

## AMPLE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM AND THE FEAR OF ISLAM

– ANNA GŁĄB –

---

Martha C. Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London 2012.

One of the tasks of philosophy is to cope with specific problems of the modern world. The Aristotelian “philosophy of human affairs”<sup>1</sup> was supposed to analyze the ethical, social, and political challenges that the Greeks faced. Generations of philosophers implemented this ideal. John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Henry Sidgwick, or Immanuel Kant – these are only some of the philosophers who exerted influence on public life through their writings. Also active in this sphere were analytic philosophers such as Bertrand Russell, well-known for his pacifism, and Vienna Circle philosophers, who contributed to the criticism of fascist ideology in Europe by analyzing the rhetoric of Nazi propaganda. Refusing to bow to ideologies, they were always on the side of reason, sometimes with tragic results. When the Nazis came to power, many neopositivists had to escape to the USA; as a result – although Europe had politically committed philosophers (e.g. Jean-Paul Sartre) and still does have them (e.g. Jürgen Habermas) – it is in America that they take part in socio-political debates to a greater extent. One of the participants of such debates is Martha C. Nussbaum, a philosopher at the University of Chicago.

Nussbaum's practical philosophy consists in analyzing the arguments used in discussions concerning the current issues of social policy, which have their source in problems connected with the multiculturalism of “the world's citizens” as well as in the religious differences and social inequalities that stem from it. A philosopher – as Nussbaum follows Seneca in saying – is primarily supposed to be an advocate of humanity,<sup>2</sup> serving that which is human with his or her skills of analysis and impartial study of reality. Her latest book, *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age*, is a continuation of an earlier

---

<sup>1</sup> Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1181b, URL = <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus-cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=GreekFeb2011&getid=1&query=Arist.%20Eth.%20Nic.%201181b> [23.07.2013].

<sup>2</sup> Nussbaum [1998] p. 793.

one, *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality* (2008), where she argues, among others, with Daniel Dennett, one of the so-called New Atheists. Because Dennett, in *The New York Times*, coined the term "brights" for non-believers, suggesting that the appropriate one for believers should be "dummies,"<sup>3</sup> and because in his book *Breaking the Spell*<sup>4</sup> he contrasted religious people with philosophers, as if no such thing as a religious philosopher could exist at all, Nussbaum decided to protest. Making no attempt to conceal her religious commitment (she is Jewish by conviction, a member of a Reform Jewish congregation), she writes: "I am a philosopher, but I and many of my professional colleagues disagree with Dennett personally: we are ourselves religious people. Almost all, furthermore, would disagree with Dennett about respect for others: we think that people's religious commitments should be respected, and that it is simply not respectful to imply that religion is a 'spell' or that people who accept such beliefs are dummies."<sup>5</sup> Quoting George Washington's words addressed to Quakers: "I assure you very explicitly, that in my opinion the conscientious scruples of all men should be treated with great delicacy and tenderness,"<sup>6</sup> Nussbaum refuses to accept the reductionism that exponents of New Atheism fall into in their description of human life and death because it offends humanity and compromises the project of building a society based on respect for people's beliefs, including religious beliefs.

It is difficult not to notice that, following the terrorist attacks carried out over the last twelve years by Islamic extremists, a radicalization of anti-religious beliefs has been taking place today. In the sphere of philosophy, it manifests itself in the activity and works of New Atheists: in Richard Dawkins' memetics, in "conversational intolerance" towards religious beliefs proposed by Sam Harris, or in Christopher Hitchens' argumentation, according to which – paraphrasing the title of his famous book – "religion poisons everything."<sup>7</sup> In this context, Nussbaum's latest work, in which the author argues that Europe and the USA should not fear Islam, is bound to be treated by some circles as a provocation. However, the book contains matter-of-fact, fiendishly intelligent and courageous argumentation by means of which the author demonstrates that modern democracies should not fear any form of religion. What we should fear is its improper use, particularly

---

<sup>3</sup> Dennett [2003].

<sup>4</sup> Dennett [2007] p. 19, 23.

<sup>5</sup> Nussbaum [2008] p. 10.

