

A story of two sides: Nussbaum and Fallaci on the edges of toleration and the significance of basic political principles

Una historia de dos caras: Nussbaum y Fallaci sobre los límites de la tolerancia y la importancia de los principios políticos básicos

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Abstract: In her book *The New Religious Intolerance*, Martha Nussbaum criticizes the intolerant attitude the West –fundamentally the U.S. and Europe– has towards Islam. For Nussbaum, this intolerance is based on unfair prejudices that would not stand any comparison with Western attitudes towards other creeds or conducts. However, Nussbaum maintains that such attitude is less aggressive in the U.S. than it is in Europe.

In the last years of her life, Oriana Fallaci held a point of view totally opposed to that of Nussbaum's, stating that there has been an actual Islamic invasion of Europe, invasion that jeopardizes Europe's democratic foundations, and its very culture indeed.

In this article, I will try to show that, though Nussbaum's arguments have a more solid and acceptable basis than Fallaci's, her view is coherent only if a certain de-islamization of Islam is assumed following the process of cultural and political americanization described by S. Huntington in his work *Who are We?* In this sense, Nussbaum's view has some weaknesses that move us to establish a difference –and a preference, indeed– between pluralism and multiculturalism.

Keywords: religious intolerance, islam, fundamentalism, Western culture, pluralism, multiculturalism.

Resumen: En su libro *La nueva intolerancia religiosa*, Martha Nussbaum critica la intolerancia que Occidente – fundamentalmente en los Estados Unidos y Europa– tiene hacia el Islam. Para Nussbaum, esta intolerancia está basada en prejuicios injustos que no soportarían comparación con las actitudes occidentales hacia otros credos o conductas. Sin embargo, Nussbaum mantiene que una actitud así es menos agresiva en Estados Unidos que en Europa.

En los últimos años de su vida, Oriana Fallaci sostuvo un punto de vista totalmente opuesto al de Nussbaum, afirmando que en la actualidad se está produciendo una invasión islámica a Europa, invasión que pone en peligro los fundamentos democráticos de Europa, e incluso su cultura como tal.

En este artículo trataré de mostrar que, aunque los argumentos de Nussbaum tienen una base más sólida y aceptable que los de Fallaci, su perspectiva es coherente solamente si se asume una cierta des-islamización del Islam siguiendo el proceso de americanización política y cultural descrito por S. Huntington en su trabajo *¿Quiénes somos?* En este sentido, el punto de vista de Nussbaum tiene algunas debilidades que nos mueven a establecer una diferencia –y una preferencia– entre pluralismo y multiculturalismo.

Palabras clave: intolerancia religiosa, islam, fundamentalismo, cultura occidental, pluralismo, multiculturalismo.

Introduction

In 2012, Martha Nussbaum published a book¹ where she strongly criticized what she called prejudices in relation to certain conducts, traditions, and cultures, focussing her interest in the attacks on Islam occurring in the U.S., but also –and mainly– in Europe. In her book Nussbaum claims that such intolerant attitude is stronger in European countries than it is in the American nation. According to her, there is an irrational fear in Europe towards Muslim culture; fear that would eventually lead to an increase in the prejudices and repulse of almost any expression of such culture. Convinced that cultural and religious diversity are more protected in the U.S., thanks basically to the First Amendment, Nussbaum wants to highlight that a correct and coherent enforcement of solid principles entailing respect to human dignity, as well as the development of a discourse opposed to stigmatization –and the education to favor «empathic imagination»–, can help to stop what she considers a new religious intolerance; intolerance mainly affecting Muslims in Western countries.

