



**Where are we
going?**

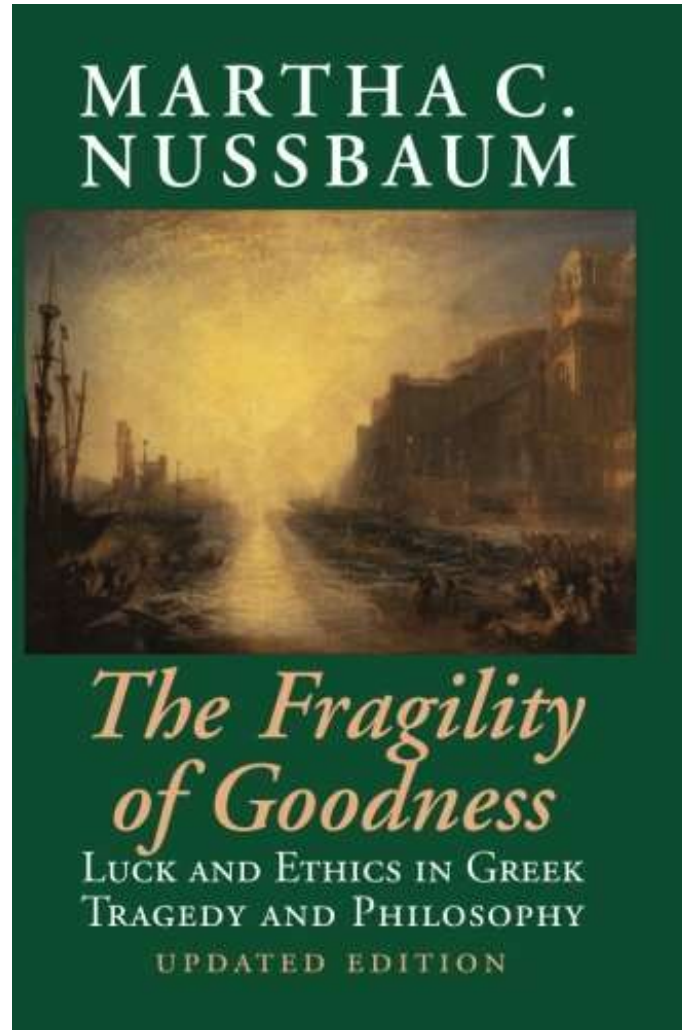
**Philosophy in the
Anthropocene**

6. Fragility and Care



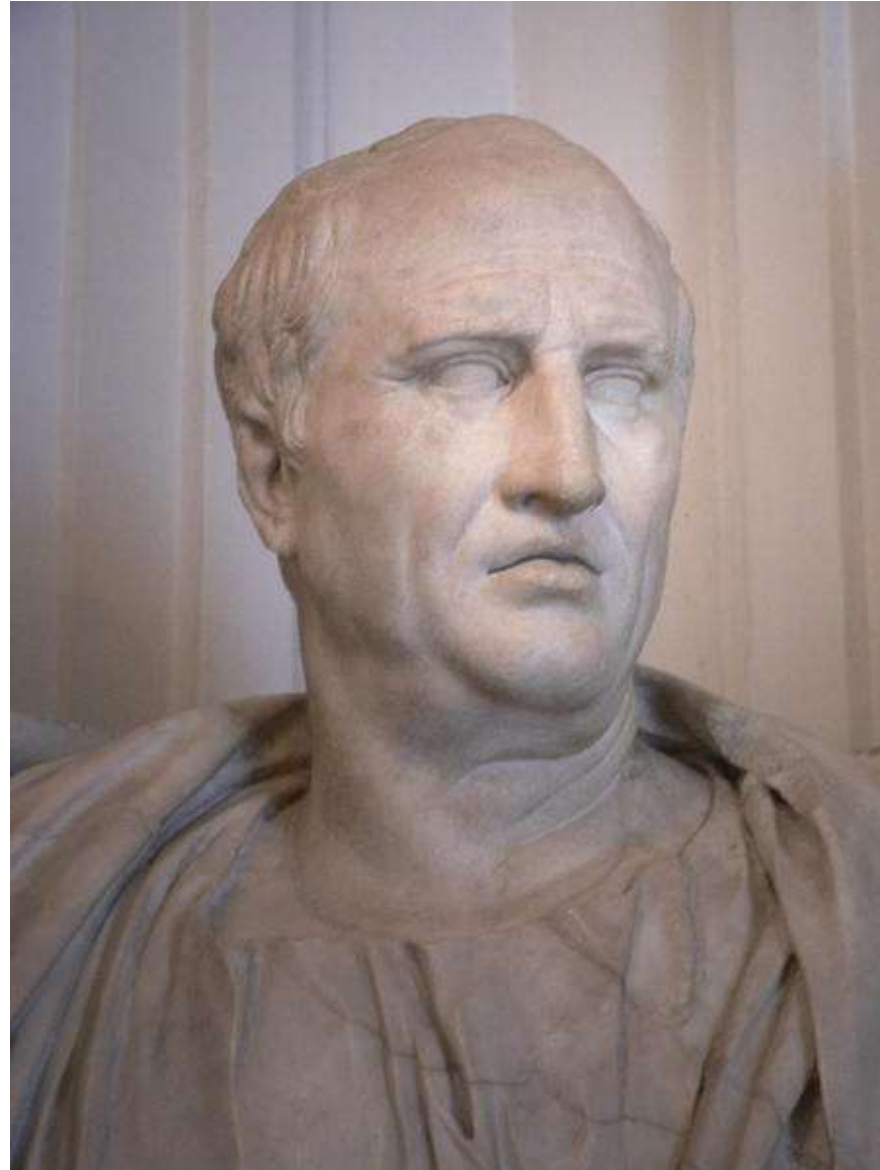
Introducing Martha Nussbaum (1947 –)