<sup>6</sup> As cited in: Nussbaum [2008] p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Gutowski [2012] pp. 14–15.

in the political field. But is defence of every form of religiousness not a case of throwing the baby out with the bathwater? Does Nussbaum succeed in maintaining full objectivity and consistency of argumentation?

The book, composed of commentaries for “The Stone,” the philosophy column of *The New York Times’* online commentary forum “The Opinionator,” has a message that Nussbaum sums up in one sentence: “know yourself, so that you can move outside of yourself, serve justice, and promote peace” (xiii<sup>8</sup>). The point of departure for Nussbaum's analyses is the situation of religious minorities today. She believes that fear and intolerance in France, Belgium and Italy, where Muslims have been prohibited by law from wearing burqas and niqabs in public places, stem from a definition of national identity that stresses homogeneity. European nations see their roots in a profile that they believe to be impossible for immigrants to fit into. They place emphasis cultural assimilation to the dominant paradigm. Proposing to take a look at **fear** itself, Nussbaum writes that, psychologically speaking, fear is a primitive form of emotion that does not require a particularly complicated mental apparatus but only rudimentary orientation to survival. Fear is the fruit of ignorance and imagination, but it is also fuelled by political rhetoric. How does fear work? First, “fear typically starts from some real problem: people had reason to be anxious about economic security, about class tensions [...], about the unpredictable forces of both political and economic change”; second, “fear is easily displaced onto something that may have little to do with the underlying problem but that serves as a handy surrogate for it, often because the new target is already disliked”; third, “fear is nourished by the idea of a disguised enemy” (23). Giving Hurricane Irene and Airport Profiling as examples, Nussbaum believes that fear may be justified. However, referring to the crime committed in July 2011 in Norway by Anders B. Breivik, she writes that, from the very beginning, numerous media related this tragedy to Islamic terrorists but the crime disproved the thesis that the only perpetrator of terrorism was Al Qaeda.<sup>9</sup>

In this situation, it is easy to give in to anxiety, which is the most narcissistic of all emotions. As Iris Murdoch writes in her novel *The Black Prince*, anxiety is a form of extreme concentration on oneself: “Anxiety most of all characterizes the human animal. [...] It is a kind of cupidity, a kind of fear, a kind of envy, a kind of

---

<sup>8</sup> All the quotation that are not footnoted have been taken from the book under review. Page numbers are given in the main text.

<sup>9</sup> Breivik was a reader of the blog kept by American Pamela Geller, entitled *Atlas Shrugs*, whose main aim is the “‘unmasking’ of an alleged Muslim conspiracy for domination” (55). Nussbaum writes more about Geller's blog further on, also in the context of “the case of Park51” – pp. 195–198.

hate [...]. The natural tendency of the human soul is towards the protection of the ego."<sup>10</sup> Can anxiety, then, be eliminated altogether? In Nussbaum's opinion, "at this time we badly need an approach inspired by ethical philosophy in the spirit of Socrates" (2), built upon **three universal principles**: 1. "political principles expressing equal respect for all citizens," 2. "rigorous critical thinking that ferrets out and criticizes inconsistencies, particularly those that take the form of making an exception for oneself, noting the 'mote' in someone else's eye while failing to note the large plank in one's own eye," and 3. "a systematic cultivation of the 'inner eyes,' the imaginative capacity that makes it possible for us to see how the world looks from the point of view of a person different in religion or ethnicity" (2-3).

Nussbaum seeks the roots of **the first principle** in the history of India, where the policy of religious tolerance was implemented earlier than in the West: at the turn of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, when Ashoka, a convert from Hinduism to Buddhism, issued a series of laws on tolerance. A better-known ruler of India, living at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries - a Muslim ruler, incidentally - was Akbar, whose views influenced the development of European ideas of tolerance. The first principle is based on the idea of human dignity and equality, which unites Europeans with Americans; however, according to Nussbaum, "Europe on the whole has relied on other strategies to deal with religious minorities: assimilation, geographical sorting (dissenters leave), and established churches with formal tolerance. Such solutions are not morally adequate" (60-61). In her definition of dignity and equality, Nussbaum also refers to various traditions: Stoic, Christian, and Kantian, which share the following thesis: "All human beings possess human dignity, and with respect to that dignity they are equal" (61). This is the first premise of her argument. The second one concerns government duties: "whatever else governments do, they may not violate that equal dignity" (65). The next premise is the thesis that the ability by means of which people discover the meaning of life, called conscience, is related to their dignity. "To violate conscience is to conduct an assault on human dignity" (65). To these premises Nussbaum adds another one: "The vulnerability premise [...] means that giving equal respect to conscience requires tailoring worldly conditions so as to protect both freedom of belief and freedom of expression and practice. It also suggests that freedom should be quite ample: being able to whisper prayers in your home is hardly enough for genuine religious liberty" (67). Answering the question of what these abstract principles mean in practice, she draws on two philosophical traditions.