Oriana Fallaci is fairly renowned for her bold stories and her courage as war correspondent in Vietnam –also in Pakistan and India, South America, the Middle East, etc.–, and as eyewitness to the «Tlatelolco massacre» in Mexico D.F. But in the last years of her life she was mostly known for her open controversy against Muslim culture –and indeed Muslim presence– in Western society. The Italian journalist has also made such controversy the key element for her analysis of contemporary society and politics. In this sense, Fallaci has made use of a highly provocative language style, what has brought many criticisms to her, given that she has not hesitated to talk of «invasion», and to say that Europe is currently threatened by the biggest and most dangerous *conspiracy* of Modern history: that of Islam.

Both positions seem to break away to the extent that have become clashing ends with no possible reconciliation. Though Nussbaum's point of view is more recognizable in our current democratic context, Fallaci's one is the spearhead of a whole cultural stream and way of thinking that has recently questioned the complaisance with which the Islam has been treated, with no counterpart from such culture/religion in those countries where the Islam is the reigning religion/culture. The controversy between both authors would seem to yield a positive balance for Nussbaum, given the argumentative process she sets up. But the analysis of both positions presents the matter in a manner

slightly different from Nussbaum's claims, leaving room for some of Fallaci's specific demands. Let us see how this can be understood.

Nussbaum's point of view

Martha Nussbaum published her book 11 years after the fateful 11-S for the Americans. The explosion of panic that swept America not only made the government to extremely reinforce domestic security measures, but also gave rise to a collective sense of fear towards Muslim fundamentalism and strengthened the conviction that we should globally hit any possible focus of danger for American citizens wherever it happens to be. But the specific enemy was Islamic fundamentalism. Very recently, the self-called DAESH has fostered hatred against the Americans when presenting once again the U.S. as the new Satan, and so as a specific target to be fought by any honest Muslim. Still more recently, the murder of French journalists working for the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, as well as the terrorist attacks on Bataclan theater or the assassinations in Brussels' airport and subway –and some more recent terrorist attacks as that of Las Ramblas in Barcelona–, have highlighted the risk of extreme violence from radical Islamists.

Nevertheless, the American author tries to show that the prejudices against Muslim doctrines –basically in Europe– are baseless and clearly unfair. Indeed, they would not stand a comparison with other attitudes towards different conducts, basically towards such related to other religious creeds. Besides, the comparison with how Americans treat Islam is favourable to U.S. citizens, as they are more tolerant with Muslims, who actually are an indistinguishable part of the population.

Nussbaum cautiously analyzes those stereotypes –frequently created from conservative political points of view– on those citizens who publicly appear sharing Muslim doctrines. Surely, the creation of such stereotypes is something very artificial, in so far as it simplifies a reality that, according to Nussbaum, is highly complex. There are numerous and clearly different ways of interpreting the Koran, the holy book for Muslims. And there seems to exist a relative autonomy in the practices of those communities where the interpretations of the book are indeed different. The outcome would be a mosaic of religious expressions in strong contrast to the rigidity of dogmatic interpretation held by Catholic hierarchy, for example. For Nussbaum, it is also highly irrational the fear Europe feels towards Muslims, whereby political as well as social and cultural answers, use to lack proportionality and are based on unjustified suspicion.

For Nussbaum, a society that intends to be truly democratic must be settled on principles of respect

1. Nussbaum, Martha (2012). *The New Religious Intolerance: Overcoming the Politics of Fear in an Anxious Age*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

for all, and must develop an interpretation of such principles according –or adapted somehow– to every specific creed. Only then such respect would be effectively guaranteed. The importance of such considerations is shown in the different creeds freely developing, without State interference or intervention in their different cultural expressions and traditions, except in cases when the general interest is in danger. The possibility that others' rites and beliefs may appear curious or strange to us should not be a reason for exclusion, rejection or stigmatization. For Nussbaum, the U.S. arose and grew as a country based on freedom of conscience and on the no interference of State in religious matters. That is the reason why we should be very careful when a law is confronted –one way or another– to concrete religious practices. According to Nussbaum, the U.S. feel more comfortable with heterogeneity than Europe does, given that they were born and nurtured from convictions on the importance of heterogeneity. Usually, also, they flaunt of being a nation arisen from immigrants and dissidents.

