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Dialogical Loveⁱ

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Love, says Martin Buber, is not about each partner having the other as his or her object, love is *between* the partners. It is dialogical. Lovers share what is important in their emotional and practical lives. The paper begins to give some substance to this idea by studying a literary example, Isabel Archer's quest for dialogical love in Henry James' novel *The Portrait of a Lady*. The paper then analyzes the notions of shared action and of shared feeling, drawing on three main sources: phenomenological studies on joint feeling from the beginning of the last century (esp. Max Scheler's distinction between four forms of sympathy), the contemporary analytical debate on joint action, and the contemporary philosophy of emotion (esp. Martha Nussbaum's cognitivism). The main contention of the paper is that the dialogical model of love is superior to the various monological models which are main-stream in philosophy today. Neither Harry Frankfurt's care model nor Martha Nussbaum's radiance model get to the heart of what love between two adults can be.

1. The Basic Intuition: Love Is Sharing

What is the nature of love? Why is love so precious? Why would happy women and men not wish to spend their lives without partners or close friends?

One popular answer to this question is this: loving somebody means rejoicing in their joy, suffering on account of their suffering and doing whatever you can to promote their good life. In loving somebody you reach out to the world. Putting value in the flourishing of beings, or even things and ideas, other than yourself gives meaning to your life. The purest form of love is selfless maternal love.

Call this the *curative model of love*. According to this model, love is opposed to egoism.

The curative model constitutes the major paradigm in the philosophy of love. One contemporary proponent is Harry Frankfurt.

Yet there is another way to understand the nature and value of love. According to this view, love is dialogical and not altruistic. Love is about sharing and not about caring. Loving somebody means enjoying things together with him or her, talking, hiking or making music together. In loving somebody you enlarge your self by closely interacting with and responding to the other person. We do not flourish as atoms; our nature is social. The purest form of love is all-embracing erotic love.

Call this the *dialogical model of love*. According to the dialogical model, love is opposed to individualism. Love is neither altruistic nor egoistic; it is “nostristic”. On the dialogical model, interpersonal love is not at all similar to the “love” a person feels for things or ideas.

The dialogical model is not standard in the philosophy of love. One prominent proponent though is Martin Buber with his *I and Thou* (1923). For Buber, love is *between* the partners; love is not about each partner having the other as his or her object:

Love does not cling to the I in such a way as to have the Thou only for its “content”, its object; but love is between I and Thou. (14/15)

Love doesn’t live in the lovers, Buber explains, but the lovers live in their love. They build the house of their love together and inhabit it. To understand love we have to look at the house and not at the lovers taken by themselves.

There are, to be sure, some philosophers today who are sympathetic to the dialogical approach to love. Martha Nussbaum is one of them. In *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986) she stresses the mutuality-requirement in Aristotle’s account of love and friendship. In *Love’s Knowledge* (1990) she has an eye for joint feeling and action as pictured in the love stories of Henry James and Ann Beattie. In *Upheavals of Thought* (2001), however, she treats love as an emotion like any other, an emotion which finds immense value in an object, sees it as radiant, wonderful and deeply needed. This is not exactly love as the curative model has it, but it is just as monological.

This paper will probe and spell out the dialogical model of love. The basic intuition is that this model gets to the heart of what love between two adults can be. The curative model in contrast seems to demand both too much (too much altruism) and too

little (too little dialogue). The curative model may have some value in understanding the love an adult feels for her children or for her relatives and friends who, through some serious illness, depend on her care. Love may indeed be a family resemblance concept. This paper will not address this issue; it will concentrate on love between two healthy adults.

The paper will begin to give some substance to the idea of dialogical love by studying a literary example, Isabel Archer's quest for dialogical love in Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady* (2). The paper will then analyze the notions of shared action (3) and of shared feeling (4). We need to understand these two notions if we are to understand dialogical love. For in dialogical love the partners share what is most important in their practical and emotional lives (5).

The paper will draw on three main sources: phenomenological studies on joint feeling from the beginning of the last century (especially Max Scheler's distinction between four forms of sympathy), the contemporary analytical debate on joint action and the contemporary philosophy of emotion (especially Martha Nussbaum's cognitivism).

2. An Example: Isabel Archer's Quest for Dialogical Love in Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*

In *The Portrait of a Lady* (1880/81) Isabel Archer, a young American woman, travels Europe enchanting her relatives and new acquaintances by her independent spirit, the freshness of her imagination and her looks. After refusing two honorable offers of marriage and unexpectedly inheriting a large sum of money, she falls prey to the fortune

hunter Gilbert Osmond, an impoverished aesthete, and finds herself stuck in a suffocating marriage with him in Rome.

In coming to Europe Isabel had set out to be free and discover the world meeting people to share her ideas with:

She had too many ideas for herself; but that was just what one married for, to share them with someone else. (IV: 195)

Osmond had seemed to her like the right person at the beginning:

a man living in the open air of the world, indifferent to small considerations, caring only for truth and knowledge and believing that two intelligent people ought to look for them together and, whether they found them or not, find at least some happiness in the search. (IV: 195/196)

One reason why Isabel marries Osmond thus is that she admires his “beautiful mind” and expects him to share with her a life dedicated to knowledge and moral goodness. She expects him and herself to enjoy their common pursuit of knowledge, not just in virtue of the goodness of searching for truth, but also in virtue of the goodness of doing so together.