---

<sup>10</sup> Murdoch [2003] p. 183.

The first one is that of John Locke, who claimed that the protection of equal freedom of conscience requires two things: laws that do not interfere with religious beliefs and laws that are “nondiscriminatory about practices, that is, the same laws must apply to all in matters touching on religious activities” (71). The other tradition, associated with the 17th-century philosopher Roger Williams, the founder of Rhode Island colony, is the belief that the protection of conscience must be stronger than that proposed in the Lockean tradition. This tradition, known as accommodationism, makes the assumption that laws in democracy are always made by majorities and reflect the ideas of those majorities, focusing on their benefits and comfort, starting with the choice of working days and ending with the legal status of soft drugs. These laws may be unjust to minorities. Williams' position differs from Locke's mainly in that it extends religious liberty to pagans and non-believers.

Accommodationism is difficult to interpret for the law, for how should minority demands for equal treatment be treated in the case of using narcotics during religious rituals? Nussbaum considers the well-known case of Native American Al Smith, who was made redundant after he revealed, in a casual conversation with a friend, that he took a hallucinogenic drug (peyote) during a religious ritual; the drug was made illegal by the state of Oregon after the case came to light. It is difficult not to notice that Smith's dismissal was unjust. Still, did the court of the state of Oregon take the right decision? In Nussbaum's opinion, what was missing there was a reference to the demands of conscience that Washington had called for respecting. Yet, in keeping with the slippery slope law, the acceptance of the precedent could result in large-scale legalization of drugs. It also seems that accepting every oddity regarding religious practices and failure to distinguish them from sects threatening the life of citizens (in Nussbaum there is no such distinction) may lead to a situation in which democratic governments will be faced with demands to accept organizations that may contribute e.g. to the death of their followers, explaining this with the requirements of religious cult.<sup>11</sup> Nussbaum writes: “One religion that makes me cringe is an evangelical sect that requires its members to handle poisonous snakes [...]. I find that one bizarre, I would never go near it, and I tend to find the actions involved disgusting. But that does not mean that I don't respect its followers as bearers of equal human rights and human dignity” (119). In the case of sects, in my opinion, Williams' demands should not apply at

---

<sup>11</sup> The financial frauds and the exploitation of citizens by members of one of the world's largest religious sects (around 8 million members) – the Church of Scientology – are described in Lawrence Wright's book *Going Clear: Scientology, Hollywood, & the Prison of Belief*, Knopf, New York 2013.

all. The proliferation of his ideas in the USA, in an atmosphere of relativism as well as playing down the role of doctrines and of adherence to the truthfulness of theses, provoked criticism from the New Atheists.<sup>12</sup> This criticism in turn fuelled the emergence of religious extremities and religious fundamentalisms, which even Montaigne, in his *Attempts (Essays)*, regarded as a threat to social order. Nussbaum appears not to notice any dangers in the radicalization of religious views, lumping all religious movements together and thus causing simplifications in the picture of their functioning. The philosophical reason must distinguish religiousness, which can and must be rationalized, from those manifestations of religiousness that constitute an attempt not only against reason but also against human life.

To Nussbaum, accommodationism seems more adequate than the Lockean stance as regards equal respect for others, since “it reaches subtle forms of discrimination that are ubiquitous in majoritarian democratic life” (87). Yet, the two traditions have much in common: “In the world imagined by both Williams and Locke, the majority does not say, ‘I’m the norm, now you fit in.’ It says, ‘I respect you as an equal, and I know that my own religious pursuits are not the only ones around. Even if I am more numerous and hence more powerful, I will try to make the world comfortable for you’” (96–97).

