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Response to Martha C. Nussbaum, Troy Jollimore, Lior Levy, and Íngrid Vendrell Ferran

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In *Love, Subjectivity, and Truth*, I examine the kind of insight that may be provided to us by the affective disposition of love. This is done through a close engagement with the incessant theorising, and interpretation of personal experience, provided by Proust's narrator in his novel of ideas *In Search of Lost Time*. This rich and intricate text contributes to philosophy of emotion by repeatedly weighing sceptical objections to taking seriously what love reveals, but illustrating that love nonetheless enables the apprehension of meaning and value in the world. If even an admittedly selfish and possessive lover such as Proust's narrator, "Marcel," learns that a loving subjectivity can indeed orient us toward significant truth, then our emotional experience need not be viewed with sceptical distrust, but rather as an important mode of apprehension and a source of moral guidance.

1. On Love and Reciprocity

Martha Nussbaum suggests that Marcel's attachment to Albertine is not an example of the love Aristotle speaks about in Books VIII and IX of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which I will call *philia*. Yet, I think this sells short the elements of *philia* that are part of Marcel's love from the early instant of its awakening, when he first sees Albertine. One reason why we cannot have *philia* for wine, apart from the question of reciprocity, is that wine does not have a life of its own in which we could take an interest: we can *use* it, but we cannot take an interest in its well-being. The scene in which Proust's narrator initially glimpses, and is captivated by, Albertine and her friends shows that he regards her as a person with a unique personality and sensibility. He wonders what plans she has made or that others have made for her, for instance, and what home she will return to at the end of the day; and he wants to know the nature of her inscrutable will. If he only regarded her as an instance of superficial beauty, he would not care about any of these things. Nor does the Aristotelian character of his dawning love require that she love him back. An example of *philia* that Aristotle uses is the love of a parent for a child who does not know of the parent's existence or identity. Such a parent could be concerned about what plans the child has made or that others have made for them, by virtue of the parent's interest in the child's life and well-being. Is it farfetched to view Marcel's orientation to Albertine as involving an interest in her life and how it is going? I don't think so. He is intrigued by her and her companions, and he wishes to befriend them if possible.

With time, he will indeed meet the young women, playing games with them and finding himself drawn to Albertine above all. They will go driving in the countryside together, talk about art and literature, take picnics together with cheese and lettuce sandwiches, and enjoy music in the form of Albertine playing the piano while

Marcel listens. Arguments notwithstanding, they will be involved in the everyday habits of domestic life at Marcel's home in Paris. All of these, as simple as some of them may be, ought to qualify as shared activities.

What do we make of the times when Proust's narrator takes comfort in Albertine's sleep, when she has ceased to be a conscious human being and has a life akin to that of a plant? This shows, I think, that the same otherness toward which he is drawn and that he seeks to know is, simultaneously, a threat to him. While she is napping, Albertine no longer torments him with worry about what she is thinking or feeling, or what she might be planning to do. Albertine, as a person with a distinct point of view and way of life, is partially knowable—but not entirely. It is true that his love for her is inseparable from a wish to control her. But he does to a significant extent get to know her in spite of himself. The beloved other is a compelling reality, who cannot be reduced to whatever we might want from them or who we want them to be. She loves to ride her bicycle, even in the rain, and that she enjoys doing this marks one of the many ways in which Albertine is irreducibly different, as Marcel is forced to acknowledge. Her difference may prompt him to feel painful emotions, but at the same time it is part of his attraction. He realises this, remarking at one point that he chose Albertine over her (and his) friend Andrée because the latter resembles *him* too much, and is therefore not sufficiently mysterious.

Marcel's jealousy toward Albertine's (actual or imagined) other lovers, female ones in particular, would be unintelligible if he did not have some form of love for her. That is the sense in which love is foundational to our entire affective experience. Love defines what in the world concerns us and relates to our own life and well-being. We do not have emotions pertaining to what we do not care about. This is illustrated by numerous forms of love, too, such as Marcel's love for his grandmother and hers for him. We do sometimes resent this vulnerability.

The lesbian side of Albertine's bisexuality, for which we have solid evidence by virtue of Aimé's research and Andrée's confession, causes Proust's narrator to suffer painfully—not only because it limits his control over her and his possession of her. Rather, it surpasses the limits of what he can imagine, and Marcel wishes to understand Albertine's experience, to grasp what it is like to be her. Yet his very gender and sexual orientation place a barrier upon him, preventing him from knowing this aspect of what she feels.