Isabel’s quest for a love grounded in the joint pursuit of truth is, however, not the only reason she marries Osmond. She also has an altruistic motive:

That he was poor and lonely yet that somehow he was noble—that was what had interested her and seemed to give her her opportunity. ... She would launch his boat for him. ... As she looked back at the passion of those full weeks she perceived in it a kind of maternal strain—the happiness of a woman who felt that she was a contributor, that she came with charged hands. But for her money, as

she saw to-day, she would never have done it. ... At bottom her money had been a burden. (IV: 192/193)

The altruistic motive thus functions as the effective motive in Isabel's decision to marry Osmond; it is her money which makes her look for an opportunity to do something good for others, with poor, lonely Osmond presenting himself as an excellent opportunity. You can read Henry James' novel as the story of a quest for dialogical love gone astray through the intrusion of an curative motive alien to adult love proper.

Instead of the envisioned happy joint pursuit of knowledge, Isabel finds Osmond unwilling to share his life with her; she finds him even hating her:

Under all his culture, his cleverness, his amenity, under his good-nature, his facility, his knowledge of life, his egotism lay hidden like a serpent in a bank of flowers. (IV: 196)

The real offence, as she ultimately perceived, was her having a mind of her own at all. Her mind was to be his—attached to his own like a small garden-plot to a deer-park. He would rake the soil gently and water the flowers; he would weed the beds and gather an occasional nosegay. It would be a pretty piece of property for a proprietor already far-reaching. (IV: 200)

Osmond had pretended to search for truth in life and to want to do so together. In reality he had wanted her money and her mind to better display his alleged superiority to the world. His egotism has made him incapable of truly sharing his life with another person.

What had seemed like a sharing of life at the beginning, Osmond's opening Isabel's eyes to the "infinite vulgarity of things and of the virtue of keeping one's self unspotted by it" (IV: 197) gets revealed as the mere appearance of sharing. When Isabel

realizes this, she finds herself trapped in a house of “darkness”, “dumbness”, and “suffocation”:

Osmond’s beautiful mind gave it neither light nor air; Osmond’s beautiful mind indeed seemed to peep down from a small high window and mock her. (IV: 196)

The love between Isabel and Osmond fails because of Isabel’s altruism and Osmond’s egotism. If it were not for her altruism Isabel would not have rushed into a marriage with someone unable to share his life with another person. To be sure, Isabel is not an angel and Osmond is not the devil. This is Henry James, after all! For Isabel to be attracted by Osmond there must be some hint of aestheticism in her as well, some will to feel superior and dominate others (cf. Nussbaum 1988, 336). And for Osmond to be attracted by Isabel there must be some willingness in him to go and meet another human being—however only if it does not cost him too much. Isabel with her mind of her own definitely cost him too much.

Stuck in her horrible marriage Isabel still finds some love in her relations with her terminally ill cousin Ralph whose doing it was that she inherited all that money in the first place and who, like many others, had warned her of Osmond.

When her cousin is about to die from consumption she goes and visits him in England against the will of her husband. She sits at her cousin’s deathbed holding his hand for three days waiting for a chance to talk. Ralph knows she is there and lies in grateful silence. What Isabel wants to tell him is that her marriage was a failure, that Osmond married her for the money. She had hidden this truth from her cousin “perpetually, in their talk, hanging out curtains and arranging screens” (IV: 203) out of

shame and also out of a wish not to pain him (again an altruistic wish on her part which keeps her from sharing her ideas). Yet at his deathbed:

She had lost all her shame, all wish to hide things. Now he must know; she wished him to know, for it brought them supremely together, and he was beyond the reach of pain. (IV: 413)

She tells Ralph and he says that he always knew, to which she responds:

“I thought you did, and I didn’t like it. But now I like it.”

“You don’t hurt me—you make me very happy.” And as Ralph said this there was an extraordinary gladness in his voice. She bent her head again, and pressed her lips to the back of his hand.

“I always understood,” he continued, “though it was so strange—so pitiful. You wanted to look at life for yourself—but you were not allowed; you were punished for your wish. ... Are you going back to him?” Ralph gasped.

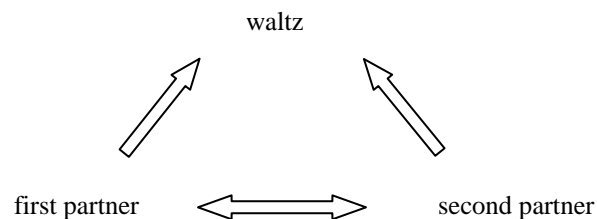
“I don’t know—I can’t tell. I shall stay here as long as I may. I don’t want to think—I needn’t think. I don’t care for anything but you, and that’s enough for the present. It will last a little yet. Here on my knees, with you dying in my arms, I’m happier than I have been for a long time. And I want you to be happy—not to think of anything sad; only to feel that I’m near you and I love you. Why should there be pain? In such hours as this what have we to do with pain? That’s not the deepest thing; there’s something deeper.” (IV: 415/416)

The “deepest thing”, Isabel and Ralph know, is love, is togetherness in what is important in life. The happiness Ralph and Isabel encounter in looking for, bearing and living up to the truth together is joint happiness. Their happiness gets expressed by words, tone of

voice, pressing of lips and holding of hands. Isabel and Ralph share not only in action but also in feeling.

3. Analyzing Joint Action

An action is *joint* if what each participant does can only be understood as a *contribution to a common venture*. Prime examples of joint or shared action are waltzing, playing a string quartet or having a philosophical discussion. Cut out one person and look at her doings in isolation and you will not be able to make out what it is she is doing. In joint action the participants continuously attune their inputs to the inputs of the others and to the action to be actualized (a waltz and not a foxtrot, for example), taking the others to be doing the same kind of attuning. Each participant combines *two triangular perspectives*, the first perspective connecting himself to the others and to the action, the second perspective connecting the others to himself and to the action. The joint action performed is then not the aggregate or sum of what the participants individually do. Rather, what the participants individually do gets integrated into a whole, the joint action.