- 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'
- Trained in acting, then in 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



‘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’

– Nussbaum, interview with Bill Moyers



Laelius: And yet, Cato, you will do us a very great favour ... if - since we all hope, or at least wish, to become old men - you would allow us to learn from you in good time before it arrives, by what methods we may most easily acquire the strength to support the burden of advancing age.

Cato: [*Having listed some common complaints*]. Such men appear to me to lay the blame on the wrong thing. For if it had been the fault of old age, then these same misfortunes would have befallen me and all other men of advanced years. But I have known many of them who never said a word of complaint against old age; for they were only too glad to be freed from the bondage of passion, and were not at all looked down upon by their friends.

The fact is that the blame for all complaints of that kind is to be charged to character, not to a particular time of life. For old men who are reasonable and neither cross-grained nor churlish find old age tolerable enough: whereas unreason and churlishness cause uneasiness at every time of life.

Laelius: It is as you say, Cato. But perhaps some one may suggest that it is your large means, wealth, and high position that make you think old age tolerable: whereas such good fortune only falls to few.

Ageing

This article is more than 7 months old

Millions in Britain at risk of poor-quality later life, report says

Ageing population and stretched care services leave poorest most vulnerable

Amelia Hill

@byameliahill

Wed 13 Mar 2019
06.01 GMT



REPORT

FUTURE PROOF

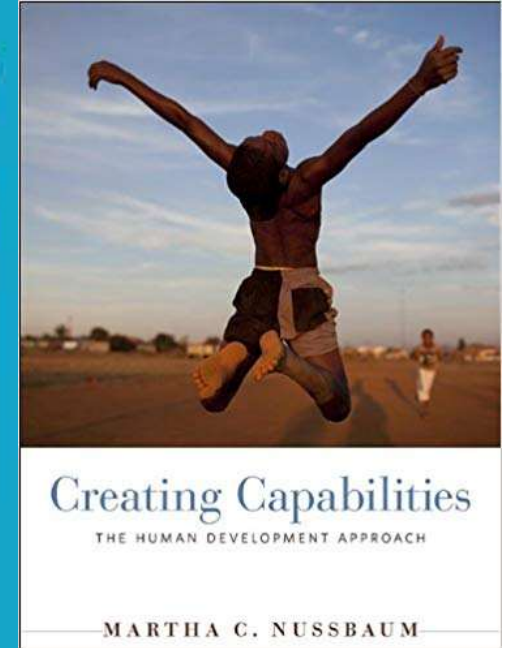
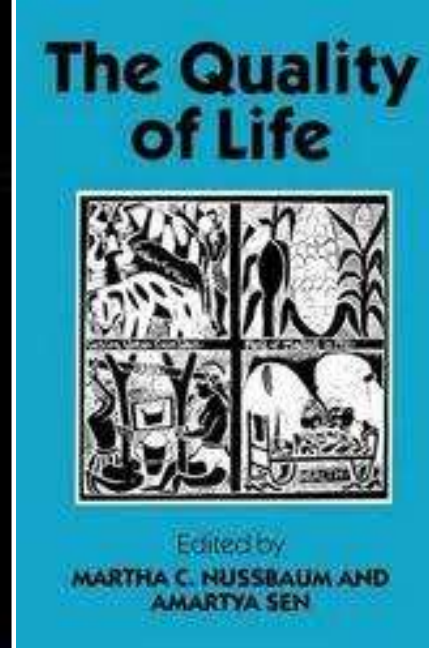
BRITAIN
IN THE 2020s



