Concern
about
Compassion

A Reflection on the Ethics of Compassion in terms of an Old Testament Narrative Perspective

Angeliek Knol

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Table of Contents

Introduction 1
Theoretical Framework 3
1.1 Research Problem 3
1.2 Sources 5
1.3 Demarcation of the Discourse and its Limitations 6
1.4 Research Question 7
2. Martha Nussbaum's Ideas on the Concept of Compassion 9
2.1 Emotion as a Cognitive Value-laden Judgement 9
2.2 Compassion as a Painful Emotion 13
2.3 Compassion and Ethics 17
3. Old Testament Narrative as a Source for Ethical Reflection 19
3.1 Biblical Ethics 19
3.2 Ethics and Narrative Imagination 20
3.3 Old Testament Narrative Ethics 22
4. The Narrative of the Prophet Jonah 27
4.1 General Information 27
4.2 Implied Reader 28
4.3 Implied Author – Narrator 30
4.4 Key Words 31
4.5 Characterisation and Important Value-laden Judgements 32
4.5.1. Pagans 33
4.5.2. Jonah 33
4.5.3. God – Yahweh 37
4.6 Intention of the Author 40
5. Ethics of Compassion as Revealed in the Narrative of Jonah 41
5.1 Ethics Revealed in the Narrative of Jonah 41
5.2 Ethical Reflection on the Cultivation of Compassion 43
Conclusion 45
Bibliography 46
Appendix: Translation of the Book of Jonah 48

Introduction

Compassion and *empathy*, these two words seem to win in popularity, as an answer to politics of polarisation, in a society that has to deal with the so-called problems of globalisation.[1] To mention a few: upcoming compassion events, such as *Passion for Compassion*;[2] the Dutch politician Jesse Klaver, who launched an essay called *De Empathische Samenleving* [tr. The Emphatic Society] in which he pleads for more empathy in politics;[3] the neuroscientist and psychologist Bruce Perry, who states that more opportunities should be created to support the empathic development of children.[4]
These examples are just a minor selection of items that have lately caught my attention. Not in the first place for me as a theologian, but originally as a citizen of a country, the Netherlands. The Netherlands is a democratic nation with an increasing need for identity markers, in which polarisation, intolerance and mutual allegations seem to dominate politics and media. The Netherlands appears not to be unique in this movement, considering political developments in other European countries and the USA.[5]

The new awareness for empathy and compassion may be a counter movement in response to the kind of harshness mentioned above. But it is not only a concept of politicians and the latest neuroscience. During the last two decades several popular writers and philosophers have contributed to a (public) discourse considering a new ethics of compassion and empathy. The search for a new ethics was, and still is, a response to a globalising world, which is assumed to be in need for a new kind of solidarity between people from various social, cultural and religious backgrounds.[6] Of course this renewed attention for compassion is not limited to the secular discourse. The University of Stellenbosch in South Africa and the Protestantse Theologische Universiteit in the Netherlands showed how this upheaval provided a motive for theological scholars to re-evaluate or to rethink its ‘core business’.[7] Their 2015/2016 consultation about human dignity was entitled ‘Compassion? Global Ethics, Human Dignity and the Compassionate God’. It opened a *call for papers* to challenge the thesis: ‘Compassion crosses borders between rich and poor, cultures, races, religions, gender and generations.’
The consultation was partly inspired by the *Charter for Compassion*, initiated by Karen Armstrong, maybe the most visible and public outcome of the renewed interest in compassion. *The Charter* is aiming for a more compassionate lifestyle and the cultivation of empathy and compassion.[8] It has been signed and shared by city councils, countries, and individuals and it has even resulted in a

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[1] See Section 2.2. about the difference between compassion and empathy.
[2] “Beweging van Barmhartigheid,” accessed January 19, 2017, http://www.barmhartigheid.nl/activiteiten/passie-compassie-weekend-2017.
[3] Jesse. F. Klaver, *De Empathische Samenleving* (Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2016), [e-booktype].
[4] Bruce Perry, in Marilse Eerkens, ”Waarom we Onze Kinderen Moeten Leren zich in Anderen te Verplaatsen,” *De Correspondent*, August 12, 2014.
[5] Romana Abels, “De Nederlandse Identiteit Beheerst Alle Politieke Debatten.”, *Dagblad Trouw*, February 26, 2017; ‘The erosion of human rights values was perhaps most pernicious when officials blamed a specific “other” for real or perceived social problems in order to justify their repressive actions (…) those in power gave free rein to discrimination and hate crimes, particularly in Europe and the USA.’ S. Shetty, *Amnesty International Report 2016/17: The State of the World’s Human Rights* (London: Amnesty International Ltd, 2017), 14.
[6] Renee van Riessen, “Rethinking the Ethics of Compassion with Levinas and Badiou” (Paper presented at the annual PThU-US consultation, Stellenbosch, South Africa, May 6-7, 2015).
[7] ‘(…) Old Testament is full of narrative and presumes to narrate about a God that is called the merciful.’ Frits de Lange, “Compassion? Global Ethics, Human Dignity, and the Compassionate God” (Position Paper for the annual PThU-US consultation, May 2015).
[8] Karen Armstrong, “Charter for Compassion” (2009), accessed May 20, 2017. www.charterforcompassion.org

campaign called *City of Compassion*. The campaign, launched by several cities in the world, is one of the methods to support a more compassionate attitude in society.[9] According to Armstrong compassion is central in all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions. Therefore, it could very well be the perfect base for a unifying, pluralistic and ethical praxis. Belinda du Plooy notes, that Armstrong manages to popularize compassion as an accessible and common usable praxis for a heterogeneous, global community, by deconstructing its dogmas and historical-theological issues.[10]

Considering the political developments mentioned previously, such a compassion movement is likely to be more than welcome. However, if compassion were to be the only simple and desirable answer for the issues in a globalised society, we may wonder why not all political, social and religious institutions have embraced the concept of compassion in their campaigns. And, if democratic election campaigns reflect society, we may even observe a polarizing response to this globalisation, that divides the globalized pro-compassionate left wing from the more national (tribal) concerned right wing.[11] The former is more often perceived to be highly-educated, wealthy or 'successful' in comparison to the latter. Inevitably this raises the question whether the wish to cultivate a global ethics of compassion is not too much the reflection of a viable society, that in reality creates new borders between those who feel compassion and those who do not. And whether the quest for a common ethics is not too much rooted in a current privileged, well-educated discourse, instead of the ancient tradition. Hence, before starting to think about *how* to cultivate compassion, we should acknowledge its ambiguity and consider *if* it should be cultivated at all.
Therefore, to explore the cultivation of compassion it is necessary to go beyond the current context, without ignoring the current debate and society. This thesis is an attempt to go against the odds, and to go back to compassion as a theological issue, to its dogmas and its roots. It is an attempt to 're-connect' one of the latest ideas about compassion with a very ancient source, which is: compassion as found in the Old Testament of the Bible.

[9] Armstrong, "Charter for Compassion."
[10] Belinda du Plooy, "Ubuntu and the recent phenomenon of the Charter for Compassion," *South African Review of Sociology*, 45-1 (2014): 83-100.
[11] E.g. South African, American, Dutch, French, and German elections and campaigns between August 2016 - June 2017; the uprising of the so called 'angry white male' in Western society. 'Angry white male' is: 'a derogatory term used to describe a white male holding what is viewed as a typically conservative to reactionary viewpoint in the context of U.S. politics, typically characterized by opposition to liberal anti-discriminatory policies and beliefs.' "Wikipedia, Angry White Male," accessed January 8, 2017, [Dutch equivalent: de *blanke boze burger*]. In this context I consider Wikipedia as a proper source, since it represents the society's description.

Theoretical Framework

1.1 Research Problem

In order to explore the research problem within a theoretical framework, I would like to take the *Charter for Compassion* as a starting point, because it has played a significant role in the consultation initiated by the PThU and Stellenbosch University. The announcement of the consultation noted that Christianity and other religions have developed and cultivated cultures of compassion for thousands of years; that 'compassion is rooted in the Old Testament, which is full of narrative and presumes to narrate about a God that is called the merciful.'[12] The choice of topic was motivated with reference to Martha Nussbaum, who also pleads for the cultivation of compassion and, as previously said, to Armstrong's *Charter for Compassion*.[13] This *Charter* states the following:

> 'The principle of compassion lies at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, calling us always to treat all others as we wish to be treated ourselves. Compassion impels us to work tirelessly to alleviate the suffering of our fellow creatures, to dethrone ourselves from the centre of our world and put another there, and to honour the inviolable sanctity of every single human being, treating everybody, without exception, with absolute justice, equity and respect. (…) We therefore call upon all men and women (…) to cultivate an informed empathy with the suffering of all human beings—even those regarded as enemies. We urgently need to make compassion a clear, luminous and dynamic force in our polarized world.'[14]

Noteworthy is, that the website's introduction for the *Charter* says: 'We believe that all human beings are born with the capacity for compassion, and that it must be cultivated for human beings to survive and thrive.'[15]

A few remarks about this *Charter* and the consultation created the main question for this thesis. Firstly, by assuming that compassion is at the heart of all religious, ethical and spiritual traditions, the possibility to argue against that claim or to discuss whether that is a positive thing or not, is almost ignored. Secondly, the desirability and goodness of its cultivation and the presumption that compassion is a kind of skill or virtue that needs to be developed is a topic of discussion.

Frits De Lange and Renee van Riessen doubt whether compassion should be cultivated unlimitedly and they offer serious criticism. The latter points out that the usefulness of compassion is not only obscure, since it is a shared suffering, but also not accurate. Van Riessen argues, with reference to Levinas and Badiou, that responsibility and care precede compassion instead of the other way around.[16] A second criticism that Van Riessen utters is that Nussbaum and Armstrong are both defending a kind of compassion which is based on self-recognition in the other. Thus, Van Riessen states, their concept of compassion is inevitably limited in the acceptance of another being.[17]

[12] De Lange, "Position Paper."
[13] De Lange, "Position Paper."; Armstrong, "Charter for Compassion."; Cf. Section 2.3.
[14] Armstrong, "Charter for Compassion."
[15] www.charterforcompassion.org.
[16] Van Riessen, "Rethinking the Ethics of Compassion."
[17] Van Riessen, "Rethinking the Ethics of Compassion."

De Lange even extends this by saying that compassion is not a competence, but a lack of it. According to him compassion is the incapability to distinguish someone's own pain from that of the other who is suffering.[18] In his criticism, he illustrates his argument with the New Testament story of the Good Samaritan. Also Dion Forster, who draws neuroscience into the discourse, provides an interesting insight into this idea of shared suffering. He notes that when a person is too much exposed to another one's pain, whilst not in a position to alleviate it, a kind of 'compassion fatigue' will arise. Eventually, this could lead to a burn-out.[19] So, although the consultation was inspired by the *Charter*, its contributors also utter a serious hesitation towards the global cultivation of compassion.
Another remark I would like to make, is that the consultation announcement refers to the compassionate God of the Old Testament (OT), while an ethical elaboration on the OT God is missing among the contributions. God's compassion in the OT is more or less presumed without further explanation.[20] That is remarkable, since this compassionate God also turns out to be just and wrathful, which is a common topic of theological discussion.[21] An OT contribution about this ambiguity of God's compassion would have questioned the *Charter*'s assumptions, and it would have provided a perspective on compassion from one of the ancient sources that the *Charter* refers to. Therefore, its omission is regrettable.

The sum of these remarks requires an exploration on the cultivation of compassion from an OT perspective that could explore the ambiguous or hesitating thoughts about the compassion that is rooted in the OT. Therefore, I decided to investigate the ethics of an OT source involving a certain ambiguity about this compassionate God, which I will approach from a modern perspective. The sources that I have selected for this investigation are the biblical book of Jonah and the writings of Martha Nussbaum on the concept of compassion.
Yet, using an OT source for ethical reflection is not per se a very understandable choice. With its cruel and ambiguous morality, it could actually be rather problematic, especially in a post-modern era. Thus in order to research the ethics of the book of Jonah, it is necessary to start exploring if and in what way an OT narrative could function as a source for ethical reflection. Moreover, it is necessary to explain why an OT source could be of additional value for ethical reflection.

The answers to these two questions require quite a comprehensive inquiry. Therefore, Chapter 3 of this thesis will further discuss the methodological choices I have made in order to use OT narrative ethics as a useful conversation partner in this discussion.
In the following sections of this chapter I will only introduce both sources briefly and explain my motivation for this selection of sources.

[18] Frits de Lange, "The Event of Compassion" (Paper presented at the annual PThU-US consultation, Stellenbosch, South Africa, May 6-7, 2015).
[19] Dion Forster, "Affect, Empathy and Human Dignity on the Intersection of Theology and Science" (Paper presented at the annual PThU-US consultation, Groningen, The Netherlands, May 19-20, 2016).
[20] Both the *Charter* and the *Position Paper* presume religion has a long history of cultivating compassion. The latter refers to a compassionate God rooted in the Old Testament narratives, yet an exploration of this compassionate God in the Old Testament narratives is missing among the consultation papers.
[21] E.g. Klaas Spronk, "The Violent God of the Bible: A Study on the Historical Background and its Impact on the Discussion on Human Dignity," *Scriptura* 102 (2009): 463-470.

1.2 SOURCES

a) Jonah

The OT source of this thesis is the book of Jonah. This book in the biblical Old Testament or Jewish Tanach, concerns a narrative wherein the so called mercy-formula plays a significant role. This mercy-formula is one of the central confessions of Israel's faith, first mentioned in Exodus 34:6-7: 'Yahweh, Yahweh, a God compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, forgiving guilt, rebellion and sin'. It proclaims God's character and identity as a compassionate and gracious God, and has been formative in not only Jewish, but also in Christian and Islamic religion.[22]

Although the mercy-formula is prevalent throughout the OT, it appears in a most remarkable way in the book of Jonah. Jonah's 'prayer' (Jon. 4:2) in which God is called compassionate, has an ironic overtone, and could even be interpreted as an accusation.[23] Thus, this book provides a view on compassion drawn from one of its main sources, but it does so in a surprising way. Therefore, I expect that the story of Jonah could reveal some interesting thoughts about the different perspectives of God's compassion.

Besides, the story entails more fascinating elements. It is full of emotions and psychological essence, involving not only human beings but animals as well. It has interesting key characters, an (anti-)hero, a dramatic turn and an open ending that invites the reader to continue the dialogue. Other features that make the book of Jonah suitable for this research, are its form and its place in the canon: it is a compact narrative with a clear start, plot and ending that is quite isolated from other narratives in the OT.

The story of Jonah is also one of the best known stories of the Bible.[24] Although that could be an argument against using Jonah, since one may say everything has already been written about it, yet, I would like to argue that this is an asset. Because of this familiarity with the story, it belongs to 'one of the great stories', even for people outside the faith community.[25] It could offer some points of recognition to a secular reader who is not familiar with the Bible. So, because it is well-known, it is an accessible story, even in a secular or public context.

Thus, the main arguments for using the book of Jonah as the OT source of this thesis are its narrative form, its well-known contents and its ambiguous use of the mercy-formula.

b) Martha Nussbaum

The other source of inquiry is Martha Nussbaum's theory on compassion. Martha Craven Nussbaum (1947, New York, USA), currently working as Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of law and ethics at Chicago University, is one of the most prominent philosophers in the field of western philosophy. Engaged with the political discourse, she argues for an increasing role of emotion in law and ethics in order to create a morality in which human dignity is central. She also claims that

[22] J.P. Bosman, "The Paradoxical Presence of Exodus 34:6-7 in the Book of the Twelve." *Scriptura* 87 (2004): 233-243.
[23] Phyllis Trible, *God and the Rhetoric of Sexuality,* Vol. 2 of *Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978), 3; Bosman, "The Paradoxical Presence of Exodus 34:6-7," 233-243.
[24] W. Wessels,"A Prophetic Word to a Prophet: Jonah 4:10-11 As Reprimand," *Journal for Semitics* 16-2 (2007): 551-69.
[25] Cf. Bruce C. Birch in Section 3.1.

compassion is one of the most important emotions that motivates citizens in their actions against suffering.[26]

I decided to investigate Nussbaum's ideas on compassion, because she is a leading figure in the current plea for the cultivation of compassion.[27] The cultivation of compassion is something that Nussbaum believes to be attained by narrative imagination. Her early writings about literature and narrative imagination refer mainly to novels and to classic Greek tragedies. In her later work she includes non-written narratives like music, play, arts and theatre.[28]

Although Nussbaum was converted to Judaism, there is no reference in her work to stories from the Tanach.[29] Nonetheless, her emphasis on narrative and literature in relation to ethics and compassion, has made her a popular philosopher among theologians with a favour for narrative,[30] which is another motivation for me to inquire into Nussbaum's thoughts. Yet, I will do so with a slight hesitation, since I suspect that Nussbaum's choice for omitting the OT stories is well deliberated, so why should I apply her method to this omitted genre?