In spite of all this –and with the well-known differences between Europe and America– there is still an ongoing mistrust towards Muslims. In this sense, Nussbaum speaks of fear as a basic emotion playing a significant role in such mistrust. Mainly, because we feel fear towards the unusual and odd, towards that what is not known. Ignorance that frequently is not only maintained but also fed. Such fear has made to appear many discourses to stigmatize «strangeness», to the extent of developing stories to dehumanize the stranger.

It is also a cliché of modern societies that majorities end up imposing their political discourse and their cultural view on minorities, but then there is still a big political problem in considering the role minorities must play on the basis of a strong respect to their view of the world. In this sense, we have to bear in mind that religion is central. Therefore, legislate against religious practices raises a problem of democratic deficit as such legislating would threaten the principle of equal liberty for all the citizens. The specific controversy Nussbaum analyzes –though framed in a broader context- is that which has to do with the use of burka, a loose garment completely covering some Muslim women.

In relation to such practice Nussbaum believes that some basic considerations must be made; considerations that seem not to be taken into account by a significative part of Western society. Firstly, and as something substantially meaningful, we have to bear in mind the role religion plays in the self-understanding of people. Usually, religion provides tools for individuals to develop a clear identity and help them to have solid references to properly define themselves. But there can be many differences and

subdivisions within religions; interpretations of a body of beliefs that do not need to coincide. Anyway, Nussbaum says, the attacks on burkas use to be unjustified and are the result of many prejudices, basically because of the absence of proper knowledge. There is no Islamic prescription or rule obliging women to wear it. Arguing that burka reifies women means that one does not realise the beam in the eye, in a society where women use to be considered as sexual objects. If we ban burkas, Nussbaum says, we should also ban many other things. By and large, so, the arguments against the burka arise from ignorance and end up harming minorities in favor of majorities. Only if such practice –or any other– attacks freedom of consent of people concerned, or jeopardizes any governmental interest of higher rank, we should proceed to suppress it.

To avoid such kind of problems, Nussbaum suggests fighting against fear from the unknown, that which seems to appear basically alien to us. And one way of fighting is seeking to know better the origins of such conducts, beliefs, or traditions we do not share. Developing, whereas it is possible, a «mental look», says Nussbaum: the will to get out of oneself to «enter» the other, a sort of G. Vico's «entrare». Such attitude would help us to understand others' interests and to realise the actual importance their conducts have. So, when we notice differences, we have to exercise those ethical virtues that move us to rescue the common humanity we share. As one of the main forms of rejection towards Islam is its identification with terrorism, we should seek to know in deep those traditions –Sufism, for instance– that preach just the opposite, whereas there are many imams who openly condemn violence and extremism (zealotry).

Fallaci's point of view

Oriana Fallaci owns the passion of someone who has lived an intense life and has passionately fought against the inner contradictions of human beings. Her numerous reportages have been as brave as controversial. A writer of agile and provocative style, her last analysis have been mainly focussed on an open debate on Muslim culture and religion, as well as their presence in Europe and their contradistinction to the Western view on values.

Unlike Nussbaum, Fallaci belongs to a social and cultural context that has historically faced and confronted Muslim domination in former times. History that has strongly influenced European identity, partly built from such confrontation with Islamic culture. But Fallaci basically refers to the most recent events, generically questioning –and with no particular interest in the diversity within Islam–, what he considers a plot to conquer democratic Europe.

Fallaci invokes freedom of expression to back her opinions on Islam, what have made her receive many contemptuous attacks. Among other things, her complaints have to do with how traditional liberties in Western Society have been cut by emerging practices –and cultures– progressively settled in Europe. They actually do not only mean a defence of the Christian background, but also a defence of a moral and political *statu quo* that has guaranteed the rights of those who –according to Fallaci– want to attack it. The foe to fight, the «other», is the Islam, and it is so –following Fallaci– for many reasons, the importance of which leads her to speak of a plot aiming to convert Europe into *Eurabia*.