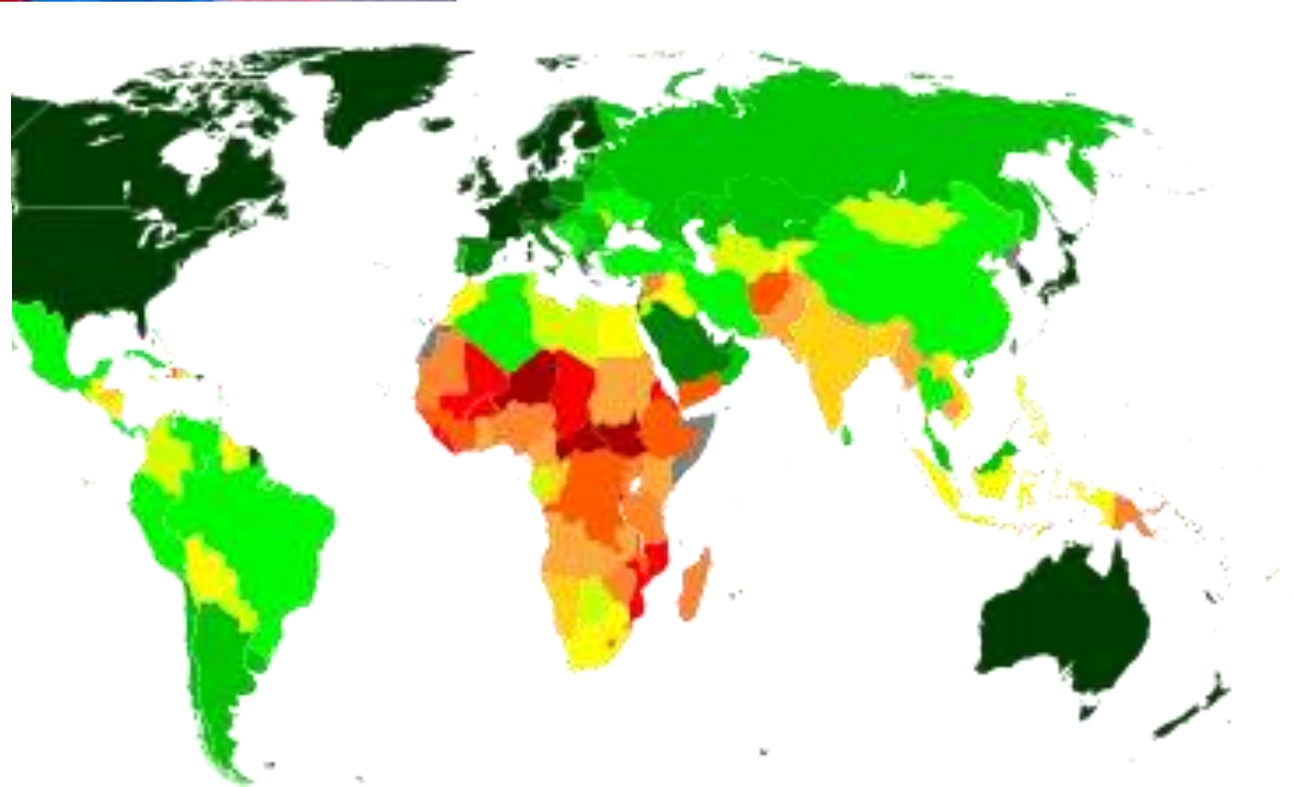
Ageing in the UK

- Next two decades, number of over-65s to increase by 40%, or 1 in 3
- Recession and vast adult social care funding deficit (62% expected budget) – IPPR
- 1 in 3 babies born in 2016 expected to live to 100 (1% in 1916)
- Life expectancy gap of 15 years between Gateshead and K&C
- Poor likelier to retire earlier and live shorter healthier lives
- 'Ageing is inevitable but how we age is not. Our current rates of chronic illness, mental health conditions, disability and frailty could be greatly reduced if we tackled the structural, economic and social drivers of poor health earlier' – Anna Dixon, Centre for Ageing Better





‘Development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy ... Focusing particularly on people's capability to choose the lives they have reason to value’ - Amartya Sen



AGING THOUGHTFULLY

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT
RETIREMENT, ROMANCE,
WRINKLES, & REGRET



- Capability: the opportunities for valued activities a nation provides for its people, not average wealth.
- Societies become minimally just when they secure to all citizens a threshold level of certain opportunities.
- Choice and agency, plurality
- Recognising ‘the *variety* and *nonhomogeneity* of lives that aging people lead’ (201), and combats damaging stereotypes

1. *Life*
2. *Bodily health.*
3. *Bodily integrity.*
4. *Senses, imagination, and thought*
5. *Emotions.*
6. *Practical reason*
7. *Affiliation.*
8. *Other species.*
9. *Play.*
10. *Control over one’s environment.*



Over to you

- Consider the way Nussbaum discusses her capabilities approach over Chapter 7 in relation to the needs of ageing
- *Were you persuaded by her arguments on rights and opportunities?*
- *Did you think of any criticisms of this kind of approach?*

Capabilities Approach (here)

1. *Life*. Being able to live to the end of a human life of normal length; not dying prematurely, or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living
2. *Bodily health*. Being able to have good health, including reproductive health; to be adequately nourished; to have adequate shelter
3. *Bodily integrity*. Being able to move freely from place to place; to be secure against violent assault, including sexual assault and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction
4. *Senses, imagination, and thought*. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's own mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and avoid nonbeneficial pain.

Capabilities Approach 2/3

5. *Emotions*. Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love those who love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by fear and anxiety.
6. *Practical reason*. Being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life.
7. *Affiliation*. (A) Being able to live with and toward others, to recognize and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another. (B) Having the social bases of self-respect and nonhumiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails provisions of nondiscrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, caste, religion, national origin.