As philosophers like Margaret Gilbert, John Searle, Michael Bratman and Ulrich Baltzer have worked out, the contributions to joint action need not be alike although there are cases of joint action (marching in step, singing unison) that require this. Furthermore,

the contributions to joint action need not be symmetrical. Some participants may contribute more than others, be it because they are more competent or because they are more invested. Moreover, joint action may be standardized (playing tennis) or improvising (playing around with a ball). Finally, joint action may be cooperative (painting the house together) or competitive (playing a game of chess).

What is required for joint action, however, is that all contribute and that their contributions fit together as to actualize the common action. You cannot intend a joint action in the same way as you would intend an individual action. In acting together, you radically depend on the willingness and ability of the other contributors and on the success of your common attempt at coordination. If an attempt at joint action fails, it becomes impossible to say what it is that each of the individuals did. Did Isabel look at the truth or did she look at signs of Osmond's alleged superiority at the beginning of her relationship with him? She wanted to look at the truth together with Osmond, and Osmond pretended to want to look at the truth together with her. But what is it that Isabel actually did?

It is an interesting and difficult philosophical question – not to be pursued here – whether joint action is just one species of action among other species like individual action or collective action (individual action with a common effect, like in pollution) or whether all action is, in a sense, joint. Some philosophers argue that there is no acting without rule following and that there is no private rule following; whenever someone follows a rule he does so as a participant in a social practice. Others argue that acting is acting for reasons and that there is no private reasoning; whenever someone makes a claim she does so as a participant in the social game of demanding and giving reasons.

Even if this is true and all action is, in a sense, joint, there is still another sense in which an action can be individual or joint, namely as an individual or joint move in a joint game or practice. The question of whether an action is individual or joint would then merely be a question of focus.

Joint action may be performed *for its own sake* or for some other goal. In carrying a heavy wardrobe up to the second floor together, the necessary coordination of movements is usually not pursued for its own sake but for reasons of self-interest or altruism. It is your wardrobe, you want it up on the second floor. Others are willing to help you with this. In contrast, dancing, conversing or going for a walk together are often done for their own sake.

Call coordination for its own sake *joint practice*. The participants in joint practice intrinsically value meeting other perspectives and transcending their own limited perspective through mutual attention and responding. Like other activities which are performed for their own sake acting together for its own sake is usually accompanied by *joy*, or what Georg Henrik von Wright calls “active pleasure” (1963: 63-65). Active pleasure contrasts with passive pleasure, for example the good taste of an apple, and with the pleasure of satisfaction, the feeling you have at getting what you want. While you can directly aim at passive pleasure, active pleasure or joy comes about only when it is not directly aimed at, only when you are absorbed in the activity and forget about yourself.

In all shared action, no matter whether it is performed for its own sake or not, the participants acknowledge each other as participants with their own perspectives and do not treat each other merely as means to individual goals. The participants strive for the successful performance of the action together; to achieve this end is in the common

interest of all participants. Thus there is an element of communism or *nostrism* in all shared action. Yet it is only in shared practice that the nostrism stands on its own and is not put into service for other individual (egoistic or altruistic) goals.

That the nostrism stands on its own in shared practice does not mean that shared practice does not further the participants' individual *self-realization*, self-fulfilment or good life. The participants in joint practice each realize themselves just as an altruistic caregiver realizes himself in caring altruistically. Both do not instrumentalize the others (or what they do with or for the others) for their own self-realization. Rather, their self-realization consists in caring altruistically or sharing for its own sake. Egoism, altruism and nostrism range on one level, self-realization on another.

In shared practice the sharing is (at least an important part of) the reason why the participants do what they do. In *personal* shared practice you intrinsically value sharing with particular others (going to see a movie with a friend), in impersonal shared practice you do not mind who the others are as long as they make good partners (singing in a choir). Further, you may seek out personal others for particular joint activities only or you may seek them out to share all that is important in life. With *universal* personal shared practice we finally reach the realm of love. One way to distinguish friendship from love is by conceiving of friendship as limited and of love as not limited to certain joint activities. Love is all-embracing, it includes, importantly, forms of cooperation which—like sex—focus on the embodiment of the partners. Yet love is not only about sharing actions, it is also about sharing feelings.

4. Analyzing Joint Feeling

A feeling is joint if what each participant feels can only be individuated as a component of a common feeling. Cut out one person and look at her in isolation and you will not be able to fully understand the feeling she expresses. Like in joint action, the participants in joint feeling continuously attune their inputs to the inputs of the others and to the emotion to be actualized, and see the others as doing the same kind of attuning. The joint feeling is not the aggregate of what the participants each feel side by side, it is an integrated feeling.

Max Scheler in his *The Nature of Sympathy* (1913) distinguishes four forms of sympathy or fellow-feeling:

- **joint feeling** (*unmittelbares Miteinanderfühlen*),
- **sympathy “about something”** (*Mitfühlen “an etwas”*; rejoicing in another person’s joy and commiserating with their sorrow),
- **emotional infection** (*Gefühlsansteckung*; being swayed by the emotion of another), and
- **emotional identification** (*Einsfühlen*; a borderline case of infection in which one self absorbs another).