At this point I want to emphasise it is not my aim to apply narrative imagination to the story of Jonah as a way to cultivate compassion. If I did, I would devaluate Nussbaum's ideas and utilize the story of Jonah, with the risk of taking away its intrinsic value. Still, her insights into narrative imagination could be very helpful in the search for meaning and interpretation of OT narratives regarding ethical reflection. What I will do instead, is analysing the book of Jonah, by using Nussbaum's conceptualisation of compassion as a hermeneutical lens. Still, Nussbaum's insights into narrative imagination could be very helpful in the search for meaning and interpretations of OT narratives regarding ethical reflection.

1.3 Demarcation of the Discourse and its Limitations

The aim of this research is to reflect on the ethics of compassion in the context of the current globalised society. This issue is approachable from a variation of disciplines, not only theological, or philosophical but also from a political, sociological, biological, psychological, neurological and even from an economical perspective. Of course I am not able to cover that entire spectrum of disciplines, so I will take the theological discourse as my point of reference. To be more specific, it is an approach from a discipline that will be described as Old Testament Narrative Ethics, which is further delineated to the ethics of compassion as found in the book of Jonah.

It has to be said that even within one discipline, there are limits. This thesis will not provide a complete overview of the pros and cons regarding the cultivation of compassion, neither does it aim

[26] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 298-299.

[27] '(…) Nussbaum engages in a more theoretical reflection on the phenomenon of compassion.' Van Riessen, "Rethinking the Ethics of Compassion."

[28] In *Poetic Justice,* Nussbaum favours written literature over other kinds of narrative. She states that reading requires a significant identification with the characters and involves a special interaction between the text and the reader then and now. In *Not for Profit,* Nussbaum describes how different kinds of arts are helpful tools in cultivating emotion, compassion and empathy. Martha C. Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life,* The Alexander Rosenthal Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), 6-10; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), [Retrieved from EBSCO Publishing eBook Collection], 36-42.

[29] OT stories are not mentioned in the books and articles I have read and to which I refer in this thesis.

[30] Cf. Sungmin Min Chun, *Ethics and Biblical Narrative: A Literary and Discourse-Analytical Approach to the Story of Josiah*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 43-92.

at introducing *the* new theology of a compassionate God or a systematic overview of God in the OT. It may provide new insights into the image of this compassionate God, though.
I have chosen to investigate one narrative of the OT, which is the book of Jonah. I will analyse this book from a narrative approach. Consequently, I cannot take a single verse or paragraph, without harming the storyline. Therefore, an analysis of the whole narrative is required to do justice to both the narrative and the analysis of its characters. Again, further choices and demarcations concerning the narrative approach will be explained in Chapter 3.

Choosing Martha Nussbaum as a contemporary philosopher in the secular discourse is to imply that this research is not restricted to the theological academic framework only. Nor is it rooted in a congregational context, so one must not expect answers about compassion for a faith community. On the contrary, because I started from the context of public society, the aim is to contribute to that context. Choosing this topic in such a broad context means however, that I can only make a modest contribution, so I have to acknowledge my limitations in this research. For instance, the overview of the current debate is not exhaustive, but based on the context as described by the consultation-programme of the PThU/Stellenbosch. Concerning the historical and scholarly overview I have to trust Nussbaum on her accuracy in referring to philosophical sources and arguments, as well as in her use of psycho-analytical and biological arguments.
This research will focus on Nussbaum's thoughts about compassion. But, since Nussbaum's definition of compassion is very much related to emotion, her theory of emotion will be outlined first. My exploration of Nussbaum is mostly concentrated on *Upheavals of Thought*, because this book is particularly focussed on the theme of compassion. When required, other primary writings will also be consulted, such as the more recent publication *Political Emotions*.
For the second aspect of Nussbaum's philosophy, the narrative imagination, I have consulted more secondary sources and reviews in order to gain more insight into narrative ethics and literature. Sungmin Min Chun is one of the main theologians in this regard. With reference to his deliberation on OT narrative ethics that includes a review on Nussbaum's theory, I will explore how Jonah's narrative could be a source for ethical reflection.
In sum, Nussbaum's philosophy is present in this research on two levels: conceptually, in the first place by using her thoughts on compassion as a hermeneutical lens for reading the story of Jonah, and secondly, methodologically, by using her insights on the narrative imagination approach.

Altogether, this thesis aims to reflect on the ethics of compassion in terms of an OT perspective, within the current context of a globalised society and its idea of cultivating a global ethics of compassion. In order to do so I will connect one of the latest ideas concerning compassion, which is Nussbaum's thought, to one of the most ancient, which is the ethics revealed in the book of Jonah.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTION

The aim for this thesis can be defined as finding an answer to the following research question:

What ethical insights on compassion does the narrative of Jonah reveal, when compassion is defined according to Martha Nussbaum's conceptualization of compassion, and how do these insights contribute to the current debate about cultivating a global ethics of compassion?

In order to find an answer to this research question, I will first explore the answers to the sub questions as formulated below.

- *How does Martha Nussbaum define compassion?*

Chapter 2 will mostly describe and explain Nussbaum's theory about, and her definition of compassion. Because her concept of compassion is based on her theory of emotion, the chapter will start with an elaborate clarification of Nussbaum's thoughts on emotion. The chapter concludes with a section on compassion and ethics, which will be a frame of reference in the concluding chapters of this thesis.

- *In what way could the Old Testament narrative of Jonah be considered a source for ethical reflection?*

In Chapter 3 I will elaborate on the discussion about OT narrative ethics. It will start with some sections on biblical ethics and narrative imagination. After that, the third section will discuss the combination of the two: OT narrative ethics. In that final section, I will explain my choices and motivations concerning the method used for the analysis of Jonah, and its ethical reflection.

- *What ethical insights on compassion does the narrative of Jonah reveal?*

Chapter 4 involves the analysis of the Jonah narrative, structured according to the methodological approach explained in Chapter 3. This analysis eventually leads to an answer to the first part of the main research question, which will be argued in Chapter 5.1

- *How do these insights contribute to the current debate about cultivating an ethics of compassion?*

The last part of the main research question will be answered in Section 5.2 which will eventually lead to the concluding answer of this research. The last chapter of this thesis, the conclusion, includes a short reflection and summary of the research result, with some attention towards possible future research and remaining questions.

2. Martha Nussbaum's Ideas on the Concept of Compassion

In one of her most prominent books, *Upheavals of Thought,* Martha Nussbaum presents a very comprehensive theory about the intelligence of emotion. In this book she argues for taking emotions as serious guides in moral and ethical deliberations, instead of only trusting a human's ability and will to obey principle rules and laws.[1] Nussbaum elaborates on compassion as a complex emotion that is relevant for the ethical discussion. Thus, in order to understand Nussbaum's concept of compassion it is important to understand her theory of emotion. For that reason, this chapter starts with an inquiry into Nussbaum's emotion theory, after which a clarification of her conceptualisation of compassion follows.

2.1 Emotion as a Cognitive Value-laden Judgement

Originating from the Stoic idea that describes emotion as a value-laden judgement, Nussbaum sets out how emotion is a serious cognitive process, based on thought, concern and evaluation. Although emotion has its physical elements,[2] it undeniably involves receiving and processing information. In that account, she states, it is a cognitive process.[3] Nussbaum structures the emotional process as judgements or thoughts, directed at an object, consisting of: perception of an intentional object; interpretation based on beliefs; value of importance concerning the agent's purposes or wellbeing.[4] Therefore, an emotion is supposed to be a very important element in constructing a moral judgement. Each of these ideas require further explanation.

a) Intentional Object

Human emotion is, in Nussbaum's theory, always directed at an object. This object, which is not necessarily a human object, is perceived and interpreted by the agent as an intentional object. The notion for 'object' merely illustrates the object as something or someone apart from the subject, 'the agent' so it does not exclude perceiving the object as a subject in herself. The recognition of an object's intentionality is shaped by the agent's imagination picturing an object as: alive, capable of achieving or feeling something, having its own purposes and intentions. The agent's thoughts about what the object is intended for, is one of the thoughts on which emotion is based. Nussbaum illustrates her theory several times with her own grief about her mother's death. So, I will also refer to grief as an example to clarify the theory. For instance, grief about an object's death can only exist by the thought that the object is intended to be alive.[5]

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[1] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 297-304.
[2] Nussbaum explicitly distinguishes emotion from physical feelings, such as stomach pain. Nussbaum also marks the differences between desires, appetites, moods and emotions. In this thesis it is not necessary to extend about these differences. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 56-64; 129-137.
[3] '(…) by "cognitive" I [Nussbaum] mean nothing more than "concerned with receiving and processing information." I do not mean to imply the presence of elaborate calculation, of computation, or even of reflexive self-awareness.' Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 23.
[4] In *Upheavals* Nussbaum writes about 'judgements', in *Political Emotions* she prefers the word 'thoughts' for emphasising that they do not necessarily involve 'linguistically formulable propositions'. In this thesis I have used both words as equivalents. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 24-33; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015), 142.
[5] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 24-33.

Emotion-related thoughts differ from abstract thoughts that are solely based on plain information, for they are usually more intense. One of the causes of that intensity is the role of imagination. An intense emotion, such as grief about somebody's passing away, is mostly conveyed by a vivid memory or picture in which the object is still present, or could have been present. In the same way non-present objects can become the object of grief, non-existing objects can become an object of emotion through vivid imagination. So, this element of imagination also explains why an object of emotion does not necessarily have to be an embodied or existing object. Imagination turns objects into intentional objects, so that even fictional figures like characters in a film or not (yet) existing objects like unborn children, or loves never found can become objects of intense emotion.[6] In what follows the significance of imagination will be further expounded.

b) Interpretation Rooted in Beliefs

Interpretation does not only depend on imagination and intention, but also on a certain set of beliefs. A precondition for having an emotion of happiness or sadness, is one's judgement about a situation as true, good or bad etc. For instance, there is no reason to fear death when one does not believe that dying is a real possibility, or that this would be a bad thing. So to understand someone's emotion and variations between emotions, it is important to gain insight into the origin of a person's beliefs.[7]
Beliefs are very much cultivated, and vary between different cultural contexts. They are not necessarily based on facts. In a comprehensive analysis including psycho-analytic, biological, and neurological sciences, Nussbaum explicates how conscious and unconscious beliefs arise and develop during childhood. But as no single childhood is perfect, some circumstances or events that occur in childhood could create a distorted worldview.[8] Hence emotions can be based on false beliefs or expectations involving e.g. danger and fear. It is important though, to acknowledge that emotions based on false beliefs, are not false or irrational in themselves. Only the cognitive assumptions that cause them are false. So, in order to change an emotion, one first has to change the beliefs behind it.[9]

c) Value of Importance

Since emotions are often intense, they are experienced as more uncontrollable than judgements about general or abstract information. The first cause for this intensity is the role of imagination, as explained above. A second cause is that all intentions, beliefs and interpretations are somehow related to the agent's own wellbeing. Objects to which an agent is closely related, very attached to, or in any other way very involved with, are objects of great importance for one's concern, either negative or positive. Although Nussbaum argues that emotion is not a form of egoism,[10] she does state that every

[6] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 33-37; 64-67.
[7] Chapter 3 of *Upheavals* elaborates on expression, language and evaluation of emotion as shaped by e.g. culture and gender specific expectations. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 139-173.
[8] Chapter 4 of *Upheavals* provides an exhaustive understanding on emotional development and distortions in childhood as causes of shame and disgust. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 174-237.
[9] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 139-173.
[10] '(…) unless one should hold that any attachment to one's own parents, by contrast to the parents of others, is a form of egoism, a harsh doctrine.' Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 53.
Nussbaum does not elaborate on this 'harsh doctrine', but the statement is debatable. A discussion about the Stoic view is beyond this research, even more would be a discussion about the Buddhist view. However, I want to explicitly distinguish Nussbaum's concept of eudaimonia from the Buddhist ideas on detachment and release from emotional suffering. I am likely to think that the concept of self-concern does not even exist for an enlightened Buddhist. Against Nussbaum, a Buddhist would probably claim the attachment to one's mother is indeed a kind of egoism which one should overcome in order to

object, interpretation, as well as the value of importance is seen from the perspective of an agent within her own scheme of goals and projects: one's self-concern. The things that can happen to that object of concern may cause intense emotion, while it is unlikely that general opinions cause the same emotion. For example, a thought like 'mothers are important' will not cause grief to you every time a mother dies somewhere in the world. But, when it concerns your own mother, who played a very significant role in your own life, this grief will probably be very intense.[11]

Yet, the closeness of a connection is not the only aspect that determines the importance of concern. Other aspects are the intrinsic value or a general concept of the good, which the agent relates to the object. This is explained by Nussbaum, when she integrates the 'concept of eudaimonia' into her theory. She defines 'eudaimonia' according to its original Aristotelean meaning, that is: 'the human flourishing', or 'the completion of a human life'.[12]

The concept of eudaimonia involves a self-concern beyond the instrumental value of an object, and does not per se exclude the recognition of an object's intrinsic value. It says that everything which is valuable for one's wellbeing and everything that is necessary to make a person's life complete, is part of someone's eudaimonia. Therefore, all objects that are part of one's concept of eudaimonia become part of that person's concern. This is called the eudaimonistic concern.[13]

Also objects perceived by the agent as intrinsically valuable, belong to one's eudaimonistic concern. This makes a person, such as a mother, not only important because of her role as mother in one's life, but also as a person with intrinsic value. In addition, objects that serve the general good can be included in the concept of one's eudaimonia, e.g. a general appreciation for arts and music, or the intrinsic good of human relations.

Once a certain object has become part of a person's concept of eudaimonia, the striving for and involvement with this concern can form part of that person's eudaimonistic concept. As a result, this striving itself becomes part of the eudaimonistic concern.[14]

Thus, whether an object is of important value is based on a varied mix of these three eudaimonistic concerns: involvement with someone's life, intrinsic value, and a general concept of the good. Wonder and awe are these parts of emotions with a maximum appreciation for the intrinsic value of the object and a minimum of importance for the agent's own purposes. For example, an agent's grief about one's mother's death constrains a close relation and great importance in an agent's life, without a necessary appraisal for the intrinsic good of that person.[15]

The complexity and sometimes contradicting concerns cause the intensity and tearing character of emotion. Because, and here Nussbaum claims to disagree with Aristotle, human beings do not necessarily value the good in a very systematic and deliberate way.[16] On the contrary, especially love and addictions show how humans value things which are not good per se; their appraisal can even

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release oneself from suffering. Therefore, Nussbaum's concept of compassion which requires a kind of attachment must not be confused with the Buddhist concept of compassion.

[11] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 24-33.

[12] This should not be confused with the Utilitarian use of only personal wellbeing. 'I [Nussbaum] retain this spelling, rather than using the English word 'eudaemonistic', because I want to refer directly to the ancient Greek concept op eudaimonia, which is compatible with as many distinct conceptions of what that good is as one cares to propose; the English word has acquired associations with one specific type of view, namely, the view that the supreme good is happiness or pleasure.' Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 31.

[13] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 24-33.

[14] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 49-56.

[15] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 49-56.

[16] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 50.

contradict their other ideas about the good. One can love a person with a bad character and appreciate the intrinsic value of the same person; one can be attached to drugs while it contradicts one's appraisal for health. So, emotions are no neutral judgements. Still, they are often moral judgements, as will be clarified below.[17]

d) Inconsistency and Reliability of Emotions

Emotions are changeable and they often appear to be inconsistent and uncontrollable. These features are significant arguments for thinking that emotions are not cognitive, but are to be categorised as uncontrollable nature events or animal instincts, that should not be trusted as moral guides.[18] Since Nussbaum regards emotions as moral guides, part of her elaboration consists of a criticism to this objection.

The thoughts required for emotion, as described above, also provide an explanation for their seeming inconsistency and unreasonableness. As mentioned before, false beliefs and the imagination of non-existing objects could provide thoughts on which an emotion is based. In the same way, changing beliefs, intentions, interpretations, or fading importance of eudaimonistic concern will lead to a change of emotions, or its fading away. The example was given that someone's death would not lead to grief when that person does not believe death is a bad thing. The same will be so if someone's interpretation about the situation, for instance 'X is dead', turns out not to be true. The fact that emotions can be mistaken or fade away are thus no arguments for the irrationality of emotion, but signs of a fading importance of the object in relation towards one's own life, or mistaken involvement with somebody.[19]

Now that the changeability and inconsistency of emotions have been explained, one of the most important causes for the uncontrollability should be clarified. This is quite simple, since emotions are directed at an object that the agent does not control. A deep attachment to an object outside one's control will pave the way for all kind of fluctuating emotions concerning that object, such as fear when it is threatened, joy when it is near, or grief when it is gone. So, when an agent puts herself in the position of involvement and attachment, she becomes very vulnerable, because it exposes her to the whole spectrum of emotions related to that object.[20]

In general, Nussbaum categorises the emotions of attachment, like those mentioned, as emotions that extend the boundaries of the self. The second category involves those emotions that isolate and pull back, to defend the self against the outward, like disgust and shame.[21]

It is important to note that a diversity of (former) circumstances influences all these cognitive value-laden judgements. Contextual beliefs, biological aspects and developmental processes during childhood, could create (mistaken) involvements or beliefs that construct emotions. I cannot go into detail about all these processes, but we may conclude that emotions are constructed from elements that nobody totally created himself. This means that emotion is related to someone's history, hence to understand someone's emotion it is required to understand someone's narrative.[22] Since beliefs,

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[17] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 49-56.