Fallaci lists a considerable amount of evidence that seems to back and guarantee her assertions in an attempt to safeguard the achievements of Western civilization against what would seem to be the regression imposed by a world view as reactionary as the Muslim is supposed to be.

We have to bear in mind that the debate arises –and it is only possible– in a political context where the principles of equality and rights enable/promote the development in terms of fairness for the different conceptions of good. In this egalitarian niche, the Islam would be taking advantage to progressively impose the culture of inequality and the contempt of others while relying on the culture of respect for others. So, at least it is how Fallaci sees the problem. She enumerates the multiple steps that, according to her, Islamism is taking in this sense.

To begin with, the consideration of equal respect towards the different moral or religious convictions that Nussbaum clearly notes in the U.S., is understood in Europe not as meddling into others' practices, but as the impossibility of exerting any kind of critique under penalty of committing a felony. To a certain extent this would be giving advantages to Islam, precisely in those aspects that –to Western eyes– would seem to be antidemocratic or that undermine equality of individuals. Any critique, although harmless, could be prosecuted on charges of racism and xenophobia, or because it promotes discrimination. Though the different degrees of severity of such charges are not easy to value, it is true that just the mere suspicion of a charge of that kind would limit –according to Fallaci– freedom of expression –in rather general terms– and the possibility that moral convictions different from that of Muslims could publicly show their distinguishing features.

Fallaci provides many examples. In the case of Switzerland, the article 261 bis of its penal code punishes racial discrimination. The text declares restriction on those actions that intend to openly incite hatred or discrimination against any person

or group of persons for reasons of race, ethnicity or religion, what actually includes any attempt to discredit them. What initially could be a legal tool to guarantee respect and equality between creeds, could actually have worked inversely to what the original text intends. The article was approved in 1995, and was actually the text invoked to make the Federal office of Justice in Berna seek Fallaci's extradition to the Italian State, and the reason to open criminal proceedings against her and the editors of *La rabbia e L'orgoglio*, one of her best-selling books; we have to bear in mind that the impeachment was basically conducted by Muslim groups.

But there was a victim directly impaired by such interpretation of Swiss penal code: the controversial activist Erwin Kessler, who spent two months in jail for speaking out against halal slaughter of animals, a typical customary Muslim practice. According to Fallaci, these and many other examples would demonstrate the existence of a deep fear of Muslims, who –in a sense– are overrespected, or of Muslim culture, a culture that contains many disruptive elements for Western society. That seems to be the reason why nothing of what we believe wrong in Muslim culture can be criticised.

What is actually true, says the Italian journalist, is that in countries of Muslim majority –or fully Muslim–, those Western liberties we enjoy do not exist, and it is almost impossible that such liberties may exist someday (neither in the smallest possible expression). As a matter of fact, Turkey, an officially secular country, but with an almost 100% of its inhabitants officially Muslim, seems to be a deficient democracy, and Islamism have to be under ongoing watchfulness to avoid the collapse of democracy. However, the worst thing is that Muslims are unwilling to integrate in Western society for reasons of creed and customs/traditions. For them, believer and citizen are the same, and the human beings are not Allah's children but his slaves.

Everywhere Muslims settle, they promote their practices even if not coincident with the demands of democratic equality. As a matter of fact, their conviction of the identity between religion and State has remained unchanged. In some places –it is the case of the neighborhood of Albaicín, in Granada (Spain)– Muslim people maintain their own laws and taxes, including specific currency. Besides, many Muslim prominent figures demand the ownership of South Spain (Al-Andalus) as an area historically and culturally Muslim.

For Fallaci, the Islam is so a real yoke, and its usages (she mentions marriage as a purchase and as women absolute submission, infibulation, contempt for pluralism, the undemocratic practices of stoning for adultery, and an extensive etcetera) are in straight

and immediate conflict with the most basic democratic principles, as the Koran is the only source of Islam law.