**The second principle** proposed by Nussbaum has a gospel guideline as its main idea: “Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove that splinter from your eye,’ while the wooden beam is in your eye? You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye” (Mt 7:3–6). Nussbaum claims that people often make decisions without considering a given matter sufficiently and without self-examination. Their decisions are distorted by limited experience, by tradition, as well as by anxiety or egoism. This kind of error Nussbaum calls inconsistency, which Socrates pointed out to his interlocutors (e.g. in conversation with Eutyphro). Kant also believed that “we need philosophical self-examination not because we are stupid or lacking in basically good ethical ideas but because each of us has a selfish propensity to ‘quibbling,’ to exempting ourselves from principles we apply to others. Therefore, a good way of testing ourselves is to ask whether the basis of our action could be recommended as law for everyone” (100–101). The inconsistency error – in both the Socratic and the Christian-Kantian versions – is, Nussbaum believes, not only an intellectual error but also a deeply ethical one, which she defines as “the failure to acknowledge the

---

<sup>12</sup> Gutowski [2012] p. 19.

equal reality of others” (102). In this context, she analyzes several arguments in favour of the ban on wearing burqas in public places, which have one thing in common: “all [...] are made inconsistently, in ways that tacitly favor majority practices and burden minority practices” (105). The first argument refers to safety requirements and says that people should show their faces uncovered in public places. Nussbaum gives numerous examples of situations when covered face does not cause anxiety in anyone (freezing weather, masks used by surgeons, dentists, skiers, etc.). The fact that Muslim women cover their faces does not justify suspecting burqa wearers of terrorism as if the burqa posed extreme danger to security. The second argument concerns the transparency that is required in relations between citizens. Nussbaum believes that uncovering one's face is not required in contact with another person, eye contact being sufficient. She also claims that people often have problems in communicating with those who look odd, but “there’s an unfortunate human tendency to blame this difficulty on the person who looks odd rather than on oneself” (112). The third argument says that the burqa is not a sign of religion but of male domination and symbolizes the objectification of women. Nussbaum claims that in modern culture we are dealing with notorious treatment of women as objects (pornography, transparent clothes, plastic surgeries undergone by women who want to appeal to men, etc.), so it is pharisaic to defend Muslim women against objectification while similar objectification is taking place in our own culture. The principles Nussbaum defends maintain equal respect for all religions but do not mean equal approval for all religious practices. The activities of the Ku Klux Klan, a symbol of racism in the USA, are legal but go against moral beliefs and may therefore be justly criticized. The fourth argument is the thesis that many women wear burqas because they are forced to do so rather than because they want to.<sup>13</sup> Nussbaum believes this argument to be unsubstantiated, since there are no statistics proving that there is disproportionately more violence in Muslim families than in others. She also believes Islam to be compatible with women's rights, which sounds surprising in a feminist's mouth. For how can her judgment be reconciled with the fact that e.g. in the United Arab Emirates women do not even have voting rights, and that for a rape to be acknowledged there a woman needs to have four Muslim witnesses?

Nussbaum also takes up the issue of France's secularity (*laïcité*). In her opinion, French secularism is unjust to religious people. It is enough to analyze the language of the burqa ban law. It prohibits “wearing attire designed to hide

---

<sup>13</sup> There is more on this subject in an interview given by Nussbaum: “Islam? Perfectly compatible with Women Rights”, URL = <http://www.resetdoc.org/story/378> [15.01.2014].

the face” and gives a long list of exceptions.<sup>14</sup> What is striking is that “the law has tried to include every possible occasion for covering the face – except the burqa [...]. From the point of view of our principle of equal liberty, the whole policy of laïcité is mistaken, since it privileges nonreligion over religion and constricts the liberty of religion expression without any compelling government interest” (134). To Nussbaum, American law is much more just because it does not favour one religion over another or nonreligion over religion. “French ban is not neutral, any more than the school dress code is neutral. [...] the French law betrays in favor of the familiar and dominant French way of being a human being” (135). Controversies concerning the dress of Muslim women reduce their understanding of femininity to the French dogma of what it means to be a woman, “in which sexuality is casually displayed as a form of individual initiative and personal self-expression. This understanding of female sexuality is taken to be ‘modern,’ and anything else is taken to be archaic, subversive, and threatening” (136). However, the same argument can, in my opinion, be applied to the Muslim understanding of woman, which may be charged with dogmatism and homogeneity; these – in the form of the European idea of the assimilation of immigrants – is what Nussbaum objects to.