[18] It is not my aim to assert emotion as a cognitive process. Therefore, I omit an overview of argumentations responding to the adversary claiming emotion as a non-cognitive process.

[19] An example of 'mistaken involvement' Nussbaum mentions is a public idol, like a sports star. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 55-56.

[20] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 85-88.

[21] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 300.

[22] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 236-237.

eudaimonistic concern and evaluations can be based on misconceptions, they can also be immoral. Therefore, they can cause emotions that are immoral.[23]

In short, Nussbaum describes emotion as an intelligent activity, as a value-laden judgement, from the agent's perspective and related to his concern. These judgements and concerns are structured from various backgrounds and psychological developments. Thus, emotion is not only a cognitive process, but actually a very comprehensive and complex one. And, even though emotions in themselves may not be unreasonable, the value-laden thoughts to which they relate can be. However, Nussbaum argues that by having emotions recognised as an intelligent activity, it opens up the ability to change emotions by using more intelligent activities.[24]
These notions are important when entering the next section, because compassion is such a cognitive process, based on judgements and concerns constructed from various beliefs.

2.2 Compassion as a Painful Emotion

Nussbaum takes Aristotle's definition of compassion as her point of departure: 'a painful emotion directed at the serious suffering of another creature or other creatures'.[25] Yet, she differs from him about the exact understanding. Before going into detail about these understandings, it is necessary to differentiate the concept of compassion from related concepts first. Nussbaum distinguishes compassion from pity, sympathy and empathy. She describes that empathy does not involve a value-laden thought, but a neutral reconstruction from someone else's experience. Whether happy or sad, empathy is without an evaluation about its seriousness or its being good or bad.[26]
The words sympathy and pity are not much different from the word compassion etymologically speaking. However, in its current usage sympathy refers to a less intense emotion about a suffering that is less serious.[27] The reason why Nussbaum prefers compassion over pity is that the latter is currently associated with denigration and superiority.[28]
Furthermore, Nussbaum argues that pain, and especially physical pain, is not a separately required element of compassion. In her definition, compassion does not have to involve throbbing or aching as it is a cognitive process of thought and imagination. In Nussbaum's view, only pain that cannot be described separately from the 'intentionality embodied in the thought' could be regarded as a necessarily painful element of compassion.[29] Still, in her later work *Political Emotions* Nussbaum uses 'painful' in her definition, which leads us to conclude that compassion involves at least a painful thought.[30]

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[23] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 172-173.
[24] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 172-173.
[25] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 142.
[26] Although, in daily use and in the context of psychology 'empathy' and 'compassion' are not always distinguished. In *Political Emotions,* Nussbaum refers to Batson's list of empathy characteristics, which differs from her own. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 297-304; Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 146.
[27] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 297-304.
[28] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 297-303; Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 416.
[29] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 325-327.
[30] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 142.
The etymology of passion refers to a passive experience of suffering or threat, indifferent whether mental or physical pain. BDAG (3rd edition, 2000): L.5480 πάθημα: 'that which is suffered or endured; an inward experience of an affective nature; feeling, interest.' L. 5724 πάσχω: 'experience something, everything that befalls a person, good or bad. In its original meaning this could denote both a good and bad experience, but it developed as a suffering with unfavourable connotation.'

In *Politics* Nussbaum also describes two different kinds of compassion more explicitly. The first is 'the emotional contagion' which means that the subject confuses emotion and pain of the object with her own. That is literally shared suffering. The second kind is emotion at a more developed level, 'the perspective taking'; this kind of compassion distinguishes between subject and object.[31]

Aristotle's understanding of compassion requires three kinds of judgement based on intentionality, beliefs and value of importance. These are the judgement of serious suffering, the judgement of non-fault and the judgement of similar possibilities.[32] According to Nussbaum the latter is an important judgement, but not a necessary precondition. Instead she regards the judgement of eudaimonistic concern as an indispensable precondition for compassion.

a) Thought of Seriousness

In order to feel compassion, it is required that the onlooker has a judgement of serious suffering.[33] Whether an object's suffering is serious or not, is determined by the agent's interpretation of the object's situation in contrast to its intentionality, and how this is related to the agent's beliefs and concepts of the good life.

In *Creating Capabilities*, published ten years after *Upheavals*, Nussbaum elucidates her own concept of the good life, that is based on the capability approach developed by Amartya Sen.[34] An object's situation perceived within that concept of human capability determines her judgement of suffering. As with all emotions, this judgement comes from the agent's point of view, not from the sufferer's. An onlooker can consider the difference in needs and concerns between hers and that of the object, so the sufferer's own judgement of experience is not ignored. Nevertheless, compassion is inevitably partial and value-laden, just like every other emotion.[35]

b) Thought of Non-fault

The thought of non-fault presumes that an onlooker will only feel compassion when the suffering is caused by external forces, and not caused by the sufferer himself, nor by the onlooker. Nussbaum's basic argument here is that if somebody thinks the sufferer caused his own trouble an onlooker will blame and reproach, and if the onlooker herself caused the suffering, the object of suffering would be an object of shame.[36] In neither of those cases compassion would be an appropriate emotion.

Nevertheless, the judgement of non-fault needs to be nuanced by further specifications. First, in *Political Emotions* Nussbaum adds that not all species' compassion rely on this thought of non-fault, for instance animals and also children do not rely on it. However, Nussbaum states that: '(…) it is, however, a conceptual element in the most common forms of adult human compassion.'[37]

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[31] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 149-154.
[32] 'A long philosophical tradition agrees on these three requirements.' Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 142.
[33] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 306-311.
[34] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Creating Capabilities: The Human Development Approach* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011), [EPub, retrieved from De Gruyter] 17-45.
It offers a very comprehensive and well defined concept of human dignity relating to justice. Although I agree with most of it, I think a perspective from outside the paradigm of western liberal post-modernism is lacking, because Nussbaum presumes a preference for individualism, freedom of choice and human dignity. Therefore, this capability approach can easily be refuted by someone who does not share in this paradigm.
[35] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 386-392.
[36] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 311-313. Section 4.2 shows how regret or a change of mind could also be appropriate when suffering is caused by the onlooker.
[37] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 143; 147-148.

A second nuance is that in everyday life persons do seem to feel compassion for a sufferer that caused the suffering herself. Nussbaum explains that in these situations it is likely the onlooker still thinks that the sufferer is somehow not blameworthy, or that the extent of suffering is found not to be in proportion to the extent of fault.
It is also possible to believe that a person is not blameworthy for making the mistake that caused the suffering, even though it was obviously by her own doing. For instance, a parent is likely to feel compassion for a child in puberty that brought herself into trouble, since she is not to blame for being sixteen and therefore not able to see consequences as an adult is.[38]
In other words, the thought of non-fault means that the onlooker does not hold the sufferer accountable for the suffering she is experiencing, so that the suffering is regarded as undeserved. Non-fault is therefore connected to an object's capability and responsibility. And in this line of thought the border between fault and non-fault is disputable. One can even question if a person is responsible for having a bad character, since that is shaped by external influences.[39]

At this point it is important to clarify the difference between compassion and 'mercy'. In contrast to compassion, mercy is not based on a judgement of non-fault, but on a judgement of fault. Opponents of bringing compassion into ethics claim that a judgement of non-fault disregards human dignity at any rate, and underestimates a person's moral responsibility and capability. They regard an ethics based on mercy, aiming for everyone's perfection (while knowing true perfection is impossible) as a more positive take on about human potential, since it focusses on a person's free will, moral responsibility, and capability.[40] Therefore, these compassion opponents think acting out of mercy is to be very dignifying for the recipient of mercy.
Nussbaum disagrees with that point of view. She states that in fact the agent that provides mercy is given most dignity. Providing mercy puts the agent in a superior position, and appears to make her invulnerable. Nussbaum compares the mercy-giver to a good doctor or parent, who positions herself beyond the feeling of pain and the need for retribution, telling somebody else that she is very bad, but does not need to be punished.[41]
This argument does not mean that Nussbaum rejects being merciful as a good virtue. She thinks it is something to strive for in law and ethics, when somebody is undisputedly guilty or responsible for a fault. In *Equity and Mercy* Nussbaum sets forth how mercy is opposite to strictness and retributive anger, as a kind of gentleness that goes beyond justice.[42]
However, Nussbaum is very convincing in her dismissal of the idea that a judgement of non-fault denies human dignity and capability. With reference to her concept of human capability, she regards an ethics of compassion as a dignifying concept as long as the onlooker holds on to the possibility that positions may reverse in time. Furthermore, she is not afraid that it leads to victimization, by holding the view that the distinction between victim and agent is artificial, since being a victim is a position in a certain situation, place and time, and not a state of being that takes away accountabilities.[43]

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[38] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 311-315.
[39] See Nussbaum's discussion on dignity. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 405-414.
[40] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 364-368.
[41] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 364-368.
[42] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Equity and Mercy," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 22-2 (1993): 83–125. Nussbaum's latest book publication *Anger and Forgiveness* (2016) is more elaborative about this topic.
[43] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 368-386; Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 405-414.

Nussbaum's deliberation on non-fault ends with the notion that for feeling compassion one should accept a worldview in which not everything is in control. One should accept that valuable things can be threatened by external causes, by tragedy.[44] Yet, it is worth mentioning here that Nussbaum holds the view that for emotional health it is important to believe in the effect of one's voluntary acting regarding one's goals and projects. This is a significant notion for believing that it is possible to cultivate compassion.[45]

c) Thought of Eudaimonistic Concern

The third requirement for compassion is described as the thought of eudaimonistic concern. This is the point in which Nussbaum differs in an interesting way from Aristotle.[46] She does not consider the thought of similar possibilities as a necessary element of compassion.

The thought of similar possibilities involves an understanding of the agent that she herself, or her loved ones, are able to come into a similar situation of suffering. Acknowledging this similar possibility puts someone in a vulnerable position, as it requires the acceptance of one's own imperfection. Through this self-recognition the sufferer will become more than a distant object, the sufferer becomes part of one's concern instead.

Van Riessen's criticism, mentioned in the theoretical outline appears to be responding to this idea, but exactly this argument is also where Nussbaum disagrees with Aristotle.[47] If this thought was truly required one would be unable to feel compassion for creatures without a point of reference towards himself. The example is given that within this theory kings cannot be able to feel compassion for beggars, humans not for animals and omnipotent gods not for humans. Nussbaum claims, though, that kings, humans and omnipotent gods are able to feel compassion for those with no point of reference to themselves.[48] In order to explain this process, Nussbaum proposes the thought of eudaimonistic concern as the third requirement for compassion.

This thought entails that every creature within the circle of one's eudaimonistic concern can be the object of compassion, even if it is impossible for the agent, or his loved ones, to end up in a similar situation. Because every object within that circle is part of the agent's eudaimonistic concern, their suffering is experienced as something that harms his own wellbeing. As a result, that suffering must be the agent's concern. Even when the agent does not have to fear that he himself will suffer the same predicament. In fact, by the thought of eudaimonistic concern the agent becomes vulnerable by his involvement with that other person, independent of his own position.[49]

Yet, the judgement of similar possibilities and the acknowledgement of shared vulnerability are still important. This judgement often precedes the thought of eudaimonistic concern. It helps to integrate other creatures, even animals, into one's own concept of eudaimonistic concern. Most illustrative is that the denial of similarity is often an explanation for indifference or disgust, which could lead to the most awful crimes against humanity.[50] So, the judgement of similar possibilities is not a necessity for

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[44] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 314-315.
[45] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, v.
[46] Rousseau an Aristotle both think that the thought of similar possibilities is required for having compassion, Aristotle adds: '(...) to those of my loved ones as well.' In Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 316.
[47] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 316.
[48] On this point Nussbaum differentiates between the more vulnerable gods in e.g. Christianity and the self-sufficient gods in e.g. the Stoa. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 317-318.
[49] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 315-321.
[50] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 315-321.

feeling compassion, but an important element for recognising an object as part of one's eudaimonistic concern.

d) Wonder

In section 2.1 the elements of wonder and awe were mentioned as emotions with the least involvement and relation and the greatest intrinsic value. In Nussbaum's deliberation on compassion 'wonder' is considered as an emotion that is at least partly non-eudaimonistic. However, she claims that the non-eudaimonistic element of wonder motivates and marks the world of concern. When the object of wonder suffers, the onlooker's emotion has a share in the feeling of compassion.
Not sure whether to call it part of compassion, Nussbaum concludes that the emotion directed to an object of wonder that suffers, is an emotion closely related to compassion, but slightly different. At any rate wonder has an important role in shaping the concept of eudaimonia, and therefore in the judgement of eudaimonistic concern.[51]

2.3 Compassion and Ethics

Now that compassion has been expounded as a cognitive process based on three different kinds of value-laden thoughts, the main argument against using compassion as a proper guide in ethics is challenged.
Nussbaum continues her plea for ethics of compassion with a criticism against the philosophical discourse of compassion-opponents. It is not relevant to discuss the whole discourse in this thesis.[52]
Most important is that Nussbaum regards compassion as ethically relevant for two reasons. The first is that the emotion of compassion is likely to be a motivation to act beneficially towards the suffering person, if there is a suggested possibility to do so. Especially the judgement of eudaimonistic concern coerces someone to act. The only explanation for a passive reaction about the suffering that Nussbaum regards as accurate, is the absence of a possibility to act against the cause of suffering. She states that when a compassionate person is not motivated to act, one of the judgements must be missing or must probably be not genuine.[53]
The second argument for the ethical relevance of compassion is that compassion in itself is of ethical relevance, since the emotion of compassion perceives another being as someone to have concern for and with whom you are involved. For Nussbaum, therefore, an ethical discussion should not be about the question *if* compassion could be a moral guide, but about *how* compassion could be an appropriate moral guide. As mentioned in the first section of this chapter, judgements could be based on false beliefs, interpretations or involvement. According to Nussbaum the inconsistency and consistency of involvement and concern, as well as its partiality require an ethical deliberation.[54]
Consequently, she pleads, on a political level, to cultivate an appropriate compassion, based on the radical idea that every human is of equal worth.[55]

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[51] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 321-327.
[52] For the elaborate discussion see: Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 354-400.
[53] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 335-342.
[54] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 368-386; 386-393; 401-405.
[55] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 414-224.
'This agenda is radical in the way that Stoic world citizenship was radical in a Rome built on hierarchy and rank, in the way that the Christian idea of love of one's neighbor was and is radical, in a world anxious to deny our common membership in

Instead of taking part in the philosophical discussion on compassion and ethics we will move to another source of ethical reflection, that is: the OT narrative. Nussbaum's methodology about narrative imagination as a manner towards cultivating compassion, plays a significant role in my interpretation of the OT narrative as an ethical source.

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the kingdom of ends or the kingdom of heaven.' Martha C. Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship and the Narrative Imagination," *Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, 107-1* (2008): 143-157.

3. Old Testament Narrative as a Source for Ethical Reflection

3.1 Biblical Ethics

In this chapter I will explore the possibilities, motivations and methods for using an OT narrative for ethical reflection. This choice is far from obvious, given that using the Bible as a source for ethics has been regarded as problematic since the Enlightenment and the decreasing authority of the Bible accompanying it.[1]
This problematizing is correct when the Bible is understood as a, or *the,* normative source for moral life and when the aim is to comprehend and apply biblical moral rules and principles to contemporary contexts. Especially OT narratives encompass a vicious and obscure morality. To extract relevant ethical insights from it, 'one has to bridge ugly ditches between past and present, Old and New Testament'.[2] And even then, it turns out that the interpretation of certain texts is most often determined by existing hermeneutical constructs, even though one may not be aware of it.[3]

Let me clarify at this point, it is not my aim to draw the Bible back into the normative position, on the contrary. Yet, I regard the Bible as a valuable source for ethical reflection. Therefore, when the Bible functions as a source of ethical reflection without being normative, it is important to explicate the basic distinction between 'principle ethics' and 'particular ethics'. Originating in Platonic thought, principle ethics are based on knowledge and abstract moral rules: principles. They are prescriptive of character and aim to be objective and universal. Consequently, they are very rigid. Particular or 'Aristotelian ethics' are based on values instead of rules and are merely descriptive. Because this kind of ethics is constructed from empirical observations and because it reflects on particular and complex contexts, it has a more flexible approach than the first. Within this ethical approach the aim of moral development is not gaining knowledge about the correct application of moral rules, but forming a character and attitude of ethical reflection skilled in discerning particular situations.
According to several ethicists, including Nussbaum, narratives that illustrate these 'Aristotelean features' such as the complexity and particularity of life, are useful sources in fostering these ethical skills.[4] Within this ethical approach, OT scholars such as Sungmin Min Chun and Bruce Birch also consider the OT narrative as a promising genre for ethics.