The example Scheler gives of joint feeling is as follows:

Two parents stand beside the dead body of a beloved child. They feel in common the “same” sorrow, the “same” anguish. It is not that A feels this sorrow and B feels it also, and moreover that they both know they are feeling it. No, it is a feeling-in-common. A’s sorrow is in no way an “external” matter for B here, as it is, e.g. for their friend C, who joins them, and commiserates “with them” or

“upon their sorrow”. On the contrary, they feel it together, in the sense that they feel and experience in common, not only the self-same value-situation, but also the same keenness of emotion in regard to it. The sorrow, as value-content, and the grief, as characterizing the functional relation thereto, are here one and identical. (12/13)

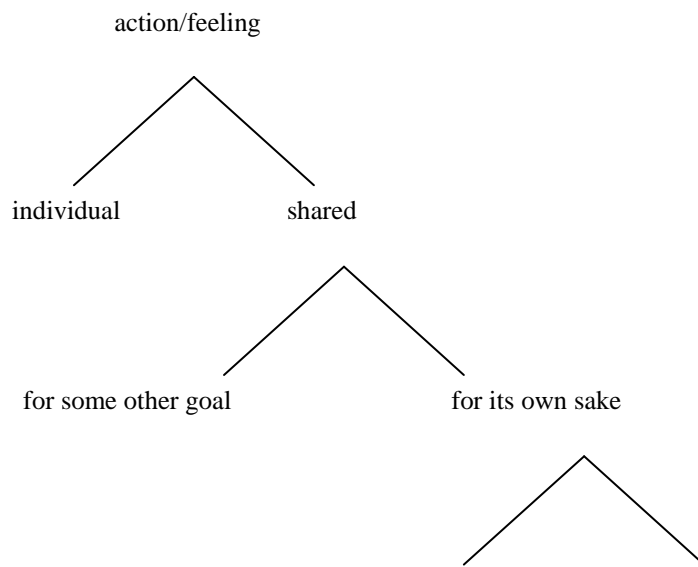
As Scheler makes perfectly clear, it is *token identity* that characterizes joint feeling and not type identity. In the example he gives there is only one token of mourning into which the parents both enter. Mutually aware parallel individual feeling must be distinguished from shared feeling. Scheler writes that both parents direct their feeling to the token-same value-situation (the loss of their child), he remarks further that both parents react to this situation with the token-same quality of functional relation (grief). Yet he also stresses that there are two functional relations, the father’s reference to the loss and the mother’s reference. Scheler thus admits that in a sense there are two feelings (two functional relations) with only a type identity between them. However, as for Scheler feelings are individuated by their value-content and their functional quality, he may just as well talk about token identity.

It is the idea of *contribution and mutual attuning* from our analysis of joint action above which can help us to make sense of the token identity in the parents’ grief. The parents go through their grief together. The inputs of the mother and the father need not be alike or symmetrical. The father may, for instance, commemorate different episodes from the child’s life. The mother may be more competent in navigating the grief and responding to the father. Yet they erect a memory of their child together and together they bear the greatness of their loss. If one of the parents only feigned his grief (like the

father in Thomas Hürlimann’s Swiss novel *Das Gartenhaus*) the grief of the other would in retrospect, upon the discovery of the deceit, lose at least a part of its meaning.ⁱⁱ

In the deathbed-scene from *The Portrait of a Lady* as quoted above, it is Isabel who is steering their joy—by refusing to think and talk about the future of her Roman marriage, by keeping out the pain (“In such hours as this what have we to do with pain?”)—and it is Ralph’s acceptance of this which marks their joy as shared. Before, there was only the mutual awareness of parallel knowledge and Isabel’s dislike of Ralph’s knowledge. Now, in the deathbed-scene, Isabel and Ralph look at the facts of Isabel’s marriage together. They do this for its own sake, because it brings them “supremely together”. It is with the joy that arises out of this that we leave the realm of joint action and enter the realm of joint feeling. The joy felt in looking at the facts together could in principle be on one side only or only parallel (mutually aware or unaware). Yet it is, in fact, neither of this. It is shared.

As with joint action, the participants in joint feeling may enter into it for its own sake or for some other goal. If they enter into joint feeling for its own sake, they usually feel joy on top of the joint feeling. There is thus some truth in the saying “A sorrow shared is a sorrow halved; joy shared is joy doubled”. With universal personal joint feeling for its own sake we reach the realm of love.



Joint feeling, as Scheler warns us, is easily confused with sympathy “about something”, emotional infection and emotional identification. If C feels compassion for A and B who mourn for their dead child together, the object of C’s *sympathy* “*about something*” is the grief of A and B while the object of A and B’s grief is the loss of their child. But not only is the object of sympathy “about something” different from the object in shared feeling. The quality of the feelings differs, too. If A feels compassion with B for his toothache, A obviously does not get a toothache himself. In joint feeling there is only one feeling, in sympathy “about something” there are two clearly distinct feelings.

<p>Joint grief:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A + B ↓ Loss of the child</p>	<p>Parallel grief:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A B ↓ ↓ Loss of the child</p>	<p>Sympathy “about” the grief of others:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">C ↓ A + B ↓ Loss of the child</p>
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Emotional infection differs from both joint feeling and sympathy “about something” in not being concerned with the feelings of others at all. If you catch gaiety from a cheerful atmosphere in a pub, your gaiety is neither directed at the happiness of the others nor does it participate in their happiness. Emotional infection is a causal and not an intentional process. You catch the emotions of others like you catch a cold. When someone wants to “see cheerful faces around him” he does not mean to rejoice with them but is simply hoping for infection as a means for his own pleasure.

Emotional identification is an extreme case of infection affecting the very roots of individuality. In emotional identity one self absorbs the other. Examples are a little girl “playing at mother” with her doll, a “Volk” feeling one with its “Führer”, hypnosis or being possessed by a demon. Like emotional infection, emotional identification is involuntary and not intentionally directed at the feelings of others.

