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## *The New Religious Intolerance.* Martha C. Nussbaum. Reviewed by John Tropman.

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scholars. And those of us in academia know that the scholarly conversation is carried on by persons who are not always in agreement, but often times in disagreement. Mikael Hjerm and Annette Schnabel, authors of Chapter 9, titled "Social Cohesion and the Welfare State: How Heterogeneity Influences Welfare State Attitudes," exemplify beautifully how a researcher joins such a scholarly conversation. Hjerm and Schnabel state in conclusion of their chapter:

However, this chapter adds to the ongoing debate by arguing that it is not heterogeneity *per se* that influences the acceptance of public policies and thereby their legitimacy, but the subjective feelings of togetherness and communality which can be activated at different levels. Modern welfare institutions are not destabilized by heterogeneity but strengthened by its social cohesion. (p. 186)

Really, the authors of all 12 chapters do not tell the reader what to think but rather invite the reader to join in a scholarly conversation about changing attitudes of the social welfare state, and rightfully include the voices of ordinary people in almost thirty European countries. That is not just good scholarship, but great scholarship.

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Martha C. Nussbaum, *The New Religious Intolerance*. Belknap/Harvard (2012). \$26.95 (hardcover).

Whether it is a single shooter in Norway, ethnic cleansing in Europe, head coverings in France, ethnic violence in Ruanda and seemingly throughout Africa, threats from a Florida media person to "deep fry" the Koran, or an attempt to build a Muslim cultural and worship center near the 9/11 site, intolerance seems to be part of the warp and woof of daily life. Professor Nussbaum's book is among many writings that seek to provide a framework for understanding intolerance (Google lists just under 300,000 entries from a search for "Ethnic and Religious Intolerance in the 21st Century"). Nussbaum, a philosopher, is Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago and is a prolific author, having previously written

more than a dozen books.

Nussbaum argues that intolerance is driven by fear, particularly fear of "the other." Intolerance permits, suggests, perhaps requires, acting out against the feared object. Fear apparently comes from a narcissism sustained by lack of self knowledge. Her message is: "...know yourself, so that you can move outside of yourself, serve justice, and promote peace" (p. xiii).

The book is made up of a Preface and 7 chapters: (1) Religion: A time of Anxiety and Suspicion; (2) Fear: A Narcissistic Emotion; (3) First Principles: Equal Respect for Conscience; (4) The Mote in My Brothers Eye: Impartiality and the Examined Life; (5) Inner Eyes Respect and the Sympathetic Imagination; (6) The Case of Park51; and (7) Overcoming the Politics of Fear.

The author states that "...we should be worried about the upsurge in religious fear and animosity in the United States as well as Europe. Fear is accelerating..." (p. 10.). She goes on, "Fear is a 'dimming preoccupation'; an intense focus on self that drives others into darkness. However valuable and indeed essential it is in a genuinely dangerous world, it is itself one of life's great dangers" (p. 58).

Chapters 3, 4, and 5 explore three principles that will "address" the current climate of fear: "an emphasis on non-narcissistic consistency, and the cultivation of 'inner eyes,' and the capacity to see the world from the perspective of the minority experience" (p. 21). Chapter 3 focuses "human dignity." Nussbaum points out that, while the concept of human dignity has very attractive properties, it also separates human beings from other creatures. She might have referred to Wolf Wolfensberger's 1972 book, *Normalization*, where he asked the question: "How can you do things to people you do not do to people?" His answer, The Principle of Animalization: you "de-humanize" them by calling them animals—e.g., pigs or frogs. Chapter 6 extensively discusses the multi-faith community center near ground zero. Chapter 7 includes some suggestions for overcoming fear, through a "...commitment to examine our choices ...." (p. 245) for selfishness, privilege, and inconsistency. Throughout, Nussbaum argues that America has a better record of religious tolerance than Europe.

Having myself written in the field of values, I found the book very interesting and illuminating. I particularly liked

Nussbaum's emphasis on critical self-examination. From my perspective, the book has some problems. I do not think Nussbaum has made the case for her title, *The New Religious Intolerance*. Indeed, intolerance seems neither new nor exclusively religious. Her focus on Muslims might be a "fresh" intolerance, but then the Crusades come to mind. I felt that an explanation of why fear was a cause of intolerance was unclear. The chapters are so rich with detailed examples that one gets lost and loses the main point of the volume. Nussbaum's "longtime" Harvard University Press editor, Joyce Seltzer, could have helped her out here, but a deep relationship with a prestigious high-powered thinker may have gotten in the way of that. And while I did not mind the author's ranging over philosophers from Socrates on, I think that might be a little distracting for the general reader. My guess is that Nussbaum had one eye on her philosophical colleagues.

Nussbaum's argument of American "exceptionalism" in the religious tolerance field may have some merit, but when held against slavery, our treatment of Native Americans, and our current "rage" against immigrants, it is hard for me to get on this bus with her. Finally, though I like the solution of self examination, it has not had a history of working all that well over the centuries in preventing intolerance, so I would hope we could also have a Plan B and C, at the very least.

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Sarah F. Pearlman, *Mother-Talk: Conversations with Mothers of Lesbian Daughters and FTM Transgender Children*. Demeter Press, (2012). \$24.95 (paperback).

Social science literature has shown that parents of LGBT persons have their own emotional journeys to navigate when their children come out as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. Many themes have been identified in the literature surrounding this process for parents, usually around issues of loss of hopes and dreams that parents have held for their children, as well as fears for their children's continued safety in a world that tends to be hostile to sexual minorities. Support for parents in this process has been shown to be especially important in coming to a place of acceptance of their children, and