The discussion

In a confrontation of this size, taking sides could be enormously complicated if reasons are carefully analyzed. It is true that the point of departure in both sides is quite different. The history of Europe and the United States has been very different in the relationship of their peoples with the Islam. In the European case, history has clearly shown that coexistence has not been as peaceful as it should have been. This circumstance could have enormously influenced the view on immigrants, which is not the same as in the American case, that seems to reflect a positive sight –or at least a disposition to it, due to the fact the American nation is just the fruit of diverse and very different waves of immigration. Such circumstance is not so clear in Europe, and after hundreds of years of Christian civilization the massive presence of Muslims in the last decades has been seen with suspicion.

Modern democratic society is usually understood as a plural society instead of a multiculturalist one. The difference is on some elements that are of particular importance. For G. Sartori, a pluralist society is characterized by the coexistence of different points of view, being such coexistence based on shared principles. Such principles demand respect for the different conceptions of good, conceptions that in a democratic society cannot invoke or sustain beliefs that contravene the public expression of the rest of conceptions, but neither those that have to do with the autonomy of individuals and their possibility to leave the group to where they belong whenever they want. Multiculturalism advocates the existence of a public space where the different ideologies or conceptions of good may work without having to submit to binding principles alien to them, so that each one of them follows its own path without any kind of contact with the rest. The only thing necessary would be a legal framework where it could work so. Multiculturalism would be, in this case, anti-assimilationist.

Something like that is what, in the end, is at issue for Fallaci. According to the journalist, one of the main scars of Islam is that it is unable of assimilation, indeed of accepting being just a mere part of the Western society itself. But, for Islam, secularizing would mean a denaturalization, losing many of the basic elements that reinforce its core identity. Notwithstanding this, on the other side, Nussbaum deems that it is neither so difficult nor so rare that Muslim people may be fully part of Western societies, given that their creed as well as their practices and traditions are, generally speaking, compatible with such societies. Besides,

in the name of the rights of groups, we should allow the Islam –Muslims– express its cultural particularities without restrictions.

Fallaci as well as Sartori –though basically sustaining different positions– emphasize those elements that, according to them, make such assimilation impossible in any conceivable situation. Though it is true that the different interpretations of Koran have given way to different schools and traditions (what according to Nussbaum does contradict those critics of Islam), the existence of common elements should be seen as the point from which understand the presence of Islam in Western society.

An important key for this controversy is the proclamation of a specific Declaration of Human Rights for Islam. Let us bear in mind that in 1948 the General Assembly of the United Nations drafted a Declaration that has been left as the fundamental reference for the development of contemporary Law. Though such Declaration did not arise ex-nihilo, it did reflect the aspirations to preserve human dignity (the intrinsic value of persons), as well as to strengthen solidarity/fraternity in order for humankind not to repeat the horrors of the first half of XXth Century. Consequently, Muslim countries have refused to sign the text, following a different one: The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (1990).

It is quite significative that there exists an Islamic Declaration. It shows the difficulties to accept a text that has often been described as exceedingly Western and too focused on the individual. There has been many criticisms from countries of Oriental culture and background, as such culture seems to reinforce the meaning of entailments between individuals and groups. Accordingly, a Muslim Declaration parallel to that of 1948 seemed to be clearly justified. One of the fundamental reasons is the strong religious commitment of Muslim text, given that human beings cannot be understood but submitted to Allah in terms of strict servitude. Humankind is a family united in its worship of Allah.