Birch is the first scholar who approached OT narrative as an ethical source. He says that a person's identity flows from a person's own story, which is influenced and shaped by contact with greater stories than those of herself. For a lot of people, the OT stories belong to these great stories, which are mediated through faith communities in ancient and modern times.[5] Because of that, these OT

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[1] Charles. H. Cosgrove "Scripture in Ethics: A History" in *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 13-27.
[2] Min Chun, *Ethics*, 25-26.
[3] Marco Derks, Thijs Tromp and Pieter H. Vos, "In de Ban van de Ring: Over het Huwelijk als Dominant Construct in Seksegerelateerde Kwesties," *Radix* 36-1 (2010): 2-21.
[4] Barton describes four Aristotelean features, see Section 3.3. John Barton, "Reading for Life: The Use of the Bible in Ethics and the Work of Martha C. Nussbaum" in *The Bible in Ethics: The Second Sheffield Colloquium*, ed. John W. Rogerson, Margaret Davies, M. Daniel Carrol (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 66-76.
[5] Min Chun reflecting on Birch, in Min Chun, *Ethics*, 44-47; cf. Robin Parry, who mentions the time span over generations within the texts. Robin Parry, "Greek Bearing Gifts? Appropriating Nussbaum for a Christian Approach to Old Testament

narratives are of great influence to the formation of a person's identity. In this kind of thought the OT narratives are viewed as sources with ethical value.

Still, we should wonder if biblical stories are considered to be suitable for this kind of narrative ethics. The next two sections present a discussion about this idea of OT as a source for ethical reflection on a more elaborate level. This discussion is partly constructed against the background of Nussbaum's narrative approach and further structured around Min Chun's reflection on several OT ethicists with a narrative approach.

3.2 Ethics and Narrative Imagination

In Nussbaum's thoughts the cultivation of emotions, and thus her thoughts about the cultivation of compassion, starts with cultivating narrative imagination. She distinguishes several levels of emotion which a person will develop, fostered by reading a narrative.[6]
The first level concerns the emotions directed towards a character within the narrative. These emotions consist of shared feelings by identification with a character, or responses to the emotions of the narrative character. The second level of emotions is directed towards the '"implied author," the sense of life embodied in the texts as a whole.'[7] As with the first level, these emotions can be shared feelings, or reactions toward the emotions of the implied author. The third level of emotions are the emotions directed to one's own possibilities and the things that might happen in one's own life.
All kinds of emotion operate at multiple levels of specificity and generality.[8] By cultivating these narrative emotions also the emotion of compassion could be cultivated.

Nussbaum appoints three narrative genres as very suitable for the cultivation of compassion by narrative imagination: the Greek tragedy, the modern novel and the performing arts. The first genre, the tragedy, is valuable for its potential to confront the audience with serious suffering, similar possibilities and undeserved suffering. Explicit scenes about pain contradictive to a character's desire for pleasure, confront the reader with the harsh reality of seriously suffering in life and death. It shows that even heroes can become victims of disasters without fault, caused by incontrollable external elements.[9]
The judgements of similar possibilities and non-fault are especially fostered by the comic subgenre of tragedy. This genre emphasises the bodily vulnerability that confronts the reader with disgust and shamefulness as inevitably part of every human life.[10] It also reveals how deprivation affects mental capabilities like speech and thought, when the effort to survive dominates.[11] The Greek tragedy in its

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Narrative Ethics," *European Journal of Theology,* 9-1 (2000): 61-73. I may even propose the claim that all societies rooted in Christianity are part of this 'community'.
[6] 'Reader' could also be read as 'spectator'. In *Political Emotions,* Nussbaum refers to the performance of tragedy during the Tragic and Comic Festivals in ancient Greece as an example of civic imagination. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 261-266.
[7] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 242.
In OT narrative the 'implied author' is explained slightly different, which will be further explained in Chapter 3.3b.
[8] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 238-242.
[9] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 257-312.
[10] Nussbaum describes disgust, shame and the denial of one's own vulnerability as the enemies of compassion. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 342-350.
[11] Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 257-312.
Another characteristic element of tragedy is the tragic dilemma of conflicting values. This is important for moral deliberation, but not very relevant in this discussion. Nussbaum, *Political Emotions*, 266-272.

original context also conveyed the usual civic roles and functions of a society, by which it crossed the limits of in- and outgroup, even that of man and woman.[12]

The second genre, the novel, became important according to Nussbaum, because ancient tragedies are sometimes too abstract and universalistic.

To regard a novel as suitable for ethical development it should fit certain criteria: characters must be described as dignified and full human beings with inner depth, rendering the reader to imagine being the other person with an inner eye perspective; the narrated world should be close enough to the reader's worldview to avoid alienation and resentment, but alienate enough to open up blind spots; it should encourage democratic values such as human equality. Novels that describe stereotypes, or dehumanise and stigmatise minorities naturally fail these criteria.[13]

To a greater extent than tragedy, the novel deals with the concreteness of daily life. Unlike historical or biographical literature novels do not describe a factual overview of what generally happened, but they describe what might happen in a particular human life.[14] Novels are able to cross cultural and national boundaries and they have the unique potential to show the inner world of those outside someone's eudaimonistic concern. A good novel possesses the quality of making the reader identify with a character of different sex, colour, sexual orientation, class, nationality, time, etcetera. Therefore, it has the ability to extend the border of eudaimonistic concern.

A reader's imagination also reveals that not every human is exactly the same. Emotions and desires differ, sometimes so much that a reader may repel imagining being that other person and fails to identify with a character. Nussbaum claims though, that even such a failure can be a source of understanding, since it shows what life could do to people.[15]

The third kind of narrative that Nussbaum mentions in her theory about narrative imagination are the narratives within performing arts like theatre, music, play etcetera.[16] Although performing arts do not have the hermeneutical interaction between text and reader as literature does, they are condensed with emotional significance. Dance and play, for instance, require to literally take another person's place, and to inhabit an unfamiliar position or bodily experience.[17] Although not explicitly mentioned by Nussbaum, these art forms beyond verbal and literate capability, may also be notable as more accessible for an illiterate audience.

The importance of identification with the character is undeniably present in all genres. However, the aspect of mystery and curiosity, which involves wonder, could be more apparent in non-literate art. This element of wonder is crucial because it indicates the limits in accessing another person, and restrains from appropriating that person as someone like yourself.[18]

In short, according to Nussbaum, narratives are helpful tools to cultivate emotions, and therefore to cultivate compassion. Narrative imagination enables a spectator, participant or reader not only to

[12] Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship," 151-152.

[13] Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice*, 1-12; Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship," 151-157; Nussbaum, *Not for Profit*, 38-40.

[14] Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice*, 5.

[15] Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship," 150-151.

[16] Nussbaum's writings about arts are in particular about childhood development and education.

[17] Nussbaum, *Not for Profit,* 36-42; Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship," 151-157.
Emotion in music may even be more direct, because there is no character to mediate. Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 271-279.

[18] Nussbaum, *Not for Profit,* 36-42; Nussbaum, "Democratic Citizenship," 151-157.

acknowledge the similar possibilities, but also to recognise and acknowledge another person as an end in itself: as an own centre of experience with emotions, desires, wishes, and intentions, as objects that are equally human, but different from the reader herself. As a consequence, this narrative imagination should extend the reader's circle of eudaimonistic concern.

3.3 Old Testament Narrative Ethics

Nussbaum omits biblical stories, and so OT stories, in her theory. This could be a pragmatic choice, since she writes with a political aim in a democratic and liberal society. For that reason, her thought should be accessible for citizens with various religious and secular worldviews.[19] But she may have more deliberate reasons for omitting these narratives. For instance, one could question whether biblical stories fit Nussbaum's narrative criteria for cultivating compassion. Some scholars have elaborated on the features of biblical narratives in connection with narrative ethics. They did so on the level of form, content and theology.

a) OT Narratives as a Suitable Genre

Brandon Woodard compared biblical tragedies with the Greek tragedies and concludes that they are not similar in genre. He states that in biblical stories, such as the story of Jonah, Jonah's suffering is a punishment deserved by fault and disobedience, and not caused by bad fate like in Greek tragedies. In his view Jonah also had the alternative option to obey and in doing so to avoid his own suffering. Woodard regards that as in contrast with the gods' uncontrolled anger towards sympathetic victims in Greek tragedies. Another important difference that Woodard discerns between the genres is a spiritual one: he claims that the ultimate tragedy in *Jonah* is the absence of any indication of a fellowship with God and Jonah's repentance of sin.[20]

This last statement is a theological evaluation that I do not completely share with Woodard. For I do not judge Jonah as the protagonist who needs to repent about his sins, but rather as a human who is inherently related to God.

More importantly I do not agree with Woodard's claim that biblical suffering is always deserved by fault and choice. For instance, I think that Jonah's suffering is in no relation to his fault, which I will argue in the next chapter. Nonetheless, Woodard may be right in his notion that it is unlikely that the reader's prior sympathy is directed to the sufferer. This notion is probably supported by Robin Parry, considering his statement that the author's judgement of fault and non-fault gives priority to God's perspective, or to what the author regards to be God's perspective. This idea will be further discussed below, after an elaboration on John Barton's and Min Chun's thoughts.

Barton introduced Nussbaum into the field of OT ethics. He derived insights from her to revaluate biblical narratives for their ethical significance. In doing so he demonstrates how, just as the Greek tragedies, biblical narratives contain the four features of Aristotelean ethics: non-commensurability of valuable things; priority to the particular with the ability to discern; the importance of emotion; the relevance of uncontrolled events.[21]

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[19] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 401.

[20] Woodard with reference to Ryken. Brandon L. Woodard, "Death in life: The Book of Jonah and Biblical Tragedy," *Grace Theological Journal* 11-1 (1991): 3-16.

[21] Min Chun reflecting on Barton, in Min Chun, *Ethics*, 53-63.

Barton restrains from positioning between the historical-critical versus literary-critical discipline. He does so, because he thinks that any attempt to reconfigurate a story to modern times, or to omit the literary structures reduces the strength of that story. A story about human beings and their fundamental questions within the world they inhabit, is enough powerful.[22]

Min Chun, who confirms Barton's idea, explicates a distinction between ethics *in* the OT and ethics *of* the OT. He defines the former as a study of the sociological reality behind the text, which is the morality of ancient Israelites. This discipline requires an approach of historical- and textual criticism. Whereas ethics *of* the OT aims at finding out what the OT in its final form says about ethics. In this discipline the study of the OT is regarded to be ethically relevant in itself.[23] Min Chun's considers the latter, ethics *of* the OT, as the preferred approach for narrative ethics.
Just as Barton and Nussbaum, Min Chun decreases the importance of hermeneutical reconfiguration, for the real reader is not very distinct from the implied reader. Min Chun states that the world of the text, with all its complexity and particularity is in itself analogous enough to real life, for being relevant.[24] For this purpose, Min Chun uses a synchronic literary analysis. Still, historical and textual analyses are not irrelevant in this discipline, as their outcomes are very important for understanding the characters in their own context. Furthermore, they are required to reveal the ethical stance of the implied author and the implied reader.[25]

Parry rejects Nussbaum's approach as an appropriate method to open up biblical stories, although he appreciates it as a 'prophetic counterbalance to tendencies typically found among Bible readers', by recognising the value of stories without clear-cut moral answers and the importance of particularity.[26]
Contrary to Barton's study, Parry's inquiry concerning the presence of Aristotelean features in biblical stories has a negative outcome. One of his arguments is that biblical narratives are too brief and that they lack the attention for detail required by Nussbaum. Yet, Parry does not regard the gaps typically found in biblical stories as a devaluation of these stories, since he thinks that meaning and moral power come from the gaps.[27]
Parry's observation is discarded by Min Chun who states that the text gives more clues than Parry suggests.[28] Furthermore Min Chun claims that the lack of direct clues could be impeded by a detailed observation of semantical and syntactical structures. For this observation he prefers a method called discourse analysis.[29] That is why Min Chun eventually uses a 'literary approach anchored in discourse analysis' for his study of OT narrative ethics.[30]

Whether biblical narratives are comparable to thick novel descriptions, is still a question for me, when it requires a scholarly inquiry, such as this discourse analysis to make them comparable. However, I

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[22] Barton, "Reading for Life," 66-76.
[23] Min Chun, *Ethics*, 11-12.
[24] Min Chun, *Ethics*, 11-16; 77. This is why Min Chun does not use Ricoeur's method, which is more focused on the actual reader.
[25] Min Chun, *Ethics*, 82-86.
[26] Parry, "Greek Bearing Gifts," 69-70.
[27] Parry, "Greek Bearing Gifts," 70.
For a detailed discussion about the meaning of the gaps see: Min Chun about Parry, in Min Chun, *Ethics*, 71-75.
[28] Min Chun accuses Parry of giving an inaccurate interpretation of Sternberg and a false observation regarding the uniqueness of gaps in biblical narratives. Min Chun, *Ethics*, 73.
[29] Min Chun, *Ethics*, 72-77.
[30] For a definition and methodological overview on discourse analysis, see: Min Chun, *Ethics*, 93-154.

regard Parry's second argument for distinguishing biblical narratives from the novels, and other narratives that Nussbaum regards as ethical valuable, as a more significant argument. This argument concerns the transcendent perspective of the narrator, which cannot be mistaken. In his argumentation Parry rejects Nussbaum's 'anti-theistic starting point' in which ethical value comes solely from the humanness of a narrator's perspective, which makes God's behaviour irrelevant. Parry responds to that starting point by stating that: 'God's view on appropriate human behaviour could be of great interest even if God's view on appropriate divine behaviour is of little value in guiding our behaviour.'[31]

I cannot verify if Parry is correct in his interpretation of Nussbaum and her anti-theistic starting point and Min Chun does not explicitly respond to this aspect of Parry's argumentation.[32] Nonetheless, some details of Nussbaum's emotion-theory suggest at least difficulties with the divine perspective. For instance, the concepts of 'God as a perfect father' and 'original sin', could be problematic. As Nussbaum explains, the image of a perfect parent and the strife for unachievable perfection, could cause to develop shame and disgust, which are obstacles for developing compassion.[33] Furthermore the image of an omnipotent and omniscient God, as Nussbaum detects in Augustine's theology, tends to focus on a human's incapable and dependent position in wait for the world to come, instead of focusing on self-control and an urge to end earthly suffering.[34]

Although both Parry and Nussbaum have plausible reasons for regarding the divine perspective as distinctive in biblical narratives, I do not share the assumption that the narrator and God are always characterized as omniscient or omnipotent, which I shall further argue in Chapter 4. For this reason, I hold their considerations about the transcendental aspect to be invalid, for if God is not considered perfect and omnipotent the objections of the divine perspective lose their point.

However, for some other reasons I do regard the transcendental aspect of biblical stories as distinctive.

The first reason is that in biblical narratives all creatures are somehow related to the divine, as mentioned previously considering Woodard's argument about the fellowship with God.[35] Such a notion has its consequences for an ethical reflection.

Additionally, the transcendental, divine character of the narratives has the potential to generate wonder and awe, for they are explicitly dealing with those things in life that are beyond human knowledge. More than average, the transcendental character implies a worldview in which not everything is controlled by a human's will.

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[31] Parry blames Nussbaum for '(...) mistaken a divine perspective on human behaviour, with behaviour that is appropriate to the divine'. Parry, "Greek Bearing Gifts," 70.

[32] A proper reference to Nussbaum and her anti-theistic starting point is lacking in Parry's article.

[33] For a more elaborate explanation on psychological distortions and shame and disgust as enemies towards compassion, see: Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 174-237; Martha C. Nussbaum, *Hiding from Humanity: Disgust, Shame and the Law*, Princeton/Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004, 189-203.
Woodard provides significant examples (e.g. Adam and Eve in Gen. 3) of how the protagonists' faults in biblical tragedy result in shame and therefore in a desire to hide away from God and humanity, which eventually leads to (the wish to be) death. Woodard "Death in Life," 3-16.

[34] Nussbaum, *Upheavals*, 535-543; 547-556.

[35] Cf. Van Riessen about 'ethics of the other that cannot but refer to religion as its last horizon of meaning (…) and an ethics of the other that refuses such reference.' Van Riessen, "Rethinking the Ethics of Compassion." Cf. The previous about Woodard.