**The third principle** proposed by Nussbaum is the principle of inner eyes, that is, of respect and empathic imagination, which “requires seeing the other as a person pursuing human goals, and understanding in some loose way what those goals are” (143). Nussbaum is a Jewess who rejects the requirements of orthodoxy (e.g. those concerning dress, wearing tzizit, or wearing a kippah outside the synagogue). Yet, she admits: “I have many problems with the type of orthodox Judaism [...]. But the participatory imagination reminds me that they have their own lives, just as I have mine, and they are entitled to the space to pursue their own goals, on a basis of equality with me [...]. By imaging other people’s way of life, we don’t necessarily learn to agree with their goals, but we do see the reality of those goals for them. We learn that other worlds of thought and feeling exist” (143–44). Nussbaum presents the ways in which empathy functions on the exam-

---

<sup>14</sup> “The prohibition described in Article I does not apply if the attire is prescribed or authorized by legislative or regulatory dispensation, if it is justified for reasons of health or professional motives, or if it is adopted in the context of athletic practices, festivals, or artistic or traditional performances.”

[L’interdiction prévue à l’article Ier ne s’applique pas si la tenue est prescrite ou autorisée par des dispositions législatives ou réglementaires, si elle est justifiée par des raisons de santé ou des motifs professionnels, ou si elle s’inscrit dans le cadre de pratiques sportives, de fêtes ou de manifestations artistiques ou traditionnelles] (as cited in Nussbaum [2012] p. 133).



ples of literary works: George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda*, Gotthold E. Lessing's drama *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*), and Marguerite de Angeli's fables.

The final chapter is devoted to what is known as **the case of Park51** – that is, to the “question of establishing an Islamic-initiated multifaith community center, containing a prayer space” (188), which is to be built a few streets away from “ground zero,” where the WTC stood before it was attacked by Al-Qaeda on 9/11. The site for construction was bought by a Muslim businessman Sharif El-Gamal (son of a Lebanese man and a Polish Catholic woman). Nussbaum presents the facts concerning the design and the debates on this issue that have been underway in America, concurring with the opinion of Michael Bloomberg, Mayor of NYC; there is no space here to present her major arguments, so I would just like to comment on one topic. Nussbaum compares the construction of a Muslim centre in Manhattan to the establishment of a Carmelite convent in the old theatre building situated next to the Gravel Yard in Auschwitz concentration camp<sup>15</sup>. She writes that the Carmelite nuns occupied the place illegally (unlike El-Gamal, who purchased the site for the construction of the centre). The facts, however, are as follows: on 14 June 1984, the President of Oświęcim granted the Carmelites the right of perpetual usufruct of the state-owned plot of land, and on 26 July 1984 a notarial deed was signed under which the Carmelite nuns became legal owners of the theatre building and the adjacent land for 99 years. This was not, therefore, a case of illegal occupation of the building, as Nussbaum suggests it as. It appears that Nussbaum frequently selects the facts that fit into her picture of reality, which calls her objectivity into question. This is the case, for example, with her attempts to blame all Catholics for the Holocaust on the grounds that Pope Pius XII, as the head of the Catholic Church, did nothing to stop the mass murder of the Jews during World War II (she contrasts this with the situation of Muslims living in the USA, who are not responsible for the attacks on the WTC since their religion is not centralized). In her opinion, irrespective of whether or not Catholics condemn anti-Semitism today, the Catholic Church “(not the faith, but the organized church) is complicit in the Holocaust on a wide scale” (228). But if Nussbaum builds her argument on the centralization of authority in the Catholic Church, she should notice the role of Pope John Paul II in bringing about Catholic-Jewish reconciliation or in the reconstruction of relations between Poles and Jews, as well as

---

<sup>15</sup> The objective history of this conflict is presented by Władysław Teofil Bartoszewski in his book *The Convent at Auschwitz*, George Braziller, New York 1991.

the fact that the pope apologized for anti-Semitism many times in public (for the first time in the Roman synagogue in 1986)<sup>16</sup>.