Such Declaration is the outcome of the Islamic Conference held in Cairo (Arab Republic of Egypt), between July 31 and August 5, 1990. This Conference (and its concomitant Declaration) shows an actual hiatus between Western moral and political thought and that of Muslim countries. Though it is true that there exist some relevant coincidences between both texts, the explicit dependence of rights in Islam in relation to Allah's will –which imposes strict limits– strongly determines their implementation, something that does not happen to the 1948 Declaration, strictly aconfesional and guarantor of freedom of conscience and religion (the Islamic Declaration clearly states in its article 10 that Islam

is the undisputed religion, that is, the *only real one*). The most significant relevance –in terms of clear discrepancy– concerns the role of women. Such issue has frequently been highly controversial. It has possibly aroused a substantial portion of criticisms towards Islam, something that Nussbaum has tried –partially, at least– to fight. If, as Nussbaum claims, nowhere in Islamic legislation there is an article compelling the use of burka, and if it has to be accepted as a perfectly assimilated usage in Muslim cultural universe, there would be no justification to prohibit its use in public.

The sixth article of the Cairo Declaration states that women are as equal as men in dignity, owning as many rights as obligations, but immediately afterwards the article continues stressing males' superiority, as they are responsible for household spending and the protection of family. Given that the interpretation of that Declaration are subject to the Islamic Sharia (arts. 24-25) as the only source, the difficulties to understand the alleged equality increase. The Sharia explicitly prohibits women to show their beauty to those that are not their *Máharim* (people who are close relatives). It also prohibits women to spruce up and greet men who are not their *Máharim*, neither can they be alone with a stranger; they cannot look down nor can ask a male to divorce his wife in order to marry him. Women are not entitled to spend their husbands' money without consent, and there is the possibility that they can be beaten in some circumstances.

The importance of such dependence between the Declaration and the Sharia lies in that it circumscribes moral and juridical interpretations to a unitary background, what clearly delimits the scope of such interpretations. Such linkage makes difficult that Muslim laws and customs can coexist with other cultural expressions with which they collide. Sartori highlights that the Sharia penetrates all the interstices of life, so that the differences of interpretation cannot let room for any assimilation that may help coexistence. So, the defence of the Sharia could only be done from a multiculturalist point of view, which to a great extent would shield it from any attack or critique.

To a significant degree, this is what seems to derive from the defence Nussbaum does of the First Amendment of the American Constitution. Nussbaum reminds us that religion has a central role in the perception people have of themselves. And that, together with it, we have to consider the equilibrium between majorities and minorities so that these do not become excluded. To protect Islam is to protect religious freedom and, at the same time, freedom of conscience. Such a defence arising from basic constitutional principles.

But all these considerations lead us to accept without special controversy ideologies and religious

practices *per se*. And Nussbaum gives many examples of it. For her, individuals must follow their own ends without any detraction of the ideological context from which such ends arise. From this point we should then accept that there is no ideological truth or religious truth as such. And such neutrality is what, in the end, entitles us to speak of (and act with) equality.

The limitations of the debate

Equality and fairness (plus dignity) must be the foundations to speak of different –or conflicting– conceptions of good. But considerations as these place us in –at least in principle– a different level in relation to them. That is, we speak of a political framework –indeed an ethical framework– within which such different conceptions may coexist. Such coexistence can be guaranteed as far as such framework is maintained, that is, those principles on which it is rooted do not become detracted or perverted.

Such principles should be understood as neutral in John Rawls' way. The equilibrium that such principles provide has been one of the main and basic goals in the foundation of the American nation, and has been frequently promoted by the U.S. law and has been useful to improve such law. A specific case would be, for instance, the protection of religious freedom. But the actual defence and support of such principles is not neutral, something that Samuel Huntington has conscientiously shown in his renowned and controversial work *Who are We?*

In his book, Huntington criticises those cultural and ideological movements proliferating in the U.S. since the sixties. Movements that have strongly promoted a reconsideration of American identity to the extent that seem to have endangered the moral and ideological roots from which the American nation was built. The author emphasizes that since then those identities of dual or transnational character have competed with what has traditionally been understood as the American national identity, being the result of such competition an irreparable loss for American democracy.