Thus, despite a difference in understanding concerning the divine perspective, I agree with Parry's conclusion that OT narratives cannot be approached as a source for developing narrative imagination in the same way as Nussbaum's appointed genres are. The divine character of OT narratives differs too much from Nussbaum's genres concerning the issues and life events beyond human understanding. Furthermore, their form does not fit the criteria that Nussbaum regards suitable for cultivating narrative imagination and extending the borders of eudaimonistic concern. Therefore, the biblical narrative should be regarded as a distinct genre. However, because of the complex, particular world and the transcendental character of OT narratives and its important role in identity formation, OT narratives could function as a valuable and unique counter voice in ethical reflection.[36]

b) Approaching the OT Narratives

I have found Birch's definition and approach as best balancing between an approach that respects the distinctive, divine character of biblical narrative, and one that values it with all its complexity and particularity, as relevant enough in itself:

> 'The canon is a witness from the ongoing encounter with God's presence in the lives of individuals and communities (…) we are invited into the conversation, not for the discovery of fixed moral truths, but rather to experience the moral power of life lived in the presence of God and as a part of God's people.'[37]

Now we have stated that the Bible is a suitable source for an ethical conversation, reflection, we should further define a suitable approach. For doing so, I would like to conclude with a reference to the OT scholar Jaqueline Lapsley. Lapsley also draws on Nussbaum's work for reading strategies concerning biblical narrative ethics. She shares the thought that biblical narratives can make a positive contribution to ethical reflection, but that they should not be read for extracting moral principles. However, more than Barton and Min Chun, she refers to the level of emotional response, as distinguished by Nussbaum. Lapsley states that in the process of ethical reflection, biblical narratives invite the reader to bring his emotional responses into conversation with his reasoning abilities.[38]
According to the method of narrative imagination, Lapsley regards the ethical significance of a response successful when the reader is capable enough to empathise with the characters of the story. Yet, instead of focussing on this point of empathising, which aims at extending the circle of concern, I would like to emphasise Lapsley's notion of the encounter with the text as 'Other'.[39] In this encounter she sees the OT stories challenging the reader, by drawing her into its moral world.[40] I perceive this notion of 'otherness' as an approach that keeps up the possibility that a narrative can be too distinctive, too brief or too estranged and transcendental to understand the biblical characters and the world they inhabit.[41]

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[36] Parry, "Greek Bearing Gifts," 70.
[37] Bruce C. Birch, "Scripture in Ethics: Methodological Issues," in Green, *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*, 27-34.
[38] Jaqueline E. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word: Hearing Women's Stories in the Old Testament* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 10-11.
[39] Lapsley refers to Levinas' ethics of encounter.
[40] Lapsley holds the theological assumption that the text mediates God's word, therefore she ultimately regards the encounter between the text and the reader as an encounter between God and the reader. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*, 12.
[41] Mikhail Bakthin's theory of literary criticism also offers a great potential for conversation models. Since this model is more explicit in bringing new voices from various contexts into the conversation, in order to open up new meanings and questions, I have decided not to elaborate on his approach. For an deliberate explanation of Bakhtin's theory in literary theology see: L. Juliana M. Claassens, "Biblical Theology as Dialogue," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122-1 (2003): 127-144.

At this point, I would like to go back to the emotional level which involved the emotional response directed at the implied author. As mentioned in Section 3.2, a reader could also respond to the text as a whole, which Nussbaum calls 'the sense of life embodied in the texts'. However, as mentioned previously, in narrative ethics an analysis of the implied author also exposes the ethics revealed in the texts. In other words, the 'ethics revealed in the text' is part of 'the sense of life embodied in the text', thus a reader's response could easily be directed at the ethics revealed in the text.
Therefore, I regard the approach Lapsley suggests as very suitable for analysing biblical narratives, particularly for this thesis, since the book of Jonah conveys a very explicit invitation to the reader to respond to the text. We could even say that by the final speech in 4:11 'the narrator leads the reader into certain kinds of nuanced ethical reflection'.[42]
I would like to add that, since this thesis aims to reflect on compassion in particular, the hermeneutical lens in my analysis is constructed by Nussbaum's thoughts on compassion. Or we may also say: the reasoning abilities that are brought into the conversation are constructed by the theory of compassion as described in Chapter 2.

To conclude, I regard the OT narratives as a valuable genre for ethical reflection. However, I prefer an approach that aims to reflect on the ethics revealed in the story, instead of aiming for an emotional response that extends the borders of concern. Therefore, in this thesis I will first provide an analysis of the book of Jonah that should reveal the ethics of the narrative, in order to open up the conversation - ethical reflection - on the cultivation of compassion.
For enclosing these ethics, I will use Min Chun's literary approach anchored in discourse analysis as a helpful tool in order to understand the context of the narrative, its characters and the lives of these characters in the presence of God. For the interpretation of this analysis I will use Nussbaum's concept of compassion as a hermeneutical lens.

[42] This citation originally refers to Judges 19. Lapsley, *Whispering the Word*, 11.

4. The Narrative of the Prophet Jonah

The analysis of the narrative of the prophet Jonah, as described in this chapter, starts off with an illustration of the narrative world (Section 4.1-4.2). This consists of general background information, followed by descriptions of the historical context in which the narrative was written, and the shared assumptions of that context. Coming as close as possible to the inhabited world and the worldview of the reader, helps in the process of finding the intentions of the author. Therefore, it helps in finding the ethical standpoint of the text as a whole.

The second part of the analysis (Section 4.3-4.4) reveals more information on the level of the text as a whole. This includes a brief description of the implied author and a semantical exploration on some words that I regard important to reveal the key motive of the narrative.

The chapter continues with the analysis on the level of the characters within the text (Section 4.5-4-6). As mentioned, I will use Nussbaum's concept of compassion as a hermeneutical lens. This means that the character analysis aims at extracting the value-laden thoughts (emotions) that reveal the ethical standpoints of the characters. Of course, it will particularly focus on the emotion of compassion and the emotions related to it. The last section of the chapter will turn back to the question of the author's intentions, which will make the analysis complete.

4.1 General Information

The book of Jonah, viewed by modern scholars as an anonymous short story of theological fiction, is a book with unique features in many ways. It is a narrative about a prophet's dealings with Yahweh. It is full of theological connotations, but in contrast to other prophetic literature, without prophetic sayings or an explicit message.[1] The temporal setting of the story is imagined to be pre-exilic, as it refers to a prophet's acting during the reign of the Israelite King Jeroboam, who reigned between 786-746 BCE.[2] However, nowadays there is agreement on it being a postexilic writing, written somewhere between the fifth and third century BCE. Thus the context of the original reader is a post-exilic context, at a time that Nineveh as well as Jerusalem are destroyed.[3]

The geographical setting changes between Joppa, at the modern Jaffa near Tel Aviv, and the city of Nineveh, located at present-day Mosul. The latter was the capital of Assyria from 704 BCE until its destruction, by Babylonians, in 612 BCE. its greatness refers more to its reputation than to its actual size, which was much smaller than a three days walk. Tarshis, the place that Jonah never reached is supposed to be close to Spain.[4]

The book may have grown through various phases, nevertheless we can assume that the current literary unit is carefully constructed by one author. Thus we will approach the book as a unity.[5] Jonah is the fifth or sixth book within *The book of the Twelve* or the *Minor Prophets*. Its place in the order of

[1] James D. Nogalski, *The Book of the Twelve: Hosea-Jonah*, Vol. 18a of *Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2011), 403-404.

[2] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 401-403; Jack M. Sasson, *Jonah,* Vol. 24b of *The Anchor Bible* (New York USA: Doubleday, 1990), 26-28.

[3] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 401; Sasson, *Jonah*, 20-27.

[4] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 411-416.

[5] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 403-404; Sasson, *Jonah*, 19-20.

the Twelve, as well as the reason for including it, are still issues of discussion.[6] Anyhow, it is usually placed before Nahum, that predicts and presupposes Nineveh's destruction.

4.2 Implied Reader

An amount of descriptions about the original reader are commonly accepted, as they matter to mostly formal and general information. A more difficult question is to which specific idea or situation the author intends to respond with this narrative, whom the author had in mind to write for. This is the implied reader or the intended reader.
Only a detailed analysis of the text could discern the implied reader on such a level that the issue to which the author responds could be revealed. Robert Person refers to Wolfgang Iser, who holds the opinion that the implied reader must be found only in the interaction 'between text and reader'.[7] But, as argued in the previous chapter, I prefer Min Chun's approach and will refer to both historical and textual criticism.

Considering the context described in 4.1 a certain set of assumptions are most plausibly shared by the writer and the reader of his context. First, Assyria is understood to be an enemy and oppressor. Although Nineveh was not the capital during the time the narrative was written, it is considered to be a powerful symbol of an evil empire: the capital of Israel's enemies.[8] Hence, the Ninevites are considered to be the Lord's enemies as well, and the Israelites are supposed to be more righteous than non-Israelites.[9] The post-exilic readers, probably bear feelings of anger and frustration towards their former oppressor, which may be identified as an intergenerational trauma.[10]
We may assume that the Hebrew audience is already familiar with a universalistic theology.[11] We may also assume that they are familiar enough with the Jewish tradition and scriptures to recognise implicit references to it.[12] This implies that the readers should be able to recognise the introduction and commission in 1:1-3 as prophetic literature. Also the parts that do not fit the prophetic pattern, must be recognised. These are: Jonah's disobedience; his emotional fluctuations; and the unparalleled success of his mission, concerning the immediate response of the Ninevites.[13] Geographical and historical indications should also be recognisable for the reader, just as semantical clues, such as the

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[6] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 403- 406; Sasson, *Jonah*, 19-20.
Stuart supposes that not only length, date, or subject, but also completing the number of twelve could be a reason for including Jonah into the *Twelve*. Douglas K. Stuart, *Hosea-Jonah*, Vol. 31 of *Word Biblical Commentary* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987), 433-434.
[7] Robert F. Person, Jr., *In Conversation with Jonah: Conversation Analysis, Literary Criticism, and the Book of Jonah*, Vol. 220 of *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 91.
[8] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 411-416.
[9] Person, *Conversation*, 109.
[10] L. Juliana M Claassens, "Rethinking Humour in the Book of Jonah: Tragic Laughter as Resistance in the Context of Trauma," *Old Testament Essays* 28-3 (2015): 655-673; Willie van Heerden,"Psychological Interpretations of the Book of Jonah," *Old Testament Essays* 16-3 (2003): 717-729.
[11] Sasson, *Jonah*, 24-25.
[12] Sasson, *Jonah*, 20-27.
[13] Sasson, *Jonah*, 342-345.
'Never had a Hebrew prophet been so successful. The Israelite kings ignored the Lord's repeated warnings through his servants, the prophets and Israel was eventually punished severely by the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple and by being taken captive into exile. But Jonah speaks to heathen foreigners and they immediately repent! Even their animals.' Person, *Conversation*, 43.

chaotic sea and its fish, which imply a reference to God as creator.[14] A number of stylistic and linguistic features indicate that the reader is aware of the hyperbolic and symbolic connotations.[15]
The name of the main character, Jonah the son of Amittai, would probably ring a bell. It literally means 'dove, son of the Lord, who is steadfast.' In the OT the dove refers to a character that is easily put to flight, seeks secure refuge in the mountains and moans and laments when it is in distress. Thus Jonah, son of Amittai implicates a hero that has these capricious characteristics, but is nonetheless a son of the steadfast Lord.[16]
Jonah is the name of a northern prophet, who is known for his proclamation of glory and prosperity during the reign of king Jeroboam (2 Kings 14:23-29). According to 2 Kings Israel had expanded its borders to the maximum during that time. This was regarded as evil conduct and Jeroboam's kingdom was consequently evaluated as sinful. Jonah's proclamation in that sinful kingdom probably did not make him a favourable prophet. Although scholars disagree on the exact implications of his reputation, as section 4.4 will further expound.[17]

Before continuing with the analysis of the text itself, I will set out the main possibilities suggested by various scholars concerning the author's intention. Although they vary a great deal in their ideas, I have attempted to categorise them roughly into three types: the affirmative, the didactical and the comforting intention.
The first category is the *affirmative*, which means that the author intends to affirm and praise God's character, for instance his sovereignty, omnipotence, and divine nature of mercy and compassion.[18] In this category the implied reader is considered as having forgotten or deviated from knowledge or insights into God's being.
The second category is the *didactical*, which could be divided into a reprimanding and a merely educative purpose. The former implies an audience judged by the author for an incorrect attitude, thought or behaviour. Or, to be more concrete, a reprimanding intention is based on the assumption that the readers are too arrogant and proud to see that they are recipients of God's mercy and compassion, but begrudge others to receive the same.[19] The writer with an educative intention is more neutral about the current situation of his audience, but aims at the same purpose, which is to redefine the concept of God's compassion, from a nationalistic concern, towards a more extended, universal concern.
The third category is the *comforting* intention. When the author's intention is to comfort, the story functions as a means of coming to terms with, for instance, a reader's trauma or perception of an evil world. It implies a reader who experiences problems with the situation she is in, outside her own fault. In this specific case, it would concern a reader who experiences a post-exilic trauma; who has anger

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[14] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 414; Sasson, *Jonah*, 342-344; Person, *Conversation*, 85; 108-112.
In my own paper about JHWH as victor over chaos, I expose about the connection between the sea monster and the image of God as creator, which is a motive throughout the OT. Angeliek H. Knol, "JHWH, Bondgenoot in de Overwinning op de Chaosmonsters: Exegese van Jesaja 51:9-16" (Unpublished paper, under supervision of Marjo C.A. Korpel), May, 2015.
[15] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 414-415; Sasson, *Jonah*, 247-260; 327-328.
[16] Person, *Conversation*, 64-65; Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 412-414.
[17] Person, *Conversation*, 64; Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 401-402. Person and Nogalski agree on Jonah's ambiguous reputation, Sasson disagrees.
[18] E.g. Person, *Conversation*, 88-89; Sasson, *Jonah*, 335-337; 342-351.
[19] Wessels, "A Prophetic Word", 565-568; Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 443-444.

and frustration about an incomprehensible perception of a world where evil flourishes, and in which God's retributive power seems absent.[20]

4.3 Implied Author – Narrator

As this narrative is a fictional story, I distinguish between the author who has a certain intention for producing the story, and the narrator whose voice the author used for telling the story. The narrator could also be interpreted as the implied author. The narrator uses linguistic features, such as hyperboles, omitted dialogue, time lapses, leitmotivs and contradictions, to allude his standpoint, judgement and possibly also his values.[21]

It is not debated anymore that the narrator's voice in *Jonah* has an ironic overtone. The hyperbolic language, absurd postures, description of incongruent behaviour and the exceptional use of contrast, give reason to label the narrative as a satire or parody; at least as a humorous narrative.[22] Noteworthy is the narrator's remarkable characterisation of Jonah, on which will be elaborated in Section 4.5.

In this story, the narrator who could be omniscient is like an invisible witness of the occurrences.[23] I think the latter is debatable though, since knowledge of inner motives is only unveiled after observations and interpretations of behaviour and conversation, whilst inner thought deliberations are omitted.

For several reasons, I also hesitate to interpret the implied author's perspective as similar to God's perspective.[24] The narrator's voice creates too much distance between him and God to identify with him. He does so, not only by referring to God in the third person, but also by omitting clear-cut insights in his thoughts and reasoning. Additionally, the characterization of God seems too ambivalent to the narrator. And finally, if the implied author was meant to be God, it would mean that the actual author implicitly claims to have insight into God's perspective, and therefore cannot be mistaken. I regard such an understanding of the narrator's perspective as unlikely and undesirable in this story, because that would make the reader incapable of participating in the conversation to which the end of the story arouses to.[25]

In any regard, it is significant that the narrator refrains from responding to the last question. Although it is without doubt a rhetorical question, it does require a response.[26] By omitting the response, the narrator may want to affirm Jonah's request-avoiding conversation style,[27] or may hesitate to confirm the conclusion himself.[28] Even though these arguments could both be true, it does draw the reader into the moral world of the narrative, which I mostly consider an invitation for the reader to respond.

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[20] The interpretations of Claassens and Van Heerden are in accordance with this category. Claassens, "Rethinking Humour," Van Heerden, "Psychological interpretations."

[21] Person, *Conversation*, 83.

[22] Humour could serve a didactical, affirming or comforting purpose. Cf. Claassens, "Rethinking Humour"; Van Heerden, "Psychological Interpretations"; Sasson, *Jonah*, 328-350. I will not elaborate on genres in a separate section, because the genre serves or parallels the author's intention.

[23] Person, *Conversation*, 83.

[24] Cf. Section 3.3a.

[25] Wessels cites Frick: 'It is the purpose to be suggestive and allusive, rather than being assertive or dogmatic (…) the book demands) the reader to continually reassess his or her view of events and motivations.' Wessels, "A Prophetic Word," 566.

[26] Wessels, "A Prophetic Word," 563-564; Person, *Conversation*, 75.

[27] See section 4.5.2.

[28] Cf. Sasson: 'The narrator cannot rip him [Jonah] into the weaknesses of God's logic.' Sasson, *Jonah*, 345.