When Marcel claims that life "laid bare and illuminated" is essentially a literary matter, this must be construed in terms of the vital connection between consciousness and writing that pervades Proust's text. This suggests that a clarification of what one has experienced in life is a crucial point of reference for the novelist's literary art. Marcel's relationship with Albertine puts a constraint on what can qualify as a legitimate interpretation of their life together. Because he did not appreciate her until she had disappeared, he must take account of this fact, and there is therefore a reality to which he must be answerable in explaining what happened between the two of them. By no means does his love float free in a fantasy realm which he himself controls. As Nussbaum points out, he eventually chastises himself for not having made a greater effort to know Albertine as she is in herself. Not every failure in loving, however, is a failure *to* love at all. Through literary art, we may get a glimpse of the uniqueness of the manner in which the world appears to each person. We can even get an inkling of what Albertine's emotional world is like, indirect and incomplete though this might be. We as readers know, for example, that she would not have separated from Marcel if he had not suggested this separation himself.

Additionally, we have reason to think that Albertine's very existence matters to Marcel, above and beyond her presence in his life. By taking an interest in her, he opens himself up to an experience of profound grief that becomes overwhelming when he learns that she has died. The fact that he has loved and lost Albertine is a defining feature of his life, an emotional truth that he learns through his feelings of upheaval, as Martha

Nussbaum argues in the title essay to her fine collection *Love's Knowledge* (1990). There is no room for scepticism here. Our way of seeing shapes what we see, and for Proust's narrator the world and its meaning are viewed in the light of his attachment to Albertine. This is compatible with its being true that a narrator who wasn't quite so preoccupied with the quest to control and possess his beloved would likely have gotten to know her better than Marcel got to know Albertine, which I am happy to concede.

2. On Love and Qualities

Troy Jollimore perceptively identifies the moments when Proust's narrator voices a kind of scepticism as essentially Humean in spirit, and grasps that a main issue in my book is whether qualities are projected onto the world or whether our attunement may enable us to respond to properties that really are there to be appreciated. In the latter case, it makes sense to speak of reasons for loving, just as in aesthetic judgement we have certain reasons for finding something beautiful. Although the qualities that justify our response are in principle available to others, it might be that in order to perceive them we must be sufficiently receptive and pay a heightened attention to the object—something that I refer to as a loving gaze.

Jollimore also notes that, when we seek confirmation from others that our love is not misplaced but well-justified, we may be guilty of a kind of inauthenticity, distrusting ourselves and our emotions. It is significant that Marcel affirms the possibility that interpreting one's life truthfully requires having the courage of one's emotions. It requires taking a stand on how the world seems from one's idiosyncratic vantage point. And Jollimore draws upon Kant in order to tease out how we should understand the interplay of subjectivity and objectivity here. Charles Swann finds Odette beautiful without having universal grounds, and yet her beauty is not only in the eye of the beholder because it is actually "out there" to be beheld. Jollimore suggests that we need to embrace a pluralism about the values that make our emotions well-grounded, since there is "more beauty in the world" than any one of us is able to perceive.

This harmonises well with the observation that, once we have begun to love a person or a work of art, we seek to find more aspects of that person or work that are beautiful or lovable. My love for Proust's novel makes me want to keep re-reading it, to know more about it, from its social context to the philosophical issues it raises. I want to spend more time with it, to discover new things about it that I can appreciate. It is the same way with my love for a close friend. I desire to keep learning more about how they see the world, as it were to look through their eyes—to apprehend their sensibility, their concerns, and their feelings. As *In Search of Lost Time* tells us, this would be the sole voyage of discovery that was ultimately worth making:

> The only true voyage of discovery, the only really rejuvenating experience, would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is. (1987, III.260)

In his book *Love's Vision* (2011), Troy Jollimore accords a special priority to our loves for other human beings, because of the complexity and responsiveness of distinctive creatures for each of whom "a world exists." That *everyone* else appreciate our unique sense of the world is not necessary, as long as *someone* does. I am mostly in agreement with this; however, I wouldn't want to sell short our loves for animals, for places, and even for abstract ideals such as fairness. Any of these have the potential to illuminate a world of meaning. Yet this point ought not to be stretched too far. William James writes somewhere about a child who befriended a cucumber,

treating it like a pet. A cucumber, no matter how treasured, can only do so much for you. This is another way of saying that there is something to be said for objectivity, and that not just any sort of object can perform the role in our lives that a beloved person can.

The delicate interaction of subjective and objective aspects in a loving person's feelings about the world is captured by a passage from the first volume of *In Search of Lost Time*, when the narrator is in love with Gilberte:

> My imagination had isolated and hallowed in social Paris a certain family, just as it had set apart in structural Paris a certain house, whose entrance it had sculpted and its windows bejewelled. But these ornaments I alone had eyes to see. . . . For in order to distinguish in everything that surrounded Gilberte an indefinable quality analogous in the world of the emotions to what in the world of colors is called infra-red, my parents would have needed that supplementary sense with which love had temporarily endowed me. (I.450)