Capabilities Approach 3/3

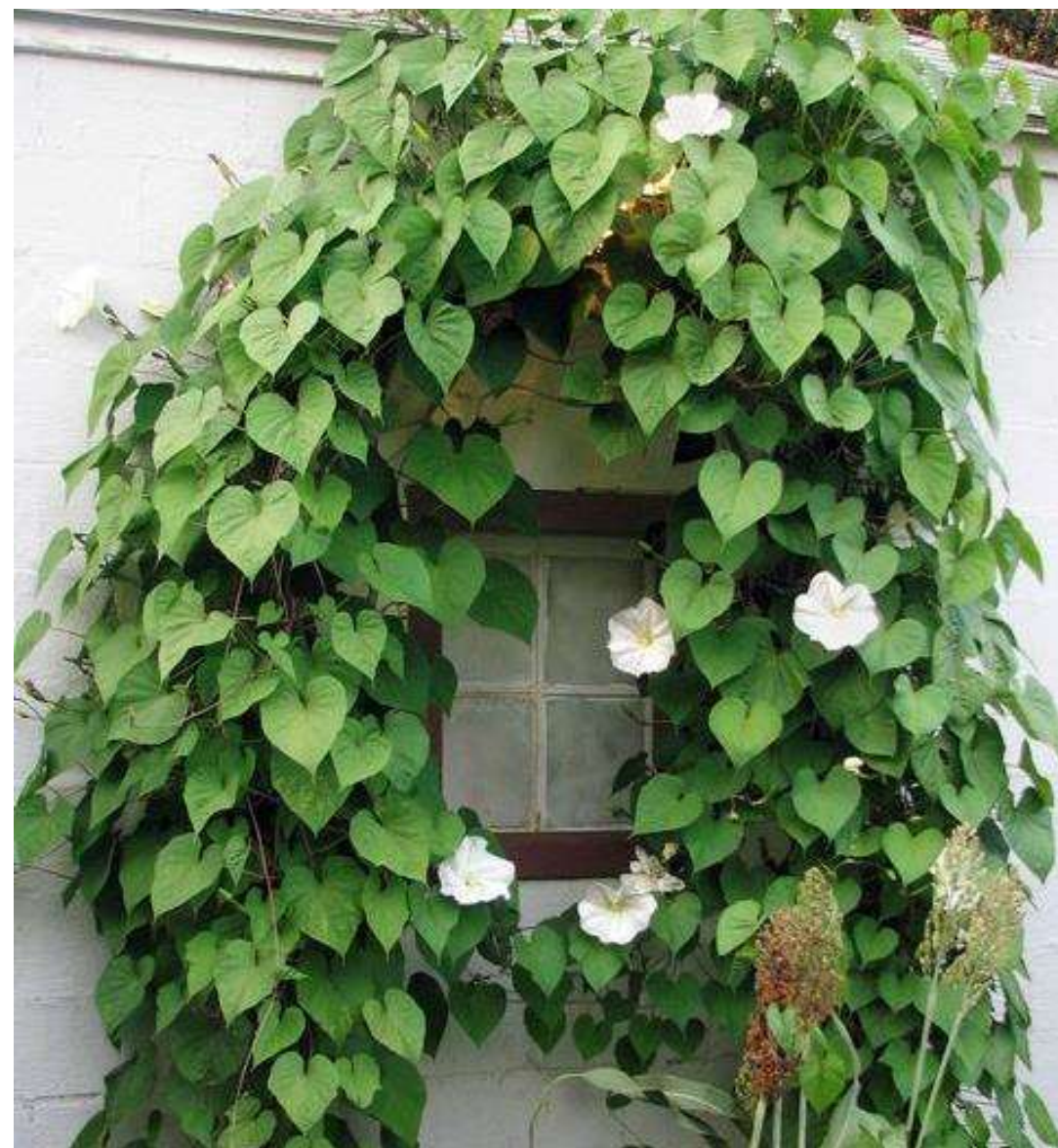
8. *Other species*. Being able to live with concern for and in relation to animals, plants, and the world of nature.
9. *Play*. Being able to laugh, to play, to enjoy recreational activities.
10. *Control over one's environment*. (A) Political. Being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life; having the right of political participation, protections of free speech and association. (B) Material. Being able to hold property (both land and movable goods), and having property rights on an equal basis with others; having the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; having the freedom from unwarranted search and seizure.