4.4 KEY WORDS

The ancient confession of a gracious and compassionate God, has a key role in the plot of the narrative (4:2). Hence, for an exact understanding of its meaning and God's response to Jonah's use of it, it is important to start with some remarks about the semantics of 'compassion related words'. In modern biblical translations grace, compassion, pity and mercy are often used as equivalents.[29] For an adequate understanding of the narrative, however, we have to differentiate between their interpretations. As Chapter 2 has shown, all these words are distinct words with different meanings.

a) Faithful Kindness

חֶסֶד (2:9; 4:2) is a noun that refers to an act or attitude of love, loyalty or something else favourable. It is mostly directed from somebody in a higher position towards somebody in a lower position. Sometimes it occurs between people who are each other's equal, but it is never directed from a human towards God,[30] It is voluntary and intrinsically motivated, an omission of חֶסֶד is never punished. It is also unconditional, independent of the object's acting, which implies it is steadfast and faithful. חֶסֶד is often used in covenantal relations between God and his people, however this is not a required element of its meaning. More importantly, 'It [חֶסֶד] 'is always the right thing to do and certainly never an unfair partiality.'[31]

One may discuss whether this noun implies an emotion or not. In any event it is not an emotion in itself, and it is neither per se directed at an object of suffering. חֶסֶד could be an act of mercy when it occurs in a situation of fault, and the agent of חֶסֶד does not react with punishment. Nonetheless, the steadfast and unconditional elements imply that mercy is just one aspect of its complete meaning, which is the steadfast and faithful attitude of kindness.

b) Concern

The verb חוס (4:10-11) is often translated as 'pity' or 'spare', sometimes also with 'compassion'.[32] It indicates an act or feeling in which a subject of higher ranking demonstrates sympathy towards a human being with lesser status.[33] A significant notion is that חוס occurs several more times used in a prohibition or another negation than in a positive way.[34] חוס can also refer to inanimate belongings.[35]

For several reasons I prefer a translation as 'concern' or 'care for' or 'worry about' over 'pity'. The first reason is that the connotation of the word is one of concern or loyalty, not a denigrating or superior one. Considering this, it could even denote a certain kind of responsibility.[36] Secondly, the words 'care' or 'concern' include the various objects of concern: one can care about inanimate objects, but one cannot have pity with them. And the last argument is that חוס does not necessarily refer to a situation

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[29] E.g. '(…)for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil'; 'Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd.' and '(…) I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in loving kindness, and one who relents concerning calamity; Then the LORD said, "You had compassion on the plant."' KJV and NASB on Jonah 4:2b and 4:10a.

[30] Sasson, *Jonah*, 198.

[31] Michael V. Fox, *Proverbs 1-9,* Vol. 18a of *The Anchor Bible* (New York USA: Doubleday, 2000), 144.

[32] BDB l.2908 חוס: 'pity', 'spare' or 'look upon with compassion.'; KB l.2729 חוס 'to be troubled about', 'to look compassionately', 'to spare, with.' Cf. Jonah 4:2 in ESV; KJV; NASB.

[33] Sasson, *Jonah*, 309; Wessels, "A Prophetic Word," 560.

[34] Nineteen out of 24 times it is used negatively לֹא אַל Cf. Gen. 45:20; Deut. 7:16; 13:9; 19:13, 21; 25:12; Jer. 21:7; Ezek. 5:11; 7:4, 9; 8:18; 9:5, 10; 16:5; 24:14 in contrast to: 1 Sam. 24:11; Ps. 72:13; Isa. 13:18 Ezek. 20:17; Joel 2:17; Jon. 4:10-11.

[35] Sasson, *Jonah*, 309.

[36] Cf. Wessels and his understanding of 4:11, although he emphasises the difference of power.

of an object's suffering, as pity does. It rather refers to a situation in which the subject takes care (or does not) to save something or someone.

c) Change of Mind

The verb נחם (3:9-10; 4:2) could be translated as 'to console' or 'to comfort', but in the story of Jonah 'change of mind', or 'regret' is a better translation.[37] 'To comfort' is a possible translation in the piel, but in the niphal stem the verb merely means 'regretting', or 'repenting' (for activities that have already occurred) and 'changing the mind', or 'relent' (for planned activities, that are never fulfilled).[38] Even though the change of mind could be motivated by compassion, נחם is more likely to be an emotion directed at a an object's (potential) suffering caused by the agent himself or his intentions to do so.[39] At any rate, it is a change in thought or emotions, therefore one may even say it is opposite to being steadfast.

d) Grace

חַנּוּן (4:2) is an adjective usually translated as 'gracious', 'merciful' or 'compassionate'. It is used as an attribute of God only, mostly combined with רַחוּם.[40] Exodus 22:26 is the only place where it occurs as a single word. So for an interpretation of its individual use, we depend on the content of that verse. In the text God is called חַנּוּן because he is listening to the cry of the poor, who has nothing that covers him at night. This context shows a concern that is directed at an object's serious suffering, most probably of non-fault. Therefore, I regard it plausible to translate it with 'compassion'. 'Merciful' or 'gracious' could also be adequate, since the connotation of a painful emotion is omitted in this particular reference, and one may argue about a sufferer's accountability of being poor. In order to distinguish between חַנּוּן and רַחוּם I will use gracious in the context of Jonah.

e) Compassion

The word רַחוּם (4:2) is closest to the description of 'a painful emotion directed at the suffering of an object within one's circle of eudaimonistic self-concern'. Its root is related to the maternal womb, and holds a very physical connotation. A very detailed overview of Trible expounds how the meaning of the root רחם developed from 'uterus' to 'God's molding, judging and baring', and eventually to 'maternal and fraternal compassion'.[41] This semantical development demonstrates that רַחוּם is very much related to vulnerable, maternal love, physical pain and responsibility, or as Trible states: 'The place of birth is the vehicle of compassion.'[42] 'Compassion' as understood in Nussbaum's definition, is therefore the most adequate translation for רַחוּם.

4.5 Characterisation and Important Value-laden Judgements

Now the context of the story has been clarified and we elaborated on the level of the text as a whole, the next step is to provide a detailed analysis of the characters that inhabit the narrative of the book

[37] BDB, l.6037 נחם
[38] Sasson, *Jonah*, 261-262.
[39] Cf. Section 2.2b.
[40] BDB l.3258 חַנּוּן
[41] Trible, *Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 33-54.
[42] Trible, *Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 54.

Jonah. The central focus of this analysis is the interaction between God and Jonah. Nevertheless, I will start with a brief description of the Ninevites and the sailors, which will be referred to as 'the pagans'.
It is important to mention that this section gives an analysis of the characters *as portrayed in this narrative*. This is also true for the character of God, who in this narrative is just one of the characters. Thus, the claims and assumption made in this analysis should not be regarded as theologically deliberated claims about the concept 'God'.[43]

4.5.1. Pagans

It is significant in the story the pagans appear to be more pious than the prophet. They express obedience, fear and believe towards God, and precede Jonah in acknowledging that God may intercede or change his mind (1:8,10-16; 3:5-9). Person claims that the narrator favours the pagans as they confirm the narrator's theology.[44]
Yet, I am not convinced of the latter. The motivations, thoughts and values of the sailors and the Ninevites remain vague and focus merely on their own concern to stay alive (1:6; 14, 3:9), so their prayers are no evidence for assuming them to be the favoured. The pagan's easy conversion may even be a sign of disrespect for the God who is known for his changeable mind. Throughout the whole story the pagans remain merely shallow and even parody-like characters, without deeper thoughts. Therefore, it is rather impossible to get to know the pagans as fully human, having real value-laden thoughts.[45]

4.5.2. Jonah

The prophet Jonah is portrayed as a character whose emotional fluctuations are quite dominant in the story: fear,[46] distress, gratefulness, intense upset, dejection or anger, and extreme happiness alternate each other in a short time span. These emotions account for the motives for Jonah's behaviour to a certain degree.[47] Nonetheless, his contradictory behaviour and lack of speech, make his true motives and thoughts hard to access. For instance, Jonah flees from the Lord's sight (1:3-4), but when he reveals his motivation (4:2), he does not explicate why he chose to flee and hide. He could also have debated God's commission, like Abraham, Moses and Elijah did.[48] Jonah prays with thanksgiving (2:3-10), but the haughty expressions in his prayer give reason to doubt his intention; Jonah is dejected about the perishing of a plant, but he is also dejected about a city that is saved from perishing (4:1-9).[49]
To detect the true values, thoughts and concerns that motivate these emotional fluctuations and behavioural contradictions, an inquiry into Jonah's character, as portrayed in the texts and discussed by several scholars, is required.

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[43] That is also a reason why I use the masculine pronoun for God, which is according to the text.
[44] Person, *Conversation*, 67.
[45] Claassens demonstrates how especially the Ninevites and the mourning animals are portrayed in a ridiculed and carnivalistic manner. Claassens, "Rethinking Humour," 663.
[46] I agree with Sasson that' fear' in this context should not too easily be interpreted as 'worship'. Sasson, *Jonah*, 97-98.
[47] Sasson, *Jonah*, 348-349.
[48] Sasson, *Jonah*, 332.
[49] Sasson argues, on semantical and psychological-behavioural grounds why 'dejected' is a better translation than anger, in the context of 4:1-9). Still, I do not completely dismiss anger as an adequate translation, regarding dejection as inward angriness. Sasson, *Jonah*, 273-275.

a) Characterization

A conversation-analysis of Person demonstrates that Jonah has a request-avoiding conversation-style and is in conflict with everybody he meets: the sailors, the Ninevites and God.[50] Some scholars attempted to diagnose Jonah within a contemporary frame, and interpreted his character as narcissistic, melancholic or manic-depressive.[51] Others regard the emotional rollercoaster merely as hyperbolic and ridiculous, in accordance to the genre.[52]

Either way, most comments interpret Jonah's behaviour as rather negative. Person is most outspoken about the narrator's negative attitude towards Jonah, and even concludes that the narrator portrays him as a false prophet.[53] He is even more outspoken about labelling Jonah as a nationalistic prophet, a claim that is supported by James Nogalski.[54] Both scholars interpret his attitude as quite explicitly nationalistic, regarding his avoiding conversation-style, his prayer (2:9-10); and his reference to the mercy-formula of Exodus 34:6-7 (4:2). They compare its application with other minor prophets, who usually relate it to God's compassion with his own people.[55]

Their argumentation in interpreting these textual elements as nationalistic clues merely originates from their interpretation of Jonah's role in 2 Kings. Yet, I do not want to draw harsh conclusions by relying on this nationalistic profile. In the first place I find it hard to parallel Jonah's character with his message in 2 Kings, since the Nineveh episode makes clear that Jonah does not always identify with the message he is commissioned to mediate. Besides, Sasson regards Jonah's mission in 2 Kings not as uniquely distinctive from other prophets.[56] Furthermore, their comparison of the mercy-formula with reference to other prophets is not very convincing, since Jonah omits a reference to God's people or the nations, so it could just as well function as an argument against nationalism. Moreover, Sasson has a more convincing interpretation of Jonah's citation, as will be argued below.[57] Another detail neglected by Person and Nogalski is the notion that Jonah is willing to sacrifice himself, in order to save the sailors (1: 12).

However, the point that Jonah keeps a distance from other human beings and does not attempt to get to know them, is quite indisputable. He does not associate with the sailors, and he enters the city no more than necessary.[58] The latter is not only shown by his short one day journey (3:4) but also by the subtle differences in the way Nineveh is mentioned: Jonah refers to Nineveh in the singular as 'the city' or 'Nineveh', which is an abstract image that does not reveal it as city full of individual human beings, whilst God and the king of Nineveh speak about and to Nineveh as a city with inhabitants, in the plural: men and beasts.[59]

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[50] Person, *Conversation*, 69-70.
[51] For an overview of psychological interpretation, see: Van Heerden, "Psychological interpretations," 717-729.
[52] For an overview of genres in relation to purpose, see: Sasson, *Jonah*, 331-337.
[53] Person, *Conversation*, 66.
[54] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 405-406.
[55] Person, *Conversation*, 65-70; Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 446.
[56] Sasson categorises Jonah as a 'third person prophet', about whom is only written from a third person perspective. He also compares Jonah with others prophets who were commissioned to proclaim to pagans and still have a good reputation. Sasson, *Jonah*, 342-345.
[57] Cf. Joel 2:13.
[58] Sasson, *Jonah*, 349-350.
[59] Jonah 3:1; 4:5-6 in contrast to 1:2; 3:5-10; 4:11.

Wessels interprets the character of Jonah as arrogant, prejudiced and hypocrite, which is supposed to be an exaggerative reflection of the typical Israelite reader. It is based on Jonah's gratefulness for receiving God's mercy while being upset when others receive the same mercy.[60]
Willie van Heerden rejects this arrogant stereotyping though, as a serious inspection of Jonah's behaviour cannot hold on to the thought that Jonah thinks positively about himself. On the contrary, it rather indicates a certain insecurity and imbalance that even lead to a loss for the sense of life.[61] I agree with Van Heerden on this point. Jonah's behaviour exposes emotions of the category that isolate and pull back and defend the self against the outward. Jonah is like a dove; he prefers running from the sight of the Lord, over fighting (1:3-5); he even keeps a distance to God;[62] he is not very attached to his life, even before the moment in which God decided not to punish the Ninevites (1:12;4:3;4:8). He is also very dejected about a perishing plant, or at least his own comfort that is taken away by the plant's perishing (4:8-11).
Also, I would like to refute Wessels' accusation of Jonah being a hypocrite. Wessels' notion presumes a similarity between Jonah's conduct, which is running away from God's request, and the conduct of the Ninevites, which is assumed to be evil and oppressive. I think that in both cases conduct as well as reception of salvation differ too much from each other to assume that they are equally approachable.

Nevertheless, we are able to allude to a character who occasionally *pretends* to be a better man than the pagans; who identifies as a Hebrew, fears the Lord as the creator ((1:9); and who claims to know God's character (4:2). And his behaviour at least shows a personality that does not positively involve with the other characters within the story.

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b) Jonah's Value-laden Thoughts

In his confession in 4:2, which is actually a complaint or accusation towards God,[63] Jonah reveals his own motivation for fleeing: 'Oh Lord, wasn't this my word, while I was still in my homeland? That is why I first fled to Tarshis, for I know that you are a gracious and compassionate God, patient in anger and abounding in faithful kindness, who would change his mind about the evil.' (4:2) Sasson exposes how minimal differences between Jonah's confession and other variations of the ancient confession of Ex. 34:6-7, in particular Joel 2:13, reveal an emphasis on God's changing mind. One of the most significant clues for this emphasis is that נחם only occurs in the versions of Joel and of Jonah. Consequently, it reveals that Jonah's reluctant behaviour is mainly directed at God's changing mind and that God customarily chooses not to punish evildoers.[64]
Sasson takes this observation for determining Jonah's real thought, namely that not the salvation of the Ninevites is the thorn in his side, but God's instrumental use of Jonah without respecting his dignity.[65] Even though I regard Sasson's observation as very convincing, I do not agree with the conclusion he draws. If God's disrespect was the main reason of Jonah's dejection, God's response to

[60] Wessels, "A Prophetic Word," 565-568.
[61] Van Heerden,"Psychological interpretations," 718. Considering the intergenerational trauma of the implied reader Claassens refers to, Van Heerden's argument does not dismiss the idea that it may be a reflection of the Israelites.
[62] Sasson, *Jonah*, 349-350.
[63] 'A positive pious interpretation is refuted.' Trible, *Rhetoric of Sexuality*, 8.
[64] Sasson, *Jonah*, 279-283. This is affirmed by Person and Wessels. Wessels "A Prophetic Word", 562; Person, *Conversation*, 44, 60.
[65] Sasson, *Jonah*, 297.

Jonah's dejection would have been inadequate. God had better explain or apologize for his instrumental use of Jonah, instead of explaining his concern.
Sasson's explanation seems to bypass too easily that Nineveh is regarded as a serious evildoer and oppressor of the people of Israel: Jonah's people. Since Jonah's people had suffered under Nineveh's conduct, Nineveh deserves to be punished in order for justice to take place, a thought that is also affirmed by God in his commission to Jonah (1:2). Jonah, therefore may have good reason to be angry or dejected about Nineveh's salvation.[66]
A reading from this perspective will recognise a conflict of values between God's justice (and his faithful loyalty towards his people), which requires that Nineveh must be punished, and God's mercy and compassion which requires God's relentment from it.[67] From this point of view, the emphasis on God's custom not to punish and to have a changeable mind, is more likely to be an accusation directed at God's weak character, than a complaint concerning his use of Jonah.

Considering all this, we can discern Jonah's true values, thoughts and concerns that motivate his emotion and behaviour and thus his emotional response to God's compassion.
Jonah does not perceive the Ninevites as intentional objects, but he does regard the Israelites as intentional objects. He even identifies himself as one of them.
Jonah believes the people of Israel are seriously suffering undeservedly by the former oppression, whereas the idea of Nineveh's perishing is deserved suffering on account of their evil and oppressive behaviour. Retributive justice is a concept of important value. Also God's steadfastness and loyalty to that concept is an important value to Jonah. Even though he also knows that God is changeable and compassionate.
So, the wellbeing and comfort of the Israelites is part of Jonah's eudaimonistic concern. Jonah's concern about himself fluctuates, but is it is the most direct and important concern present in the narrative. Jonah does not feel a single concern for the Ninevites, he regards them as objects that he wants to pull back from.