Real-life cases of sympathy are often mixed cases. The friend C who commiserates with the parents’ grief at the funeral, may later come to share their grief though he did not know the child himself.

Sympathy in all its four forms must be distinguished, Scheler further explains, from merely understanding the emotions of others, either in *simple understanding* (*blosses Verstehen, ”dass”*), that is, grasping what kind of emotion the other experiences, to what object her emotion is directed, how it feels to have this emotion etc., or in *empathy* (*Nachfühlen, Einfühlen*). Empathy looks at the world from the perspective of the other. It is like watching a movie with the other in the leading part. In empathy the emotion of the other is present to you as an emotion, but as a separate one, it does not walk over to you and become your own feeling, as Scheler puts it. As the example of

cruelty shows, simple understanding and empathy are only preconditions and not themselves forms of sympathy. For cruelty, being the opposite of sympathy, also requires understanding or empathy.

Scheler's great achievement lies in his fine distinction between all these forms of sympathy and understanding. What Scheler however does not do is provide much of an analysis of joint feeling. We will therefore turn to the contemporary debate, especially to Martha Nussbaum's theory of the emotions, and try to understand joint feeling on this basis.ⁱⁱⁱ

The theory of the emotions as developed by *Martha Nussbaum* in the first chapters of her book *Upheavals of Thought* (2001) seems to be just the thing we are looking for. For Nussbaum stresses the active and cognitive side of the emotions. She develops her account in opposition to the so-called "feeling theories" of emotion, which conceive of emotions as "unthinking energies", like gusts of the wind or the currents of the sea. If emotions were moving us around like gusts of the wind there would be no room for voluntary emotional contributing and attuning and thus no room for joint feeling.

For Nussbaum emotions are *value judgements*. When a mother mourns her dead child, her grief, says Nussbaum, combines two elements: first it ascribes great eudaimonic importance to an object in the world (the child), second it registers how it is with the object at the moment (the child is dead and lost for the mother). More precisely, Nussbaum distinguishes between *five emotional components*:

- *aboutness* (the grief is directed to an object in the world: the child),

- *intentionality* (this object is present to the feeling subject in a certain manner, for instance, as “my sensitive child”),
- *web of beliefs* (the way in which the object is present to the subject is usually more than merely seeing it as something, “seeing as” being only the tip of the iceberg of a complex web of beliefs about the object),
- *eudaimonism* (the object and how it fares is important for the good life of the subject; the child is not only dead, it is lost to the mother), and
- *judgement* (it does not only appear to the mother that her child is dead and lost, no, she judges that this is so, she assents to the appearance).

With Nussbaum’s five-point-analysis in the first chapter of her book, we have the cognitive core of her theory before us. The following three chapters only refine this core.

There are *three refinements*:

- *narrativity* (to understand emotions we have to look at early infant development),
- *social construction* (emotions vary from culture to culture), and
- *independence from language* (in music or with small children and animals, emotions are possible without language; language is not even the best medium for emotions).

Nussbaum further notes *four typical elements* of emotions. These elements do not belong into the definition of emotion, she says, because they do not figure in all emotions or at least not always, not in all emotional episodes. The four characteristic elements are:

- *kinetic and affective intentional feelings,*
- *lack of control,*

- *imagination*, and
- *consciousness*.

Kinetic and affective feelings, like *pain at something*, the pain the mother feels when she sees a garment of her dead child, are the upheaval or arousal you feel in eudaimonic thinking. It is this upheaval that lends Nussbaum's book its title. For Nussbaum, you feel what you think, especially when what you think is intimately related to your own flourishing as is the case in emotion. These feelings are not bodily in nature, she explains, but constitute only the other side of thought. This is reminiscent of Peter Goldie's category of *feelings towards* in his study on *The Emotions* (2000). However, it is difficult to understand what this "thinking with feeling" is exactly supposed to be. In contrast to Nussbaum, we should insist that emotions which do not bodily feel like anything are not emotions. There is what could be called a "the phenomenological void" in Nussbaum's cognitivist approach to the emotions.

Nussbaum regards *non-intentional bodily sensations* as not even typical of emotions. She argues that a queasy sensation may accompany joy or grief, that the variability of bodily sensations is just too great; that the same is true of what goes on in your brain or in your blood, after brain injury other parts of your brain take over. Expressive behaviour, action and desire are also excluded from Nussbaum's definition. The resulting position is then extremely cognitivist. Emotions are value judgements, more precisely, a species of value judgements related to your own good life.

With Nussbaum's cognitivist theory of emotions and the contribution and attunement theory of joint action as our basis, it is now easier to understand the phenomenon of joint feeling. For we often relate to others when we appraise,

comprehend, and evaluate a situation. *Henry James* describes this process in more detail than most. We only need to think of the deathbed-scene cited above, or, following a suggestion of Nussbaum, his late novel *The Golden Bowl* (1904). In this novel we read about the struggle of two lovers trying to understand an emotionally important situation: “he found their word” or “he could enter into her picture”. The thought movements of two lovers, who are fathoming their feeling of guilt together, is illustrated with the image of the one helplessly paddling in a lake while the other is standing on the shore, within eyespot, and has inwardly already taken off his vest in order to jump in if she needs his help:

She had been out on these waters for him, visibly; and his tribute to the fact had been his keeping her, even if without a word, well in sight. He hadn't quitted for an hour, during her adventure, the shore of the mystic lake; he had on the contrary stationed himself where she could signal to him at need. Her need would have arisen if the planks of her bark had parted—then some sort of plunge would have become his immediate duty. His present position, clearly, was that of seeing her in the centre of her sheet of dark water, and of wondering if her actual mute gaze at him didn't perhaps mean that her planks were now parting. He held himself so ready that it was quite as if the inward man had pulled off coat and waistcoat. Before he had plunged, however—that is before he had uttered a question—he saw, not without relief, that she was making for land. He watched her steadily paddle, always a little nearer, and at last he felt her boat bump. The bump was distinct, and in fact she stepped ashore. “We were all wrong. There's nothing.” “Nothing—?” “It was like giving her his hand up the bank. (XXIII: 366)

And later, when she breaks down in a feeling of guilt after all:

But to hear her cry and yet do her best not to was quickly too much for him; he had known her at other times quite not make the repressive effort, and that hadn't been so bad. He went to her and put his arm around her; he drew her head to his breast, where, while she gasped, she let it stay a little—all with a patience that presently stilled her. Yet the effect of this small crisis, oddly enough, was not to close their colloquy, with the natural result of sending them to bed: what was between them had opened out further, had somehow, through the sharp show of her feeling, taken a positive stride, had entered, as it were, without more words, the region of the understood, shutting the door after it and bringing them so still more nearly face to face. They remained for some minutes looking at it through the dim window which opened upon the world of human trouble in general and which let the vague light play here and there upon gilt and crystal and color, the florid features, looming dimly, of Fanny's drawing-room. And the beauty of what thus passed between them, passed with her cry of pain, with her burst of tears, with his wonderment and his kindness and his comfort, with the moments of their silence, above all, which might have represented their sinking together, hand in hand for a time, into the mystic lake where he had begun, as we have hinted, by seeing her paddle alone—the beauty of it was that they now could really talk better than before, because the basis had at last once for all defined itself. (XXIII: 377/378)

Such literary descriptions, which translate our mental acts into images of movements in space, make clear that joint feeling is not parallel feeling with both parties aware of it, but that it is an essentially integrated feeling.

In the first passage, the sharing of the feeling of guilt is still rather *asymmetrical*: the woman, Fanny, is brooding (she is paddling alone in a lake and casting mute gazes at her husband). The man, Bob, is waiting and watching over her (from the shore). That is how they bear their growing worry and despair together. Fanny's paddling would look different without Bob's watching, and there would not be Bob's watching without Fanny's paddling. The boat metaphor nicely brings out how intertwined their contributions are.

The sharing is more symmetrical in the second passage. The symmetry is prepared by Fanny's breakdown, which she tries to hide from Bob. But Fanny's suppressed despair is too much for Bob, he goes to her, holds her, they stand "nearly face to face", they look at the facts together, sink "hand in hand" in the lake and find a shared truth on its bottom.

Their sharing is not ideal, though. A certain asymmetry persists, which could admittedly also only mirror the fact that Fanny is the guiltier one of the two. But Fanny always seems to be "in the thick of it", and Bob always merely on the sidelines—the asymmetry between them is therefore systematic. Bob is a loyal, straight, simple character. He is lean, Fanny ample, he is dry, Fanny romantic, he is colorless, Fanny colorful, he is comical, Fanny tragic, he is British, Fanny American. Bob stands for principles, objectivity, and value-neutrality, Fanny for sensitivity, imagination, and values. A closer look at the dynamics of Fanny and Bob's interaction reveals a delight in

contradiction, especially in the first chapters (“their old custom of divergent discussion, that intercourse by misunderstanding”, XXIII: 365). The chapters all start with Fanny worrying and Bob remaining cheerful. When Fanny eventually calms down, Bob starts drilling. The chapters all end with an idea of a solution to the problem. Fanny asymmetrically dominates this antagonistic, yet constructive dynamics. Fanny likes to triumph at Bob’s expense, but also to his advantage. He understands himself and the world better with her help. Fanny regularly overlooks what Bob says, or she finds it idiotic. His clarifying, sometimes block-headed inputs essentially serve Fanny to have dialogues with herself:

her thoughts, as always in her husband’s company, pursued an independent course. He made her, when they were together, talk, but as if for some other person; who was in fact for the most part herself. Yet she addressed herself with him as she could never have done without him. (XXIII: 278)

Occasionally Bob provides cues, assessments, suggestions, which she accepts gratefully. For example, what he sees on the stairs at the start of the diplomatic reception party serves her as a clue, as a “*point de repère*”:

But I see ... where you are, and I’m much obliged to you for letting me. You give me a „point de repère” outside myself—which is where I like it. Now I can work round you. (XXIII: 284)

This is the epitome of what the philosopher of language Donald Davidson calls “*triangulation*”, and it shows that Fanny and Bob are really building a common view on the world together, even if somewhat asymmetrically.^{iv}

You often read, also in Goldie, that joint feeling is only possible with emotions that persist for a longer time, like guilt or grief, which can last a couple of months, but not with *episodic* or situational emotions that last merely a couple of minutes. There certainly are episodic emotions, which simply overcome you like a sudden fright. There is no room for contributing and attuning in such emotions, at least not in the foreground. Yet one may sometimes only understand even such an emotion completely if one places it before the background of a shared life. And not all episodic emotions are of such overwhelming power. Think about the joy you feel about a special recognition or some other success. You do not want to be alone in this joy. You want to share it with your partner or a friend. If he is not there, you at least want to talk to him on the phone, to look at the most important stages again in the light of your triumph, and together to imagine and delight in the nice things that are in store for you in the future.