Curiously, though such movements were a cultural product of it, only by maintaining the principles traditionally nurturing such democracy it can keep on functioning as such. The problem is that the American nation is an outcome of a substantially Protestant identity, what strongly marks a nation of immigrants. The origins of such nation –according to Huntington– is the Dissident Protestantism that migrated to America and created a community indebted to the conviction of the importance of specific basic liberties that had to be maintained at any cost. As a matter of fact, such migration and difference and plurality in the origins strengthened

those liberties. And the centrality of them became part and parcel of American identity.

For Huntington, such identity is made of, on the one hand, those characteristics given by the European settlers of XVII and XVIII Centuries and, on the other hand, of the American's Creed: the importance of equality, freedom, individualism, human rights, representative government, private property, and the rule of law. According to Huntington, the United States would be and offspring of Protestant Reformation. Something that should not be seen particularly bizarre as Israel, for example, was created as a Jew society -and country-, or Saudi Arabia as a Muslim one. So, the importance of individualism, the fundamental value of individual conscience, the ethics of work, etc. point at -or must be understood within such view- making the United States be the *Promised Land*, what actually shows that political expressions of such aforementioned principles are but political theology.

It is thus understood that to be American there must be, in a certain sense, a sort of assimilation of such principles, which is the same as saying an assimilation to the Angloprotestant culture. The importance of such assertion basically lies in what has to do with an essential part of Nussbaum's reflection. As the Americans tend to be inclusive in matters of religion, the problem is not that different religions may coexist, but that they all accept the criteria of 'Anglo-conformity'. The example Huntington emphasizes is that of the de-Romanization of Catholic Church in the U.S. -a certain Protestantization of Catholicism-, something that would allow its assimilation and functionality in terms of private and also public presence. But something like that is what may have happened to Muslims in America so that their presence has not been seen as threatening and problematic as in Europe. If, in general terms, coexistence is harmonious that would be -according to Huntington's reflections- because the Islam has been somehow de-Islamized, substantially accepting the model of Anglo-conformity; assimilating the typical American values -the core of U.S. identity. Values that, for Huntington, are -in the last instance- those of dissident Protestantism. In short, Christian principles. Such de-Islamization should be understood, then, as a partial re-Christianization if what Huntington states is true.

However, difficulties for coexistence stress when the different groups insist in maintaining their differences. In this sense, the Islam would be particularly controversial. The aspiration to hold the purity of faith and the rigour of customs makes assimilation difficult, what leaves room for potentially numerous tensions. As a matter of fact -and despite that it collides with core values of traditional Islamism- the self-called Nation of Islam has made the creation of a country separated from the U.S. one of its most

important goals. Nevertheless, it is not surprising that in countries as United Kingdom or Spain the Sharia has worked *sotto voce* as the effective regulating law for Muslim citizens.

Consequences of the debate

The consequence of all this is that, if Nussbaum is right, she will possibly be so due to what Huntington says. This puts into question the culturalist idea so dear to the contemporary U.S. Intellectuals. Accepting that Islam goes throughout the whole life of Muslims, it can only go in harmony with the rest of American creeds -and citizens- insofar as it has been assimilated to the democratic and egalitarian principles of the American nation. That is, as we said before, to a certain extent the Islam has become de-Islamized. This is what allows us to speak of pluralism instead of multiculturalism (despite de growing influence of such anthropological perspective). In maintaining the democratic principles that, according to Nussbaum, allow us to differentiate *de facto* the U.S. from Europe on dealing with Muslims, she seems at least to accept some parts of what Huntington is defending. Those political principles of equal respect for everybody let us sustain the current religious diversity, but imply to a great extent that some religions -Islam, in our case- have to give up or resign at least some of their ways of acting, what actually implies -also to a certain extent- a certain relaxation in doctrine. Only so the heterogeneity defended by Nussbaum would be possible.