These value-laden thoughts are an explanation for Jonah's desire for the Ninevites to perish, but at the same time his knowledge of God's compassionate and changeable mind creates a feeling of entanglement. Within that frame, arguing with the Lord would have been a senseless effort, and the encounter with the Ninevites regarded as a repellent idea. This clarifies the motivation for Jonah's flight.[68] Moreover, this feeling of entanglement explains his desperate dejection at the end of the story (4:1-9), as his biggest concern is that the evil oppressor of his people must be punished, but he has no control over this at all. Jonah is suffering from the flourishing of evil, or God's renouncement to punish the wicked.
Additionally, Jonah's emotional fluctuations, like his extreme happiness and feeling of dejection about the plant, fit the scheme of a powerless man. The withering plant directly attacks his self- concern. It is the only concern left over which he felt at least a little control. When reading the story in that perspective Jonah's emotional fluctuations turn out not to be so unreasonable, moreover it requires an explanation about God's change of mind.

[66] Cf. Wessels and Claassens.
[67] Van Heerden with reference to Eubanks. Van Heerden, "Psychological interpretations," 727.
[68] On this point I agree with Sasson, Jonah is (also) dejected about God's use of Jonah and the dismissal of his dignity. I just disagree with Sasson in claiming it is the main focus of Jonah's accusation and dejection.

4.5.3. God – Yahweh

God is referred to as 'Yahweh, 'God', 'the or that God'[69] and 'Yahweh-God'. None of the commentaries report such a significant difference between the names for proposing an interpretation of separate entities. So I will also refer to him as one character. We may assert though, when Yahweh or Yahweh-God is used instead of God (Elohim), there is more emphasis on this special God, who is Yahweh.[70]

a) Characterization

God acts on seven occasions to determine the progress and outcome of the narrative. He appears to be the dominant character in the relation between him and Jonah.[71] His properties are mostly described by other characters in the narrative as: the creator of heaven, earth and sea (1:9); someone who decides over perishing or not (1:6; 3:9); a God to fear (1:9-10); a God to communicate with by prayer, sacrifice or acts (1:6, 14, 15; 2: 2-10; 3:8-9; 4:2,9); someone who gives deliverance (3:9), is compassionate, able to change his mind, patient in anger and abounding in faithful kindness (4:2). God's own actions and speech show a God who controls or manipulates animals and nature events (1:4; 2:1; 2:11; 4:6-8), who is displeased by evil (1:2) and concerned about humans and animals (4:11).

Most commentaries interpret God's control of nature and his capability to manipulate human destiny as a sign of his omnipotence and omniscience.[72] I have to disagree with this assumption though if this implies 'having the power and knowledge over everything on heaven and earth'. The text indeed gives enough clues to recognise the acknowledgement of God being the creator of heaven and earth. Creation language is a motive throughout the OT, which should affirm God's authority over the sea and its monster.[73]

Being the creator makes God indeed very powerful, yet it also makes him very vulnerable, as I will explain below. However, too many clues show that being the creator is not an equivalent to being omnipotent: God has no control over Jonah's mind and acting, who is able to disobey and to flee from God's sight (1:3) It is a pagan instrument that uncovers Jonah as the one who should be held accountable for the storm (1:7), which could bring up to discussion whether it is God or another force that appoints Jonah as accountable.[74] God has no control over other humans either since he cannot change their thoughts and cannot make them turn from evil paths without the word of a human (1:2; 3:1). Furthermore, he needs to manipulate humans by inefficient movements of nature ((1:4; 2:1;11) the only thing he does control, or at least is immediately obeyed by.[75]

In sum, God does not control the turn of events, he has only more tools than others to affect and manipulate. I also question the idea that God's will is completely free and sovereign, for, regarding his confession in 4:2 which reveals a sign of character determinism, Jonah already knows about his

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[69] The article in הָאֱלֹהִים may function as a demonstrative pronoun. Sasson, *Jonah*, 104.
[70] E.g. Sasson, *Jonah*, 93-98.
[71] Wessels, "A Prophetic Word," 555.
[72] E.g. Person, *Conversation*, 59-62; 67-68; Sasson, *Jonah*, 329; Wessels, "A Prophetic Word," 555.
[73] Cf. Section 4.2.
[74] Person, *Conversation*, 56. Even though Person suggests that God uses the pagan ritual of throwing lots, I cannot regard this as a clue for God's intervention, we may just as well say that throwing Jonah out of the ship creates a new problem which God needs to solve.
[75] Sasson, *Jonah*, 148-149; Person, *Conversation*, 58-59.
Sasson explains that וַיְמַן (2:1;11) is an act that generally needs a medium through which something is to be fulfilled. In *Jonah* this means to set the most appropriate conditions for teaching Jonah the desired lessons. Sasson, *Jonah*, 148-149.

changing mind from the start. Sasson even suggests that if the story had been written chronologically, God would have been narrowed in his freedom to act with compassion. Sasson, however, also claims that God himself knew all along that Nineveh would return from evil and that he would not perish the city.[76] That is a statement that I regard as very contradictive, because if God knew he would not destroy Nineveh he did not have to change his mind, he just had to stick to his original plan.[77]

The vulnerability that comes with God as being the creator entails his engagement with all creatures. A textual clue that supports this engagement is his רַחוּם, motherly compassion, as uttered by Jonah in 4:2. Also 3:3 may serve as a clue, if לֵֽאלֹהִים does refer to Nineveh as a city 'belonging to God'.[78]
Most evident is God's concern for human beings and animals as uttered by God himself in 4:10-11. This concern is revealed as follows: when God questions Jonah's appropriate concern about the plant,[79] he implicitly refers to his parenthood of, and his responsibility for, human- and animal species. He does so by reminding Jonah that Jonah has concern for something that he does not help to grow, does not labour for, and that arose and perished in one night. Thus, God justifies why he shows concern for 120.000 individual human beings and animals (because he did help them grow, he did labour for them, and he has known them longer than one night).[80] Noteworthy is God's use of אָדָם for human beings, which reminds us of the creation of humans in Genesis and God's use of גדל which usually refers to the raising of children or enhancing the status of individuals.[81]
God's explication of his parental relation with all creatures consequently exposes his vulnerability, which is his responsibility and involvement with every creature making him compassionate thus weakening his steadfast attitude and capability to act according to the concept of retributive justice.[82]
The paradigm of an omnipotent and omniscient God overlooks this fundamental aspect of God's final speech, hence the interpretation of God's intention with it. Yet, when we recognise God's honest disclosure of vulnerability in his speech, we also have to understand that it functions as an explanation, or even an apology for his regretting mind and relenting retributive action, rather than as an attestation of his power and free will.[83] Worth mentioning is that God does not judge Jonah's behaviour and dejection.[84]

b) Value-laden thoughts

Within the frame of Nussbaum's concept, we can now discern that God perceives every creature as an intentional object, intended to grow both physically and mentally.

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[76] I differ with Sasson about the translation of 3:4. Sasson proposes an alternative to the proclamation 'Nineveh will be overthrown' in order synchronise it with the outcome. (Sasson, *Jonah*, 234; 267-268). I do not consider 'turn to the good' as a plausible interpretation, for the author could have used שׁוּב , like he did in 3:8. Nor do I hold Sasson's deliberately ambiguous 'overturn' as very likely, for the twenty times it occurs in the OT, only one time it has a positive connotation. Furthermore, if the Ninevites would only return from their evil, their mourning and calling out to God would have been be irrelevant.
[77] Sasson, *Jonah*, 329-234; 267-268.
[78] Sasson, *Jonah*, 227-230.
[79] Cf. Wessels on God's reprimand saying Jonah is not in a position to have concern, I disagree with Wessels' interpretation saying it is intended to be a reprimand. Wessels, "A Prophetic Word," 551-569.
[80] Or, it took more than one night of effort to make them grow.
[81] BDB l. 1650 גִּדַּלְתּוֹ; Sasson interprets the גדל deliberately paralleling 'great city'. I however, think a reference to parenthood is equally presumable. Sasson, *Jonah*, 309.
[82] See also: Wessels about the explanation of God's responsibility. Wessels, "A Prophetic Word," 551-569.
[83] Which makes Sasson's statement saying Jonah is left to guess for God's motives and reasoning false. Sasson also explicitly states that God never feels the need to excuse for his conduct of saving Nineveh. Sasson, *Jonah*, 342-344; 346.
[84] Sasson, *Jonah*, 286-287.

God’s interpretations and beliefs are: Jonah’s suffering is undeserved, God judges the inhabitants of Ninevites as evil creatures (1:2), but also as creatures for whom he is responsible, ‘who cannot discern between left and right’ (4:11). This implies that God perceives their possible suffering as undeserved, or at least as a seriousness of suffering (to perish) that is not in accordance with their accountability. Especially the animals could not be held accountable.[85]
On the other hand God regards the conducts of evil as causing serious and undeserved suffering to others, or more specifically, to his people. Important values to God are retributive justice, and steadfast loyalty to his people. From this perspective the enemy of his people needs to perish in order to act against the cause of suffering.
God feels involved with all his creatures as a responsible creator and parent. Consequently, the wellbeing and growing up of the lives of Jonah, the Ninevites, the sailors, the animals and also the Israelites are part of God’s eudaimonistic concern.
This conflict in concern and thoughts, with on the one hand compassion for the Ninevites which make God relent from punishment, and on the other hand his compassion for Jonah involving an ethics of retributive justice and deliverance from Jonah’s suffering under the flourishing of the wicked, explain God’s fluctuating thoughts and actions. It explains God plans to punish evil and to send Jonah proclaiming it (1:2; 3:9) in contrast to God’s listening to the Ninevites (2:3-4) and his decision not to punish, as an act of compassion ((4:9-11). It explains God throwing a great storm into the sea, but also his taking notice of the sailors, interceding (1:6); and his saving Jonah from the sea (2:1-11) and his attempts to pull Jonah out of his misery (4:6).[86]
To put it in other words: God’s compassion for Jonah is incompatible with his compassionate act towards the Ninevites. It makes him vulnerable for emotions related to everything that happens to the creatures he is responsible for. So, God’s compassion gives him no other choice than to be slow in anger, to have a changeable mind, and to retain from an ethics based on absolute principles.

Only one possibility may deliver both parties from suffering, that is to release Jonah from his need for retribution by taking retributive justice out of Jonah’s concept of eudaimonia and to let the Ninevites be part of his circle of concern. Considering this, we may even have found another motivation of God’s commissioning Jonah to Nineveh, meaning Jonah’s encounter with the inhabitants of Nineveh may allow Jonah to recognise them as intended objects, as creatures similar to himself. In that perspective Jonah’s mission to Nineveh functions as embodied narrative imagination. Yet, as Jonah keeps the distance between himself and the city, God starts the ‘play’ with the plant and the worm.
This play cannot make Jonah feel compassionate about the Ninevites, but it might let him feel God’s pain about his perishing creatures, and thus it might enable Jonah to have compassion with God’s compassion, or at least make him accept and understand God’s compassionate and changeable mind.
But whether the latter is an adequate clarification of God’s mission or not, God’s explanation in 4:10-11 is motivated by his desire to provide an explanation, or an apology even, for his weakness and changeability that made him decide to act according to his compassion for Nineveh, and not according to his compassion with Jonah and the ethics of retributive justice.

[85] Sasson refers to comments saying ‘who cannot discern between left and right’ refers to children and to others regarding this description as the capability for ethical discernment. A definite answer is not given. Sasson argues אָדָם proofs the texts cannot refer just to children. Sasson, *Jonah*, 314. Considering גדל I think 4:11b definitely implies a kind of immaturity.
[86] Sasson, *Jonah*, 286-287.

So in the end, the book of Jonah turns out to be not only a narrative about Jonah, but also a narrative about God, in which God enfolds himself as a multi-layered character, who just as Jonah, is struggling with his vulnerability and his painful emotions directed at the sufferings of his creatures.

4.6 Intention of the Author

Before heading to a conclusion about the ethics revealed in the story, I will first go back to the aspect of the author's intentions. Considering the analysis and elaboration of the former section, two of the possibilities are immediately refutable.

The affirmative intention is inaccurate, for the story turned out not to be very convincing about God's sovereignty and steadfast character. Furthermore, if the author aimed for a conclusive and undisputable dogmatic message he would have avoided this open ending which invites the reader to participate in the story and to deliberate about the possible response.

The reprimanding purpose also turned out to be unlikely, as it is based on the wrong accusation of Jonah being hypocrite and arrogant. Furthermore, it disrespects experiences of trauma and anger of the implied reader and the significance of Nineveh's evil. A more likely intention is the educational, aiming to extend the reader's circle of concern.

This intention is allusively represented in God's commission to Jonah. However, if this were the intention of the author, he should have taken more effort to portray the pagans as multi-layered characters. The shallow and even ridicule descriptions inhibit the reader from perceiving them as subjects with inner-thoughts, emotions and desires. So to sympathize, let alone to identify with one of them, in order to recognise things that might happen in one's own life seems very unlikely.

I therefore, regard the comforting intention as the most plausible, since the story deals with the ambiguity of flourishing evil that is not in accordance with a worldview in which God's retributive justice rules. It reveals the central theme of theodicy, that underlies the narrative.[87] The answer for questions about the flourishing of the evil, and the reprieve of the wicked is not a clear-cut one, so a parable-like response that ends with a question back to the reader seems an accurate manner to serve this intention.[88]

Assuming that God's question to Jonah is equally directed at the reader, its function towards the reader may also be an equal one. This means that the story functions as an explanation and apology for an illogical reality in which evil does not perish.

Still, to the reader it is probably not the preferred explanation, for God does not explain the changeability of his decision. So the reason for why he acts according to his compassion with the Ninevites instead of according to justice, remains partly mysterious, or at least unpredictable. Therefore 'the story does not allow to force God in a box'.[89] Indeed, the answer may be dissatisfying and illogical, though it nevertheless shows how God's motives are based on compassion, and not on a desire for retribution.[90]

[87] Claassens, "Rethinking Humour," 665.
[88] Cf. Wessels about extended-parable. Wessels "A Prophetic Word," 553.
[89] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 407.
[90] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 407. On this point I agree with Nogalski's, however I differ with him in interpreting this attempt as a didactical or reprimanding lesson.

5. Ethics of Compassion as Revealed in the Narrative of Jonah

This chapter contains an ethical reflection on the analysis of the book of Jonah. Five statements can be revealed from the narrative, which will be propounded below. Subsequently, the significance of these insights in the debate on cultivating an ethics of compassion is reflected on.

5.1 Ethics Revealed in the Narrative of Jonah

- *Retributive justice and compassion are incompatible, ethics based on both concepts require a changeable and patient mind.*

God's first thought, in which Nineveh needs to perish for its evil conduct is based on an ethics of retributive justice that requires the wicked to be punished. God's second thought, in which Nineveh should be saved, is based on an ethics of compassion, which appeals to God's concern of responsibility and involvement with every creature, even with the evil one. Both concepts have only one possible outcome (either perishing or salvation) and an ethics based on both is incompatible. God eventually chooses, or is determined to choose, to act according to his compassion. His decision is thus based on an ethics of compassion. Yet, the story lacks a systematic definitive explanation for this decision.
The differences between God's first and second judgement reveal that God opens up the possibility to have second thoughts: he thinks that the Ninevites deserve to suffer for their evildoing, but he also thinks that they should not be punished, since they are part of his concern.
In this regard we may conclude that every situation could be judged and evaluated differently. God's ethics is thus closest to an Aristotelean ethics, based on particularity and context, but not necessarily always based on concern and compassion. This dialectical balancing between God's justice and compassion therefore causes a judgement that makes God change his mind, regretful and patient with the wicked. But as such it also implies a partiality, or an illogic and unpredictable reasoning, even for God himself. This makes him unreliable for those who expect his strong arm to make evil perish, and weak for those who hope to be saved from evil. This is a characteristic that Jonah disapproves, and which is known by the Ninevites (3:9).

- *Compassion is based on a judgement of responsible involvement which precedes eudaimonistic concern.*

Despite the former it is not true that nothing can be explained about God's reasons for his relenting. The narrative shows how God is responsible for the existence of all creatures who are intended to grow up, and therefore God is painfully involved with his creatures. God uses the analogy of a plant to illustrate his parental responsibility for all living creatures. By doing so God explains his concern as originating from his responsibility.
It is noteworthy God does not start his explanation with an appeal to Jonah's imagination considering the similar possibilities, nor to Jonah's shared humanity with the Ninevites, nor to any other argument that should include the Ninevites and animals within Jonah's eudaimonistic concern. Considering this, the narrative supports Van Riessen's claim, mentioned in Chapter 1, that responsibility and care precede compassion and not the other way around.
Another notion supporting the consequences of this statement is God does not punish Jonah for his lack of compassion. The narrative does not conclude with an encouragement or reprimand to feel compassion with the Ninevites, neither to Jonah, nor to the reader. God solely explains his own

concern towards Jonah. The narrator does not tell us about a prophet who is or should be concerned about the Ninevites. It appears that Jonah is not required to have compassion with the former oppressor of his people and, as will be exposed below, is not even capable of it.