Let us return to Nussbaum's *five-point-analysis* and discuss Scheler's example of shared parental grief in its light. The *object* of the parents' feelings (the child) is the same. The *way this object is given* to them ("my smart child", "my sensitive child") may very well vary, if the shared feeling is to be productive. But it should not vary too much, because otherwise no integral whole can form. The same goes for the *web of beliefs* in the background. Concerning *reference to good life*, the question arises if this needs to be directed at the *shared good life* of both partners (the child being the parents' common project), or if it is enough that there is a reference to *each good life* in both partners, or to the *good life of one* of the partners that the other can "*tune in to*" through pity or a strong egoistic interest and thus enter into joint feeling. What is surely not enough is the simple reference to the *good life of only one* of the partners, for then we would merely have the

case of joint contemplation on the emotions of the one person, which is not joint feeling. Scheler's example suggests that a reference to the shared good life has to be present. Bennett Helm also sees it this way in his analysis of joint feeling, one of the few available detailed analyses so far. But what about reference to the good life of each? Could not two students of a recently deceased teacher, who did not know each other before and meet at the teacher's funeral for the first time, grieve for their cherished teacher together? Could they not, during walks and long dinners, attune their memories, their fears and hopes in such a way that a shared whole emerges? This seems possible, but we should in this case perhaps call it merely joint feeling in a weak sense of the word. Regarding the last element, the character of *judgment*, we can envisage a cooperative belief (it seems to us that...), as well as the cooperative working out of a common stance, for example with a division of labor concerning justification responsibilities.

We can thus very well picture joint feeling as joint value judgment with Nussbaum. But what happens to joint feeling when we overcome the phenomenological void of Nussbaum's approach and move on to a component theory of emotion, along with Goldie and many others? According to such a theory an emotion is a complex of various elements, including thoughts, bodily sensations, bodily processes, feelings towards, and expressive behaviour. Let us concentrate on one element, the trickiest one: *bodily sensations*. Nussbaum excludes them from her definition of emotions, for they are too unspecific and do not always occur. We could object with Goldie that it is enough that bodily sensations occur on and off, at certain points in the history of the emotion, and that they are identifiable as parts of the emotion through the cognitive-evaluative content. The following problem now arises for joint feeling: bodily sensations, like stomach ache or

dizziness, cannot be shared. That is because of the way they happen to you on the one hand, and, on the other hand, because they live in your own body and are not directed at an object in the world, which more people could relate to together. But if bodily sensations are constitutive for emotions, and if it is impossible to share them, does that not mean that joint feeling is not possible after all? Is what was described above with Henry James only shared value judgment, while the emotions are separate, only parallel after all?

We should not give up on joint feeling that fast. For, first, the cognitive-evaluative heart of the emotion is crucial for the integration of the not all too specific bodily sensations and this heart can be shared. Following Nussbaum and Goldie, Christiane Voss' *narrative theory of emotion* works out the importance of the integration of different components of emotion through a narrative, a temporally and thematically structured story. People who feel together, we could say with Voss, write a narrative of their emotion together and, through that, create the emotion in the first place (of course, not out of thin air). Therefore, the essential part of emotion, its narrative cognitive-evaluative heart can be shared. Second, we do not share everything in joint action, either. For example in shared judgment insights befall us. We prepare these insights through our joint differentiating and arguing. But the insights themselves befall us separately, more or less in parallel. We should integrate such unshared elements in the whole in emotions as well, without letting the whole become an unshared one in the process.

5. Love as Emotional and Practical Sharing

Nussbaum lacks joint feeling as a systematic category. She does have the phenomenon in sight, as already mentioned, but she does not develop this perspective systematically. She works basically with the categories of compassion (Scheler's sympathy "about something"), empathy, and fusion (Scheler's emotional identification, which she also views critically as personality loss). Her definition of love is accordingly *monological*. For her, love is about bestowing great importance for your own good life to an object in the world. You would then see the object as "wonderful", "radiant", and "deeply needed" (2001, 477). Love would actually underlie every emotion. For in every emotion you would bind yourself to something in the world and make yourself dependent on it. This conception of love is monological, because it makes it very well possible to love alone. There is nothing missing if nothing comes back from the beloved object. For love is not conceived of as shared action and feeling.

Nussbaum deals with this objection of monologism briefly (in *Upheavals*, 474). She agrees that "reciprocity" or "mutuality", as she calls it, may indeed be central to romantic love and friendship. Therefore we must look, she says, not only at the individual emotions of love but also at "the whole fabric of the relationship", including its history. She promises to do so in her chapters on different literary love narratives. Yet these chapters focus on the "ladders of love" and the rehabilitation of sex and everyday life. There is hardly any mention of reciprocity or sharing (sharing being different of course from mutually aware reciprocal admiration, caring or needing). Nussbaum further stresses the historical and cultural variety of romantic love (with the contemporary American notion keenly emphasizing mutuality and reciprocity) and ends her book on a sceptical note: a total text, one that includes all the elements that she thinks a view of

romantic love should include – *eros*, *philia* and *agape*—would not do justice to the complexity of the problem (713).

Like Nussbaum, I believe that to understand romantic love we have to take seriously its complexity, its historical and cultural variety, and literary narratives. Yet I hold that sharing (and, in this sense, *philia*) is central to romantic love and that a flourishing human life without it is impossible. Other elements like caring (and, in this sense, *agape*) may come in but it is sharing which is basic. Thus I believe, in contrast to Nussbaum, in the possibility of a universal, total text.^v

Nussbaum's monological conception of love cannot be right. It does not capture the phenomenon of love between partners. The object that lovers bestow with importance for their own good life is the sharing of life with a special person. It is an *interactive object* and not an individual one.