But also the principles with which the Europe we currently know was constructed were Christian. As a matter of fact, but also as a peculiar coincidence, the founding fathers of Contemporary Europe were committed Catholics: De Gasperi, Schuman, and Monnet (plus Adenauer). It seems to be true what Nussbaum highlights on European homogeneity, but we must concede Fallaci that such search for national identity was formed in confrontation with Islam, an ongoing foe throughout many centuries of history. We currently face some sort of unrest in relation with the huge number of immigrants approaching the frontiers of Europe. The cultural clash puts into the question how to make those immigrants integrate and live a prosperous and dignified life. Fallaci argues that there is enough information to assert that there is an underground intentionality of conquest in the progressive increase of Muslims in Europe, where the arrival of immigrants has less restrictions than in the present-day U.S. The proclamations of Islamic leaders on the urgency to islamize Europe are many. For Fallaci, if that happens we would see all our achievements in matters of culture and rights vanished. If Islam is theocratic it is difficult to imagine that it can work in a

democratic regime. The answer would be integration, but that would imply -as we said before- the Islam giving up some specific principles and, indeed, many of the interpretations of Sharia as, according to Fallaci, Muslim culture is unporous on key issues.

Professor Nussbaum also stresses that one of the main errors that predisposes aversively against Islam is that it is not properly and adequately known. That is, an adequate understanding/knowledge of its cultural background and its reasons to be what it is, would significantly lessen the fear towards it, and Europe itself would respond in a more comprehensive and less tense manner to the presence of Islam within her borders. We may speak, then, of the development of a «mental look» that would allow us not to see the «other» as «radically other», discovering the humanity he/she shares with us, as well as the reasons and justifications he/she gives to be and act as he/she does.

But to this respect, the disadvantages of Nussbaum's view seems to be obvious. To place oneself in the other's place implies -to a certain extent- renouncing to be oneself. If the philosopher of science Th. S. Kuhn was right, entering another paradigm (or worldview) means not only to change one's perspective, but actually also his/her language, developing or becoming engaged in a worldview different from the one from which one departs. But this has to be understood as a species of «conversion». Understanding another worldview is assimilating the key points to understand it: «To live», Kuhn said, «in different worlds». That would seem to keep from having a more or less objective perspective on what we are «emotionally looking at», without a sufficient distance as to fairly realise what it implies.

Though «understanding other's reasons» is undoubtedly a way of approaching views diverging from those one supports, nevertheless it is easy that we get to a version of the Stockholm Syndrome, insofar

as the others have always reasons to do what they do, and to put oneself in the other's place is but realising the value such reasons may have insofar as they own an inner logic and a motivation backing them.

The reception of the «other» must unavoidably depart from a consideration of the human conditions we share. The recognition of dignity associated to the very human condition. To this respect, Nussbaum is absolutely right. We must pay respect to persons, but their conducts, ideas, traditions, etc., can be discussed, questioned or criticized. What actually implies that the «inner look» must be carried out without the need of any «immersion» that completely overrides our own point of view, and so avoiding the resignation of those principles that make such «view» possible.

To what extent, then, are Fallaci and Nussbaum far from each other? To what extent they do coincide? If the American professor is defending the principle of equal freedom for every citizen, Fallaci thinks that it grants minorities a specific weight which actually is higher than their social implantation. At least to the extent that we think that such equality may be dangerous as minorities intend to become majorities -on the one hand- and -on the other- they defend social «atomization» to keep on maintainign their practices and traditions without any kind of external interference. In both cases freedom should be considered having in mind its social functionality. Then we should promote/advocate assimilation. But Fallaci is right when she states that Islamic culture must clearly shorten all that clashes with the ideas of equality, freedom of conscience and those basic protections associated to dignity. This may seem to be an excessive interference but it would eventually agree with what Nussbaum preaches when she says that we must maintain certain values from which Islam may be accepted in democratic societies.

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