

Some Thoughts for Rebecca

by [Samuel Hux](#) (June 2020)



The Philosophers, Benjamín Cañas, 1970

Rebecca? I mean Rebecca Bynum, Editor and Publisher of New English Review Press and author of *Allah Is Dead: Why Islam Is Not a Religion*—which should have been nominated (at least) for a Pulitzer or one of the several pulitzers. Not very likely in this cultural moment when the least doubt of the nobility of

Islam is thought to be simply outright anti-Muslim bias on a level with gender bias and traditional prejudices like antisemitism—this in spite of the fact that there is no rational comparison. Gender bias sets one half the human race against the other, roughly, with an indeterminate number not knowing which sex it decides to claim. Rebecca Bynum is absolutely right that Islam is not a religion—although I’ll put this my way. Religion comprises a combination of transcendental (not situational) ethics and deeply metaphysical mysteries. The communism which some of my anti-religious academic colleagues called a “religion” does not measure up to that standard, and neither does Islam, which is a not-very-mysterious but a highly imperialist *politics*. And as for the superficial assumption that distrust of Islam is just as bad as anti-Judaism, Judaism is one of the foundation stones of western civilization while Islam is a serious threat as it rejects most western values, and is, incidentally, the entrenchment of gender bias. But I have no intention of discussing Rebecca’s book here. Get a copy and read it. Rather . . .

Some weeks ago Rebecca, having read an essay of mine published in *NER*, asked me by email what I had meant by a casual remark about a couple of philosophical errors by Plato and Nietzsche, saying that in my years of teaching in a college I’d “collected” several such. I answered her with brief comments on those two thinkers and a confession that *collected* was an exaggeration and that most of the “errors” were not very serious and not very interesting. Anyway, since her question, I’ve been thinking that my answer was sketchy, too casual, rather ungenerous, so that I’ve felt somewhat guilty for not being more forthcoming to someone who’s been quite generous to me. So I have decided on a better response, hoping that alleviation of my guilt does not become a burdensome sprawl. While my chosen reader, of course, is Rebecca, anyone else is

invited to listen in.

I should have made clear a distinction I would insist on between a philosophical *error* or *mistake* on the one hand and on the other a *disagreement* between thinkers. If I say to you I disagree, I can be saying something on this order: You have a point, and I see your point, but I respectfully (usually) do not see it the same way you do. (I add that parenthetical *usually* because occasionally one thinker, like foul-tongued Martin Luther, writes with such disrespect to his intellectual superior, Desiderius Erasmus, on the subject of freedom of the will.) But if I say to you that you are in error, are mistaken, this might be a way of saying with rather more apparent respect that I really mean something on this order: You are being *foolish*