It is the radiant existence of Gilberte, bathed in love's glow, that makes her house appear to be hallowed and bejewelled. Infra-red vision, after all, does not spawn a fabricated world out of itself; rather, it brings to light something "out there" which is real yet invisible to most subjects. No logic determines what in the world ought to stand out and command our attention, and without the dispositional affects of love, care, concern, or interest—the emotional *a priori*, in my terminology—nothing in the world around us would be more salient than anything else. Indeed, in this case we would be faced with a flat, disorganised mass of information, without the sense that any of it *matters* to us. For a comprehensively unloving human being, the world would seem empty and absurd. When we love, we apprehend meaningful facts that would be otherwise lost upon us. Just as a family's dinner table used for daily meals is not merely a piece of wood, likewise the entrance to Gilberte's home isn't exhausted in its significance by the materials of which it is made. This would suggest that Marcel, in loving, is *not* out of touch with reality, but better attuned to it in certain respects, by virtue of his affective orientation. Giving epistemic priority to a disenchanted mode of vision would be not only sceptical but nihilistic. As Jollimore has elsewhere observed (2011), sometimes a charitable perspective is needed in order for us to see and appreciate what is right before our eyes.

3. On Love and Meaning

Roquentin, the narrator of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Nausea* (2013), is radically unlike Proust's Marcel because he views the natural world as alienating and absurd. I regard this difference as having to do with a refusal or a willingness to be enraptured by one's surroundings. When Marcel, on first visiting Balbec, rhapsodises for many pages about the sunlight dancing on the undulating waves of the sea that are visible from his hotel room, he is exhibiting a receptivity to falling in love with the world. But his embrace of a loving point of view, one that is willing to finds things beautiful, does not imply that everything is rosy. Even if love makes the world go around, it does not by any means guarantee us happiness: indeed, it is precisely by virtue of his greatest loves that our narrator experiences the worst of sufferings after the deaths of his grandmother and then of Albertine. The relevant distinction here is not between happiness and sadness, but between meaning and meaninglessness. My jealous rival, or the terrorist who regards me as a threat, is not accurately described as radically different in motivation from a loving person: it is just that what they love and care about conflicts with what I represent or embody in their eyes. While I may do my best to avoid being harmed by them, I cannot refuse to comprehend why they dislike me.

Lior Levy agrees with me that our existence is always attuned, but suggests that this is not necessarily due to our capacity to love or care. One reason for characterising the themes of the book as "existential" is that I am concerned with what distinguishes meaningful experience from the sense that all is vanity. When Marcel first encounters Albertine and her friends on the Balbec coast, he feels that life is positively enchanted, rich with possibilities, and this is due to an incipient love for all of them, before they have been particularised. Yet being drawn to them all makes him want to know *each* of them in particular, and it is significant that Albertine's eyes are the first to meet his gaze. Proust's narrator tells us that love enables us to single out each individual in her specificity, even in her tone of voice. Our emotional perspective is enhanced *and* made more complicated by each of these loves, because we are susceptible to being upset for better or worse by contingencies that pertain to what we love and care about. The well-attuned lover is therefore oriented toward the beloved, a non-fabricated being, in such a way that his picture of her (or hers of him) is not falsified by distortions or fantastic impositions. He envisions her as precisely what she is, a person for whom a world exists, with an utterly singular perspective through which a unique truth can be disclosed.

Another variety of truth which is at issue in Proust's novel is the truth of the self, the one who loves and who is thereby individualised and located. Levy is right to highlight this. Marcel does not take flight from life into literature as into a fantasy; rather, by writing he articulates and clarifies what he has experienced most intensely, from the hawthorns in bloom to the death of his grandmother. This project is constrained by his own shortcomings and mistakes, such as his belief that Albertine would not leave him without warning, and all of his jealousy and boredom during the time that he was deceiving himself about how much she meant to him, as he would learn only later. His words pay tribute to his life in its actual particularity, doing justice to what he has become due to what he has found emotionally overwhelming. We learn who we are via "the truth of our feelings, the truth of our destiny" (1987, III.517), not by taking a view from nowhere.

In a formula for affirming one's own life in its singular identity, Marcel says: "Our true life is reality as we have felt it to be" (III.915). To avoid being untrue to that reality, his narrative will need to be every bit as messy, complex, and ambiguous as the story of what he has loved: "Only from such an impression," from the most cogent emotions, is it possible to "extract some truth from life" (II.787). What the writer transcribes, this book that has been dictated by reality, is to be used by each reader as a lens for self-interpretation: "Every reader is, while he is reading, the reader of his own self. The writer's work is merely a kind of optical instrument which he offers to the reader to enable him to discern what, without this book, he would perhaps never have perceived" (III.949). Each of us experiences a unique and qualitatively different world, which a vivid example of anyone else's concrete narrative can aid us in bringing to light. Far from being "a purposeful disengagement from the activity of living as well as of loving," literary imagination is intrinsically bound up with the examined life.