- *Compassion involves a vulnerability that only responsible beings can afford.*

This statement follows from the previous statement. Several details in the narrative indicate that Jonah is in a weaker and less responsible position than God. Jonah has no tools and has no control over the fate of the Ninevites. In his emotional and mental fluctuations, we can even perceive a character that is mentally and physically weak.

We can observe a concern for Jonah's own people, but at the end of the story the only concern which is left is Jonah's self-concern for comfort and care. He appears to have no power for being exposed to more vulnerability. He is simply not capable of feeling more compassion. The story affirms Forster's neuro-scientific perspective, mentioned in Chapter 1, which shows that an agent who has no control over the cause of events should not or cannot be exposed to too much compassion. In this respect the story affirms the human limitations of compassion.

In contrast to this, God's responsibility does reach the corners of the world, as his position as creator of heaven and earth implies. Therefore, all living beings are within God's circle of eudaimonistic concern. As concluded in the previous chapter this painful involvement makes God vulnerable. Not only is God capable of compassion, he is even determined to have compassion. As the vulnerability of compassion is inherent to Nussbaum's definition, this insight is merely a re-affirmation of it. God's determination towards compassion also reminds us of what De Lange has stated, which was that compassion is actually an incompetence of distinguishing another one's pain from your own. These vulnerable and uncontrollable aspects of compassion show that unlimited compassion is not only impossible but also unbearable.

Without entering the whole debate about free will versus determinism, we may also conclude that the border between fault and non-fault is a vague line from God's perspective, since God as creator could be held accountable for the existence of every being. Therefore, humankind can only be held partially accountable for its conduct. Considering this, in combination with the painful burden that compassion is, רַחוּם is also the only possible form of compassion. By this I intend to say that compassion is only possible when it is based on a parental, responsible concern, and not solely on a eudaimonistic concern. So, the story reveals that universal compassion is beyond the human condition, and thus divine.

- *The partiality of compassion could cause suffering.*

Jonah's accusation on God's compassion reveals the ambiguity of compassion within the story. It considers compassion a kind of weakness that lets God relent from firm retribution.

What Jonah's dejection encloses is that a positive evaluation of compassion depends on a shared thought concerning serious suffering, non-fault, responsibility and concern. A disagreement about one of these thoughts, as Jonah and God have, implies that one has to choose between compassion for either the one or the other.

This does not only lead to inappropriate compassion, but also to a new kind of suffering, that could be interpreted as undeserved serious suffering caused by an unfulfilled need for compassion.

- *Every creature is valuable in itself.*

One last notion that is revealed in God's explanation for compassion, is the dignity of creation. In section 4.5.3b I have proposed the thought that God intended an encounter with the Ninevites, to make Jonah perceive the Ninevites as subjects with similar possibilities, or intended objects. Yet, this thought was not a necessary argument for convincing Jonah about life value of the Ninevites. As mentioned, God does not argue about the value of so many human beings and much cattle in relation to Jonah's eudaimonistic concern, neither does he argue about the thought of non-fault. Instead, God provides a plant that comes up in one night, and perishes in one night. God's argument for the dignity of human beings and much cattle is that he brought them into existence, so he has concern because they are God's creation. In his play with the plant God argues all humans, even those who seem to deserve suffering, should be treated with compassion.

With his final word God asserts an ontological dignity for every human being, every creature, even when from a human perspective, a situation of suffering would be judged as deserved suffering. In other words, God does not let Jonah share in his compassion, but in his wonder for the entire creation.

5.2 Ethical Reflection on the Cultivation of Compassion

Now, what could these insights contribute to the current discourse about the cultivation of compassion? The analysis of the narrative exposes two insights that could be interpreted as arguments against an ethics of compassion. The first argument is that a universal idea of compassion is possibly too idealistic since compassion for one party is incompatible with compassion for another party involved. Furthermore, a person with strength and power may be capable of compassion, but will probably still be limited in the extent. A global eudaimonistic concern appears to be beyond human capability.

The second argument is the analysis affirms the partiality of compassion, since not every human shares the same value-laden judgements about serious suffering, fault and non-fault, and concern. Also, the narrative leaves a gap for the inexplicable, the mysterious, and unpredictable deliberations that determine God's ethical decision. This creates an ambiguous apologetics of compassion in which the unreliability and inappropriate aspects of a compassion-based ethics are exposed.

So, the narrative is to be understood as affirmative on psychological and neurological insights that acknowledge the limitation of a human's capability to bear this painful emotion, and respect those who have a different or limited concern (which could sometimes even be just a self-concern for one's own safety and comfort). These ideas are different from those of Nussbaum who recognises the vulnerability of compassion, but also approaches compassion as a cognitive, fully explainable goal in addition to being achievable.

Still, the narrative does support, just as Nussbaum and the *Charter of Compassion* do, an ethics which is based on compassion over an ethics of absolute principle and retributive justice. Yet, it does not support the cultivation of eudaimonistic concern.

The ethics of compassion in *Jonah* puts the thought of fault into perspective and emphasises the thought of responsible concern. In that respect, the narrative supports an ethics of compassion that starts with responsibility and is less demanding than an ethics that starts with narrative imagination for the extension of the borders of eudaimonistic concern.

This is a notion I perceive to be a very acceptable notion in the context of a globalised world. Since, especially in a globalised world, the extension of eudaimonistic concern appears to have no borders, the possibilities to observe serious suffering of other creatures seem unlimited, whilst the possibilities to alleviate the suffering are indistinguishable. Therefore, the observers are often powerless and not in a position to act against the cause of suffering.
However, I do not think it means the story provides an argument against the cultivation of compassion or that it should be read as an excuse to sit and wait.[91] That would contradict the last statement revealed from the story in which every creature deserves to be judged according to an ethics of compassion.

Considering that, I would like to conclude that the story supports the cultivation of an ethics of compassion, but also provides an appeal to be careful with compassion. In order to do so, the cultivation of compassion must be separated from the cultivation of eudaimonistic concern. Priority must be given to the cultivation of responsibility.
This requires to acknowledge a certain differentiation and deviation in responsibility, in which the most responsible should recognise their concern and in which the most powerful should bear most responsibility.
I would like to point out that 'the most powerful' should not only include those in charge of power, but those who are privileged and strong concerning wealth, psychical and mental health, country of birth, capabilities etc. Therefore, the cultivation of responsibility should acknowledge 'privileges of non-fault', by which I mean to say this responsibility is more appropriate to be originated in gratefulness than in superiority.
Of course, compassion cannot fall prey to a dismissal of dignity or an understanding of compassion that only the privileged can afford, since it will then run the risk to evolve in the same way as 'pity' has done, to an emotion of superiority. A theology of responsible concern must involve a creational dignity, that equally relates every human to God.

Within this frame of reference, I would plead for the cultivation of careful compassion that acknowledges a concern beyond human capability but ascertains every human's dignity, since it originates from God's creation.

[91] Such as Nussbaum's criticism to Augustine refers to in Chapter 3.3.

Conclusion

This thesis started by referring to the current global society and its plea for the cultivation of compassion, and my aim at showing an OT perspective on an ethics of compassion. In order to define compassion, I explored Martha Nussbaum's ideas on compassion describing compassion as a painful emotion based on the thought of undeserved serious suffering, directed at another creature within someone's eudaimonistic concern. After expounding on how the OT narratives could function as a source for ethical reflection, I have analysed the narrative of Jonah.
I have found that the narrative of Jonah supports an ethics of compassion that includes every human as valuable and part of God's concern. Therefore every human is a possible recipient of compassion. I have also found that the thought of concern is preceded by the thought of responsibility, and that an extension of the borders of concern without responsibility is beyond the human capability.
Therefore, I have concluded that the cultivation of compassion must rely on the cultivation of responsibility in the first place, before the cultivation of eudaimonistic concern. So in the end, I would plead for a concerned cultivation of compassion, based on responsible concern.

One last remaining question is of course, what a cultivation of responsible concern should be like, and how it eventually differentiates from a cultivation of eudaimonistic concern. An elaborated answer to that question is beyond this research. I suppose it is even beyond the theological discourse. However, I would like to emphasise that the cultivation of responsibility should not only include a concept of values, but also practical knowledge about capabilities, possibilities and boundaries and borders of responsibility. It should aim at a shared responsibility that could cover the whole world, as a global society: each person with a limited and may be changeable responsibility, depending on one's own circumstances and condition. Knowledge about borders is a social and political issue, knowledge about personal boundaries of responsibility is a psychological, but also a theological, issue. The questions about (practical) responsibility in a globalised world prioritised in creational dignity are however, contents for further research.

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Appendix: Translation of the Book of Jonah

The translation, as exposed below, is based on the Masoretic text and structure.[1] I have used Sasson, and Person's translation with reference to Sasson, as main point of reference, in order to review my own translation.[2] Only significant deviations, disputed choices and remarkable notes which are relevant for the research question, are explained in the footnotes. According to the aim to reveal meaning from detailed textual clues, I prefer a concordant translation over a vivid narrative tone closer to modern English.

The Book of Jonah

$_{1:1}$Once it happened, the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the son of Amittai, saying: $_{2}$'Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against her, because their wickedness has come up before my sight.'[3] $_{3}$And Jonah got up to flee towards Tarshis, away from the sight of the Lord, and went down to Jaffa and found a ship going to Tarshis.[4] He hired it[5] and went down into it, in order to go with them in the direction of Tarshis, from the sight of Lord. $_{4}$But the Lord threw a great wind towards the sea, so a great storm raged upon the sea, and the ship expected itself to be wrecked. $_{5}$The sailors feared and cried out, every man to his god, and they threw the cargo which was in the ship into the sea, in order to lighten it. Meanwhile[6] Jonah was gone down into the vessel's hold, laid down, and was fast asleep. $_{6}$But the shipmaster approached him and said to him: 'What are you sleeping? Get up! Call out to your god, perhaps that[7] god will give a thought[8] to us, so that we will not perish.$_{7}$ And they said to each other 'Let's cast [down] lots to find out on whose account this evil came upon us. So they cast [down] the lots, and the lot fell [down] on Jonah. $_{8}$Then they said to him: 'Please, tell us on what account this evil came upon us. What is your occupation? Where do you come from? What is your homeland? And from which people do you come?'$_{9}$And he said to them: 'I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the god of the heavens, who made the sea and the dry land.' $_{10}$And the men feared with great fear and they said to him: 'What is it, that you have done?' So the men came to know that he was fleeing from the Lord, because he told it to them. $_{11}$And they said to him: 'What should we do to you for the sea to become calm over us?' because the sea became increasingly violent against them. $_{12}$And he said to them: 'Pick me up, and throw me into the sea, for the sea to become calm over you, because I know that it is

[1] The notes in the BHS do not indicate relevant differences between various manuscripts.
[2] A set of draft notes with an elaborated determination of semantics and syntax is attainable on request.
[3] I have translated לְפָנָי with 'sight', in order to mark the significant detail of the wickedness that came up to God's sight and Jonah who is hiding away from God's sight.
[4] Also possible is: 'which had just come from Tarshis'. Person, *Conversation*, 32.
Nogalski interpreters the omission of the directional marker as a subtle difference between the ship that actually goes to Tarshis, and Jonah, who goes *towards* Tarshis, but will never get there. An explanation that I think is more likely than Person's. Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 415.
[5] Nogalski, *Hosea-Jonah*, 412-422.
[6] Person, *Conversation*, 32-36.
[7] The article of הָאֱלֹהִים may function as a demonstrative pronoun. Sasson, *Jonah*, 104.
[8] Also possible is: 'take notice, or intercede'. Sasson, *Jonah*, 89-104. I prefer 'give a thought' for highlighting the (value-laden) thought. See: BDB, l. 7512 עשת.

because of me that this great storm rages against you.’$_{13}$ Then the men made one’s way by rowing to get back to dry land, but they were not able to, because the sea was increasingly raging against them. $_{14}$And they cried out to the Lord, saying: Please, O Lord, do not let us perish for the life of this man, do not hold us accountable for innocent blood, for you are Lord, whatever pleases you, you do. $_{15}$Then they picked up Jonah and threw him into the sea. And the sea ceased its raging. $_{16}$Then the men cried out to the Lord with great fear, and they offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and made solemn promises.
$_{2:1}$Then the Lord provided a big fish to swallow Jonah.

And this happened: Jonah stayed in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights. $_{2}$And Jonah prayed to the Lord, his god, from the belly of the fish. $_{3}$He said:

‘I call out, in my trouble, to the Lord
and he answers me;
from the womb of Sheol I cry
you hear my voice.”
$_{4}$You threw me into the depths,
in the heart of the seas,
and a stream surrounds me,
all your breakers and waves sweep over me.
$_{5}$And I, I say: I am banished out,
far from your eyes,
yet I continue to look out for the temple of your holiness.
$_{6}$The waters grasp around me, up to my life,
the deep surrounds me,
weeds are tied around my head.
$_{7}$To the foundation of the mountains I sink.
The earth, it closed her bars behind me forever.
but you lift up my life, out of the pit, o Lord my God.
$_{8}$As my life faints away,
I remember the Lord.
And my prayer comes to you,
to the temple of your holiness.
$_{9}$Those who hold on empty vanity,
give up their hope for faithful kindness. (חֶסֶד)
$_{10}$ But I, with a voice of thanksgiving
I will sacrifice to you
I shall fulfil what I promise.
Salvation belongs to the Lord.’

$_{11}$Then the Lord spoke to the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land.

$_{3:1}$ Now it happened, the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying: $_{2}$’Get up and go to Nineveh, that large city, and call out to her the message which I tell you.’ $_{3}$And Jonah got up and went to Nineveh according to the word of the Lord. And

Nineveh was a large city to God, [9] a three days' journey. $_4$And Jonah began to enter the city and walked a one-day journey, and he called out, saying: Yet, forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown. $_5$And the men of Nineveh believed in God, they called out a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. $_6$When the word reached the king of Nineveh, he got up from his throne, took of his garment and covered himself in sack-cloth and sat on ashes. $_7$Then he had the following proclaimed: 'In Nineveh, on the authority of the king and his nobles: 'Neither, human nor beast, herd nor flock, must taste anything, must not graze, nor drink water. $_8$But they must cover themselves in sackcloth, human and beast, and call out to God with strength and each man must return from his evil path and the violence that is in their hands. $_9$Who knows that god will change his mind (נחם), and turn away from his fierce anger, so that we may not perish. $_{10}$And God saw their deeds, that they turned away from their evil path and God changed his mind about the evil which he had told them to do, and he do not do it. $_{4:1}$This was so terribly upsetting to Jonah, that he became dejected.[10] $_2$And he prayed to the Lord, saying: 'Oh Lord, wasn't this my word, while I was still in my homeland? That is why I first fled to Tarshis, for I know that you are a gracious (חַנּוּן) and compassionate (רַחוּם) God, patient in anger and abounding in faithful kindness (חֶסֶד), who would change his mind (נחם) about the evil. $_3$Now then, Lord, please take my life away from me, because for me death is better than life.'

$_4$Then the Lord said 'Are you rightly dejected?'[11] $_5$Then Jonah left the city and sat down at the east side of the city. There he made a shelter for himself, and he sat under it in the shade until he could see what would happen in the city. $_6$And the Lord-God provided a plant, and it came up over Jonah to form a shade over his head, to pull him out of his misery. And Jonah was exceedingly glad about the plant. $_7$Then God provided a worm. At the rise of dawn, the next day, it attacked the plant, so that it dried out.

$_8$And then this happened: when the sun came up, God provided a scorching eastern wind. And the sun hit on Jonah's head, so that he became faint, and he asked himself to die, and said: 'for me death is better than life.'$_9$ And God said to Jonah: 'Are you rightly dejected about the plant?' And he said: 'Yes I am rightly dejected, even to death.' $_{10}$And the Lord said: 'You are concerned (חוס) about the plant, for which you do not labour, nor did you make it grow up[12], which came up in a night and perished in a night. $_{11}$Yet, should I not be concerned (חוס) about Nineveh, the great city, in which there are more than 120.000 human beings (אָדָם) who cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand side, and also much cattle.'

[9] Also possible is: 'belonging to God' Sasson, *Jonah*, 227-230.
[10] More common is 'anger'. Sasson, *Jonah*, 273-275.
[11] Sasson translates הֵיטֵב as 'utterly' since God recognises Jonah's pain and cannot be teasing or questioning his motivation or justification. Although his argumentation is very convincing, Sasson's translation creates a rather odd conversation between Jonah and God, which adds nothing to the narrative. Furthermore, Sasson does not thoroughly explore the possibility of the inf. abs. functioning as a subject, which would support 'Is doing good making you depressed' as an accurate translation of 3:4; חָרָה in the 3rd person seems to support הֵיטֵב functioning as a subject in 3:4, but this is not possible in 4:9. Therefore, in order to stay congruent with 4:9 I prefer a translation with 'rightly'. Sasson, *Jonah*, 286-287.
For functions of the inf. abs. see Jan.P. Lettinga, *Grammatica van het Bijbels Hebreeuws* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 172.
[12] גִּדַּלְתּוֹ usually refers to the raising of children or enhancing the status of individuals. BDB l. 1650 גִּדַּלְתּוֹ.