When analyzing romantic love and friendship, we should start with the sentence "two people love each other", and not with "A loves B". The first sentence emphasises the sharing of life. "I love you" can also be understood in the context of this sharing, e.g. as "performative", as an invitation to sharing. "A loves B", on the other hand, emphasises the individual emotions of A. With this we can perhaps explain the beginning of love, the falling in love, with its, often intense, yearning for closeness, or also unrequited love, but not love proper.

Love proper is the sharing of life. On the basis of this sharing we can attribute an attitude or disposition to everyone who loves. Because the lovers' sharing is of a feeling as well as of an acting nature, the attitude we attribute to lovers is an *emotional and practical attitude*. Yet, why call this an „attitude“ and not a „background emotion“, as

Nussbaum suggests? Nussbaum contrasts background emotions with situational emotions. Background emotions persist through situations of various kinds, whereas situational emotions arise in the context of particular situations (69). The main reason why “attitude” is preferable to “background emotion” is that an attitude can be emotional, practical or both. The attitude of lovers is both. The readiness of lovers to share in feeling and action befalls them but it is also subject to their decision. The readiness manifests itself in shared feeling but also in shared action. Lovers’ readiness to share in action is not derived from their readiness to share in feeling. Both are important in themselves.

In addition to shared practice and attitude, we can make out episodic and enduring *emotions* of yearning, joy, anticipation or gratitude in everyone who loves, emotions which refer to the sharing with the other person, or to the person as someone with whom one shares.

So, is love an emotion? No. Love is first of all a doing, a sharing of actions and emotions. It is second of all a practical and emotional attitude. And it third of all necessarily comes along with emotions, especially in its beginning phase.

Love, says Martin Buber, is not about each partner having the other as his or her object, love is *between* the partners. We are now in a better position to understand what Buber means by this. Love is a relation. It is constitutively shared. Partners share what is important in their emotional and practical lives. Love is not reducible to the individual emotions, actions or attitudes of the partners. Rather, love is the intertwining of two lives.

In sharing emotions and actions the partners engage in a mutual building of selves. How they view and respond to each other shapes their characters. It is through this process of mutual self-building that the other becomes irreplaceable, that love becomes

non-transferable. The loss of the other does not only sadden, it impairs and disables. Jealousy is rightly alert to this. Yet the jealous wish to possess is inimical to love. As is the wish to freeze the other as you would have him or the wish to overcome all difference in perspective and merge into one self. The standstill of dialogue is the end of love.

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ⁱⁱ "A part of its meaning", because grief is only contingently and not constitutively shared. You can mourn alone or mourn together. There is an important disanalogy here between the world of action with its many constitutively shared actions, like waltzing, and the world of feeling with its few if any constitutively shared emotions. Where something is only contingently shared you can identify a part of what it is without looking at the whole.

ⁱⁱⁱ For a similar attempt cf. M. Gilberts "Collective Guilt and Collective Guilt Feeling" from 2002. For more on Scheler see Krebs 2010, for more on other phenomenological accounts see Krebs/Landweer/Schmid/Konzelmann Ziv (eds.) *Phänomenologie des geteilten Fühlens* forthcoming.

^{iv} The 1972 five-and-a-half-hour BBC film adaptation of *The Golden Bowl*, directed by James Cellan Jones and starring Cyril Cusack as Bob Assingham, wonderfully depicts the interaction between Bob and Fanny. In contrast, in James Ivory's more recent (2000) and far less convincing, but much shorter adaptation, Bob and Fanny appear only as pale supporting roles. Indeed, as Nussbaum explains in "Finely Aware and Richly Responsible" (*Love's Knowledge*, especially 157-161), Fanny and Bob in the novel function as a kind of Greek choir, albeit a dialogical (rule-perception-dialectical) and somewhat guiltily involved one. They comment the actual story centered on the four main protagonists: Maggie and her prince, Maggie's father and Charlotte. But even the actual story in the novel can be read as a story of the struggle for sharing in love (Nussbaum, however, reads it only as the story of a struggle for overcoming moral perfectionism). In the novel, the innocent young Maggie learns that having romantic feelings for somebody is not the same as love, and that if you want to love, you have to pick the "flower of participation" (XXIV: 26). The form of the novel is also interesting in this context. The first part is told from the perspective of the prince, the second part from the perspective of Maggie. The reader is thus shown how different the two perspectives are and how difficult love, as an interweaving of two perspectives, can be and usually is. Henry James is a master of the dialogical, with his self-diagnosed double vision, his addiction "to seeing through – one thing through another" (1984, 1168), his meticulous studies of the failure (cf. "The Beast in the Jungle" and "The Altar of the Dead") and success of the interweaving of perspectives. For a sensitive and illuminating analysis of the dialogical in Henry James, cf. Yeazell, *Language and Knowledge in the Late Novels of Henry James*, also McWhirter, *Desire and Love in Henry James* and Pippin, *Henry James and Modern Moral Life*.

^v For more on this see my survey article on the philosophy of love 2009. In this article I distinguish three models of love: the *curative model*, which I trace back to one reading of Aristotle and *agape* (contemporary proponents include, apart from H. Frankfurt: H. LaFollette, L. Blum, N.K. Badhwar, A. Soble, A. Margalit and J. Raz), the *dialogical model*, which I trace back to another reading of Aristotle and *philia* (with the following contemporary proponents: R. Scruton, H. Schmitz, B. Helm, R. Nozick, R. Delaney, N. Kolodny, A.O. Rorty, M. Gilbert, K. Ebels-Duggan, U. Baltzer and M. Friedman), and the *fusionist model* which I trace back to the Platonic myth of Aristophanes and *eros* (contemporary proponents include R. Solomon and M. Fisher).