



29 January, 2021

The Holberg Committee Citation: Martha C. Nussbaum

Martha C. Nussbaum is the Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics, a joint appointment in Law and Philosophy, at the University of Chicago, and one of the most productive and well-known philosophers writing today. Over more than 20 books and 500 academic articles, Martha C. Nussbaum's work combines a rigorous training in Classics with a broad engagement with many themes and schools in the contemporary humanities and social sciences. Professor Nussbaum's writing is always scrupulous about arguments, perceptive about human emotions and vulnerability, and attentive to the realities of human situations, social interactions, and the many forms of dependence and interdependence that can arise within them. Her influence and impact extend well beyond her own disciplines, and she has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to the task of distributing the benefits of academic knowledges to a wider public.

Nussbaum's earliest work concentrated on matters of ancient Greek and Roman philosophy. Her 1978 edition and commentary on Aristotle's *De motu animalium* remains a seminal work on Aristotelian philosophy of mind and nature. In *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986) and *The Therapy of Desire* (1994), Nussbaum drew on the Stoic notion of the cognitive nature of emotions and developed her interest in how philosophy and literature might together illuminate foundational aspects of a good human life. Her later work has applied this method to explorations of the emotions in human life. These works include *Upheavals of Thought* (2001), *From Disgust to Humanity* (2010), *Political Emotions* (2013), and *Anger and Forgiveness* (2016).

Martha C. Nussbaum has also made important contributions to the humanities more broadly in confronting modern political problems and questions of well-being. Most remarkable is her development of the 'capabilities approach,' an important method for conceptualizing human well-being, now widely used in the measurement of poverty, development, social exclusion/inclusion, and social equality and inequality more broadly conceived. The range of her scholarly contributions is extensive, engaging with debates in feminist philosophy, disability studies, law, gender studies, animal rights, and the philosophy of cosmopolitanism. In all of these areas she has been a distinctive, passionate, powerful, and much needed, voice.

Truly a 'public philosopher', her work has reached wide audiences across the world as well as influenced many areas of knowledge. Nussbaum is one of the world's leading intellectuals and a prominent advocate for the humanities, and for the value of reason and compassion in public affairs. While Nussbaum's eminence in her fields of academic endeavor is unquestionable, what is particularly admirable is her dedication to the task of putting her knowledge to work, towards making a real and lasting difference to people across the world. For these reasons, and many more, Martha C. Nussbaum is a highly worthy recipient of the 2021 Holberg Prize.

On behalf of the Holberg Committee,
Graeme Turner, Committee Chair