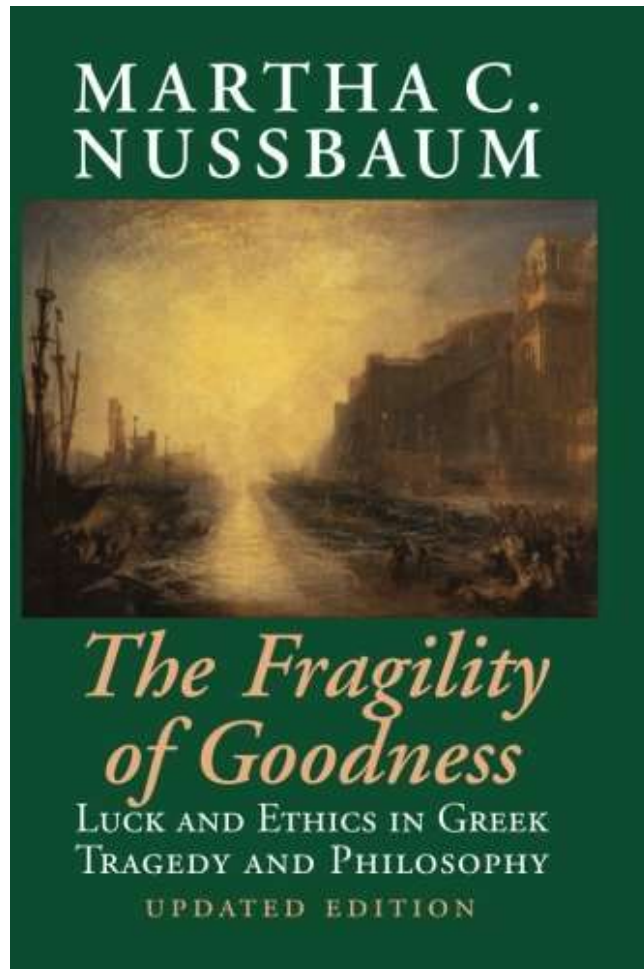




‘All nations, however, need to forge a social consensus about what types of care for aging seniors are central enough to count as basic entitlements, to be abridged only in the most dire emergency. Since no nation has deliberated well about the rights of the aging, there is no such secure understanding. Aging thoughtfully means, then, group solidarity and a spirit of protest that may, over time, create a consensus about basic rights.’ (211)

I wonder – Nussbaum’s flexibility and liberalism often lead to not pursuing criticisms of market capitalism, e.g. US private healthcare