A separate issue is blaming the Poles for the Holocaust. Nussbaum's statement that "Polish Christians [...] played a big role in the Holocaust" (229) is only one side of the coin. We are responsible for the pogrom in Jedwabne,<sup>17</sup> whose memory is recently being restored in Poland. The other side of the coin, which Nussbaum fails to take into account, is that Poles constitute the largest proportion of individuals decorated with the Israeli medal *Righteous Among the Nations*, awarded by Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority (the medal has been awarded to 6,394 Poles). Even though in her moral philosophy program she stresses the role of particulars in moral judgment, Nussbaum overlooks the circumstances in which Poles helped the Jews as well as the fact that in Poland under Nazi occupation helping the Jews was punishable with death. It is an irony of fate that Americans constantly need to be reminded of "the man who tried to stop the Holocaust,"<sup>18</sup> Jan Karski, who was the first one in the West to report to the Allies on the extermination of the Jews and to appeal – also to Roosevelt – for helping them, suggesting a number of ultimatums that the Allies should deliver to the Nazis in order to stop the Holocaust. All this to no effect. No one believed that Germans could be so cruel towards the Jews. Roosevelt is even reported to have interrupted Karski's account by saying that the time to get even with the Germans would be after the war.<sup>19</sup> Perhaps Nussbaum's position on the participation of Poles in the Holocaust reflects the ignorance of many Americans; after all, Barack Obama himself, when posthumously awarding Karski the Presidential Medal of Freedom in April 2012, used the expression "Polish death camp."

---

<sup>16</sup> Nussbaum only comments on Pope Benedict XVI's words: "He blamed the Holocaust solely on 'criminals' in the Nazi regime, and asked why God had allowed this to happen – clearly refusing to inquire why Catholics and the Church had allowed this to happen" (229). Again, she may be charged with treating history and various statements selectively.

<sup>17</sup> See J.T. Gross, *Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland*, Princeton University Press 2001. Much of the information given in this book is not true, e.g. the data concerning the number of people killed in the pogrom. According to the decision of 30 June 2003 to discontinue the investigation, issued by the Polish Institute of National Remembrance (IPN), approximately 300-400 people were killed – not 1600, as Gross writes.

See: [http://arch.ipn.gov.pl/ftp/ftp\\_pdf\\_jedwabne\\_postanowienie.pdf](http://arch.ipn.gov.pl/ftp/ftp_pdf_jedwabne_postanowienie.pdf), p. 174 of the document [15.01.2014].

<sup>18</sup> See T. Wood, S.M. Jankowski, *Karski: How One Man Tried to Stop the Holocaust*, Wiley 1996; J. Karski, *Story of a Secret State: My Report to the World*, Penguin Books, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> Klich [2010], URL = [http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,8132619,Jak\\_katolik\\_zostal\\_Zydem.html](http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,8132619,Jak_katolik_zostal_Zydem.html) [15.01.2014].

The argumentation Nussbaum uses at the end of her book contrasts with the principles she has formulated. To avoid the charge of pharisaism that she herself levels, she should be able to come face to face with extremism not only on the part of Christians (a manifestation of which is planting bombs at abortion clinics) but also on the part of Judaism and Islam. She should condemn massacres in the Middle East, e.g. in Lebanon, that Jews perpetrated on the wave of nationalism,<sup>20</sup> just like Emmanuel Lévinas condemned them, despite his Jewish identity and friendly attitude towards Israel, when he said, causing outrage in many, that “invoking the Holocaust to say that God is with us always, in all circumstances, is just as despicable as the *Gott mit uns* on perpetrators' uniform belts.”<sup>21</sup> Instead of objectivity, what can often be observed today is succumbing to political correctness, opportunism, and adulation of one's own circles.<sup>22</sup>

In order to obtain a consistent picture of religious persecutions, Nussbaum should make herself acquainted e.g. with the data of the *Aid to the Church in Need* organization, for Islam or Judaism are not the only religions in a minority situation in numerous countries. According to this organization, Christians constitute 2% of the population in India, 2.25% in Israel, 1.5% in Pakistan, and 5.25% in Syria.<sup>23</sup> In Nigeria, where 51.3% of the population is Christian and 45% is Muslim, Christians are massacred during services and buildings of charity organizations are attacked. There is not a single word in Nussbaum's book about the fact that Muslims from Nigeria regard Christians as infidels that they declare war on. Meanwhile, in June last year, suicide attacks organized by the Islamist organization Boko Haram in three Christian churches initiated riots in which 80 people lost their lives. In the recent fighting in May 2013 at least 39 Christians were killed.