4. On Love, Value, and Perspective

Íngrid Vendrell Ferran rightly emphasises the importance of phenomenological thought, especially that of Max Scheler, for my overall project. She notes that my book is distinguished by its attention to the ways in which love plays an indispensable role in constituting one's entire realm of affective experience, as well as how a literary narrative such as Proust's invites us as readers to reflect on the nature of such experience. I wholeheartedly agree with a thought of Scheler's (which she quotes) that our identity as loving beings is fundamental to our particular vantage point on reality, founding what Scheler calls our many-sided interest in the things of this world, above all the beloved others whose existence and well-being are important for us (1973).

It is remarkable that a flawed and sometimes unreliable narrator can serve to illuminate the very nature of human emotions—but this is precisely what we find in *À la recherche*. For Proust's own voice includes, but is not limited to, that of his narrator. When the latter professes his indifference while also mentioning his somatic agitation (that his heart rate has increased, that he is breaking out in sweat) when considering that Albertine might leave him, the novel as a whole gives us more information about "Marcel" than is transparently available to *him*. This shows us ways in which any of us might be susceptible to self-deception, and how through an increased attentiveness we might take notice of this deception. It also invites us to question views that his reflective mind puts forward as evident truths, such as that his joy when kissing Albertine was mainly a pleasure within himself and not a world-disclosing phenomenon. The narrator's formula of "our true life," that is, "reality as we have felt it to be" (III.915), is fulfilled by the novel as a whole more accurately than it takes shape in his own consciousness. That we as readers are invited to perceive the truth about matters that Proust's narrator incessantly and ultimately fails to grasp testifies to the scope of the novelist's literary and philosophical vision.

Once again, "every reader is, while he is reading, the reader of his own self. The writer's [narrative] is merely a kind of optical instrument which he offers to the reader to enable him to discern what, without this book, he would perhaps have never perceived in himself" (III.949). Never perhaps has a fallible narrator provided his reader with so valuable a lens onto affective experience in general, including the peculiar and idiosyncratic shape that it will invariably take for each of us. This fact has implications for the philosophy of emotion, which most of the time floats free of any engagement with concrete narratives. I would welcome a phenomenological psychology that more frequently made contact with the philosophy of literature.

The book that Proust's narrator plans to write, which may be the very text that we know and love, ends up being a tribute to his *ordo amoris* in Scheler's sense. Just as Swann's life story is defined by his tragic love for Odette, Marcel realises that although "[he] was no more capable by an effort of memory of being still in love with Albertine than [he] was of continuing to mourn [his] grandmother's death," he nonetheless "asked [himself] whether a work of art of which they would not be conscious could really for them, for the destiny of these two poor dead creatures, be a fulfillment" (III.939). Vendrell Ferran distinguishes among "the objective realm of values that can be grasped by our feelings," the "descriptive *ordo amoris* [which] refers to the subject's affective structure, developed over the course of her life," varying "from individual to individual and defin[ing] one's character," and "a normative *ordo amoris*, which refers to a selection of objective values realisable over the course of a life." I feel that each of these three is relevant to my interpretation of Proust, but I do not agree that the last "is given at birth," as she claims, not in Proust's (or his narrator's) universe at least. The novel is filled with remarkable coincidences, and the historical contingencies that led Marcel to Balbec are crucial to the role that Albertine ends up playing in his life. William Blake's line in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1994) that "eternity is in love with the productions of time" is an apt epithet for the Proustian apotheosis of chance.

After concisely summarising the ten sceptical modes that I employ in my longest, middle chapter, Vendrell Ferran attends to another main theme of the book that attains its culmination in the final chapter. This is the *perspectival* nature of any singular person's emotional "take" on the world, of "reality as we have felt it to be." It involves the way in which love enables each of us to become our distinctive selves. Proust's novel gestures toward the possibility of a broader enlightenment that would not only reveal our own personality but also offer a glimpse of those other affective worlds that others must perceive. In each case, the emotional self registers one irreplaceable and apparently inevitable point of view. Our sense of meaningful reality is based upon "that ineffable something which differentiates . . . what each of us has felt," and we could wish for no

greater miracle than "to see the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to see the hundred universes that each of them sees, that each of them is" (1987, III: 257ff.). Particular emotions arise within our overall affective orientation. It may or may not require a few thousand pages to articulate this, but *In Search of Lost Time* accomplishes it masterfully in its chronicle of the heart.

Allow me to end by thanking all four commentators—Martha, Troy, Lior, and Íngrid—for the time and care they have devoted to bringing my book to light. Their illuminating responses to *Love, Subjectivity, and Truth* have effectively conveyed this book's major themes to my most esteemed group of emotion researchers. My heartfelt thanks are also given to *Passion*'s editors for making this possible.

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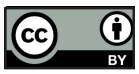
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