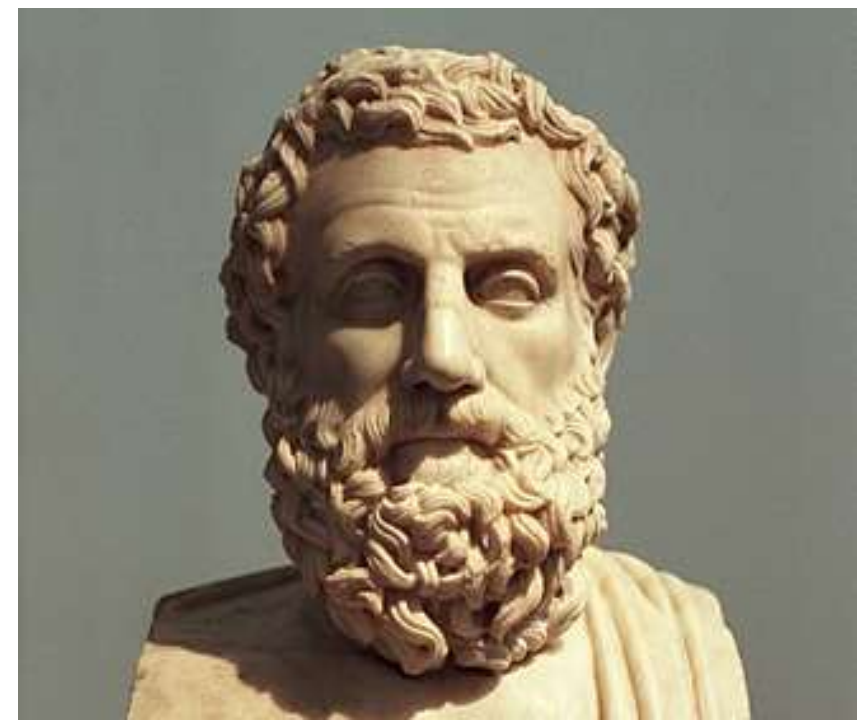
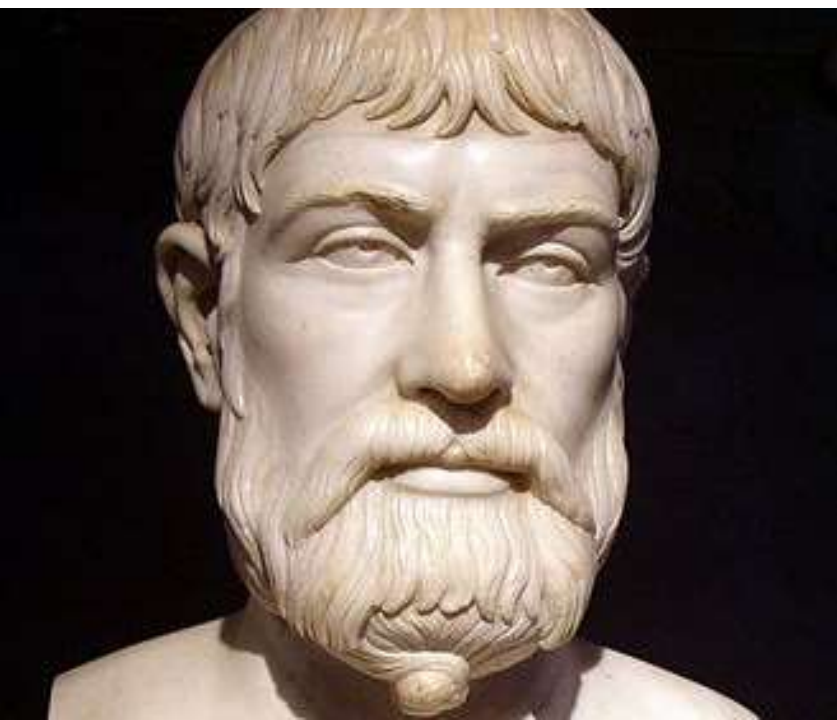
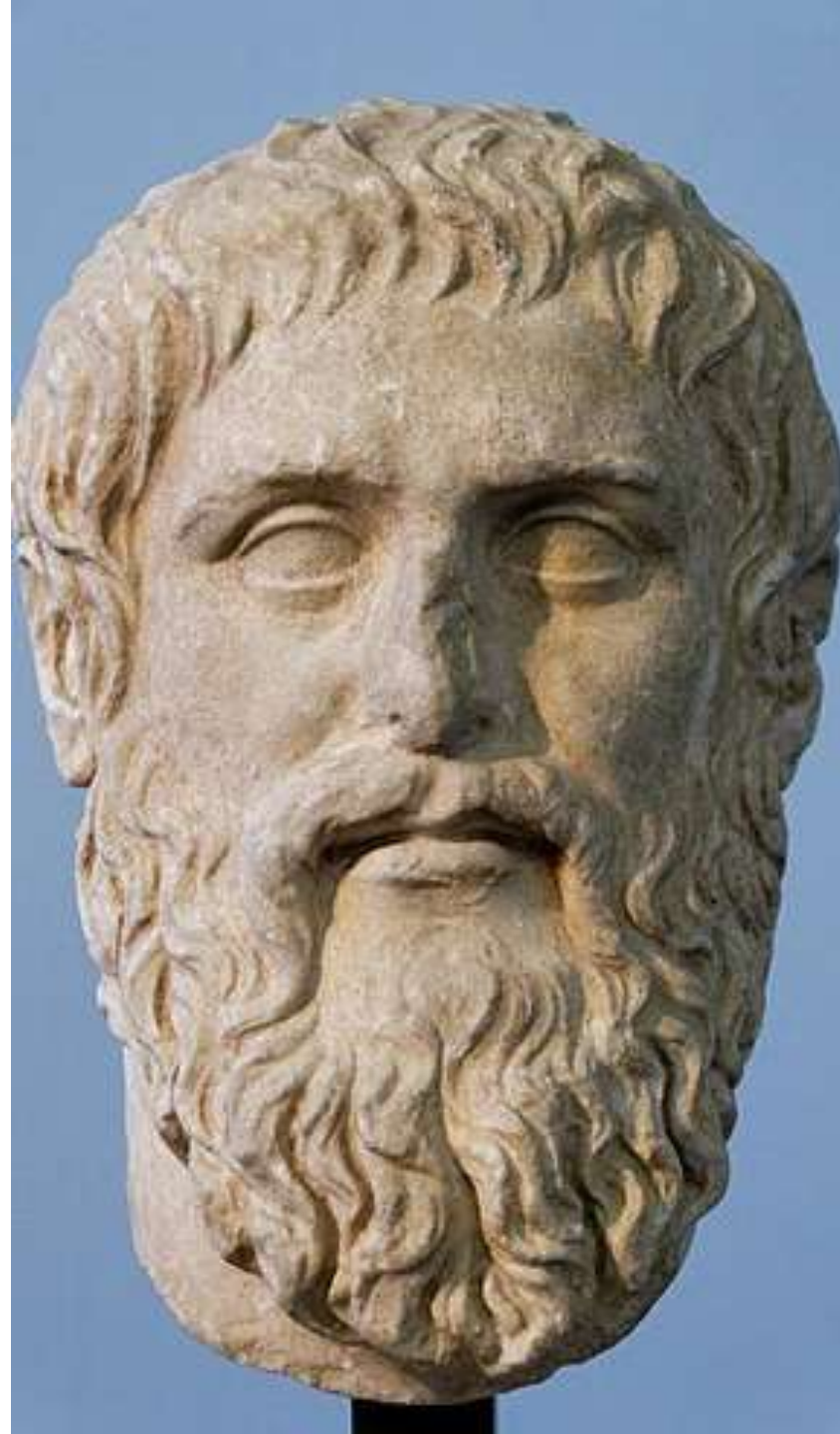
But human excellence grows like a
vine tree, fed by the green dew,
raised up, among wise men and
just, to the liquid sky.