Nussbaum's book represents broadly understood journalism. Is such a mode of philosophizing not subject to quick devaluation? Honest philosophical journalism stands a chance of surviving only as long as it rests on universal prin-

---

<sup>20</sup> E.g. the Israeli attack on the town of Qana in southern Lebanon in July 2006 killed 36 children. This is only one of many examples.

<sup>21</sup> Skarga [2002] p. 114 [translation mine].

<sup>22</sup> The book worth reading for a comprehensive view of the Holocaust is Bryan Mark Rigg's *Hitler's Jewish Soldiers: The Untold Story of Nazi Racial Laws and Men of Jewish Descent in the German Military*, University Press of Kansas, 2004, in which the author presents the history of 150 thousand Jews who were Wehrmacht soldiers. It is a shocking discovery for many Jews that there were (in such large numbers) men of Jewish origin in the army that served Hitler. But this confirms that the history of the Holocaust is indeed very complicated and that it is an injustice when Jews look at it from the angle of themselves as the only victims while seeing all other nations as guilty.

See: <http://www.kansaspress.ku.edu/right.html> [15.01.2014].

<sup>23</sup> Pontifex, Newton [2012] pp. 25–80.

ciples. Nussbaum does refer to such principles. What is missing in her approach to religion is reference to religious doctrines with regard to their rationality or irrationality as well as their susceptibility to ideologization. It seems she should deal separately with the problem of politicization of religion and point out the dangers it carries. Also introducing a distinction between a sect and a religious movement that poses no danger to citizens could alter the line of Nussbaum's argumentation.

Apart from the sexual sphere, religious liberty is arguably the most delicate sphere of human life. It requires the wisdom of Solomon to write tactfully about the problems that result from a lack of respect for religious beliefs. The question of whether a philosopher can maintain objectivity even in matters so difficult as those, should be answered positively, with the reservation that this happens only when objectivity serves reason.

## References

- Aristotle - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, URL = <http://perseus.uchicago.edu/perseus/cgi/citequery3.pl?dbname=GreekFeb2011&getid=1&query=Arist.%20Eth.%20Nic.%201181b> [23.06.2013].
- Dennett [2003] - D. Dennett, "The Bright Stuff," *New York Times*, 12 July, 2003, op-ed., URL = <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/07/12/opinion/the-bright-stuff.html> [15.01.2014].
- Dennett [2006] - D. Dennett, *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon*, Penguin, New York 2007.
- Gutowski [2012] - P. Gutowski, *Czym jest 'nowy ateizm?*, [in:] *Nauki przyrodnicze a nowy ateizm*, M. Słomka (ed.), RW KUL, Lublin 2012, pp. 7-45.
- Murdoch [2003] - I. Murdoch, *The Black Prince*, Penguin, New York 2003.
- Nussbaum [2008] - M. Nussbaum, *Liberty of Conscience: In Defense of America's Tradition of Religious Equality*, Basic Books, New York 2008.
- Nussbaum [1998] - M. Nussbaum, "Public Philosophy and International Feminism," *Ethics* 108 (4) 1998, pp. 762-796.
- Pontifex, Newton [2012] - *Christians and the Struggle for the Religious Freedom with Persecuted and Forgotten?*, 2012 Update, Aid to the Church in Need, J. Pontifex, J. Newton (ed.), UK 2012.
- Skarga [2002] - B. Skarga, *Emmanuel Lévinas - metafizyka jako etyka*, [in:] *Filozofia XX wieku*, vol. I, Z. Kuderowicz (Ed.), Wiedza Powszechna, Warsaw 2002, pp. 114-145.