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*

Reason vs Luck

- To what extent can we pursue human excellence against the inevitable adversity of fate and fragility of luck?
- Like the vine, '[w]e need to be born with adequate capacities, to live in fostering natural and social circumstances, to stay clear of abrupt catastrophe, to develop confirming associations with other human beings'
- Against luck, we have reason. We can deliberate and choose. There is something 'about us that is pure and purely active, something that we could think of as 'divine, immortal, intelligible, unitary, indissoluble, ever self-consistent and invariable [Plato]''
- 'how much luck do these Greek thinkers believe we can humanly live with? How much *should* we live with, in order to live the life that is best and most valuable for a human being?' (4)



‘That I am an agent, but also a plant; that I must constantly choose among competing and apparently incommensurable goods and that circumstances may force me to a position in which I cannot help being false to something or doing some wrong;

that an event that simply happens to me may, without my consent, alter my life;

that it is equally problematic to entrust one’s good to friends, lovers, or country and to try to have a good life without them – all these I take to be not just the material of tragedy, but everyday facts of lived practical reason.’ (p. 5)



Over to you

Based on what we've discussed, let's discuss the challenge of the book, over pp. 5-7.

Traditionally, philosophies like Plato's aspire to a self-sufficiency that's 'cleansed of the 'barnacles' and the 'seaweed' of passion'.

How viable or desirable is that?

'How much should a rational plan of life allow for elements such as friendship, love, political activity, attachments to property or possessions, all of which, being themselves vulnerable, make the person who stakes his or her good to them similarly open to chance?'

- The absence of external, contingent goods ‘may deprive the agent not only of resources but of intrinsic value itself and living well itself’
- Internal factors like emotions and desires can disorder our worlds:
- ‘The agent who ascribes value to activities connected with the appetites and emotions will *eo ipso* be depending on the external, upon resources and other persons, for his possibilities of ongoing good activity. ... To nourish them at all is to thus expose oneself to a risk of disorder or ‘madness’
- *But can we even step out of that contingency?*
- *Isn't wisdom instead in learning how to live with luck, fragility and vulnerability?*

A	B
agent as hunter, trapper, male	agent as plant, child, female (or with elements of both male and female)
agent as purely active	agent as both active and passive/receptive
aim: uninterrupted activity, control; elimination of the power of the external	aim: activity and receptivity; limited control balanced by limited risk; living well within a world in which the external has power
soul as hard, impenetrable	soul as soft, porous, though with a definite structure
trust reposed only in the immutable and altogether stable	trust reposed in the mutable and unstable
intellect as pure sunlight	intellect as flowing water, given and received
solitary good life	good life along with friends, loved ones, and community



To think over

What do the words luck, fragility,
and care mean to you?

Next week: democracy and participation

Two readings:

- Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902), Introduction and Chapter 6
- Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (1971) excerpts

While both are dated, each argues for democracy as a kind of way of life involving participation, moral awareness of others, and each is critical of systems that are based just on the ballot box or the law.

I want us to use them to think more broadly about the forms of political representation we find appealing or necessary in the current moment, at a time when direct democracy, union organising and citizens assemblies are debated.