

# **DEFINING TOLERATION**

**Andrew Jason Cohen**

## **KEYWORDS**

toleration, tolerance, interference, neutrality, diversity, pluralism, power

## **ABSTRACT**

The task of this chapter is to provide what is necessary for a conceptual analysis of toleration such that one would have a clear definition of this central liberal tenet. First, notions related to but different from toleration are discussed; this provides guidance by introducing the likely definitional conditions of toleration. Next, those conditions are explicated and defended. Putting the conditions together, we can say *an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.), though she believes she has the power to interfere*. This definition is neither normatively loaded nor sufficient for moral or political theory. Readers may also prefer a definition made with some subset of the conditions rather than all.

## **DEFINING TOLERATION**

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Toleration has been called “the substantive heart of liberalism” (Hampton 1989: 802). This should be understood as precisely as possible. The task of this chapter is thus to provide what is necessary for a conceptual analysis of toleration such that one would have a clear definition of this central liberal tenet. First, notions related to, but different from, toleration are discussed; this provides guidance by introducing the likely definitional conditions of toleration. Next, those conditions are explicated and defended. Putting the conditions together, we can say *an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.), though she believes she has the power to interfere.*<sup>1</sup> This definition is neither normatively loaded nor sufficient for moral or political theory. Readers may also prefer a definition made with some subset of the conditions rather than all.

While we all likely have some inchoate ideas about toleration, it is also likely that these ideas are somewhat confused. Outside the world of academic philosophy, the term “toleration” is often used in different ways. Since much of that variation finds its way into scholarly thought, it is worth distinguishing toleration from other concepts with which it is often confused before engaging directly in conceptual analysis. This will also provide guidance for determining what the core idea of toleration is as we begin to see conditions necessary for toleration. These, indeed, will appear quite quickly in this discussion; it will nonetheless be worth looking at a

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revision of work in chapters 1 and 2 of my 2018, which was itself revised from my 2004a. The definition defended here is thus a modification of that in my 2004a: that an act of toleration is an agent’s intentional and principled refraining from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.) in situations of diversity, where the agent believes she has the power to interfere. The current version is meant to be substantively equivalent to the 2004a though with the removal of the requirement of “situations of diversity,” which now seems to me to add nothing to the definition for reasons I make clear. I am grateful to Taylor and Francis (Routledge) for permission to use the material from my 2018 and *Ethics* for the earlier permission to use the material from my 2004a.

number of other concepts that are often confused with toleration. The following list owes much to Robert Paul Churchill 1997 (esp. 193-198). In particular, indifference, resignation, permissiveness, and neutrality are all suggested in his discussion, though they are discussed differently here. Of course, all of these concepts—and the others discussed here—are *related* to toleration. If they were not, there would be no confusion. Some may be on a continuum with toleration, but we need not be concerned with that here.

### **A. Indifference, Simple Noninterference, Resignation**

Toleration is not indifference or simple noninterference. If you see someone playing baseball and have no interest in that American game, you would likely walk past without interfering; when you do, it does not seem right to say you tolerate the behavior. The reason for this seems straightforward: we think of ourselves as tolerating only when we recognize something and disapprove or, at least, dislike it. If someone is throwing a ball against your wall, you may tolerate it (or not)—in part because the behavior annoys. Some negative response is necessary for our lack of interference to count as toleration. Put another way, we must *care* (see Churchill 1997: 193; David Heyd 1996: 4; and Edward Langerak 1997: 111). Absent caring about that with which we refrain from interfering, we are not tolerating it. It may be that we are indifferent to it or that we simply do not notice it.

From this brief discussion, we already see that we are the sorts of beings that can tolerate, that toleration requires noninterference, and that behavior is something that can be tolerated. These three facts seem uncontroversial; they will be conditions one (agent), four (noninterference), and six (object). Also interesting is that toleration requires that the tolerator have some negative response; as Bernard Williams explains, “If you do not care all that much

what anyone believes, you do not need ... toleration ... Indeed, if I and others in the neighborhood said we were *tolerating* the homosexual relations of the couple next door, our attitude would be thought less than liberal” (Williams 1996: 20). Interestingly, then, a world populated by individuals indifferent to those they do not know and like might be better than a world populated by individuals who know and tolerate those others. One way people can tolerate more often, after all, is to have more negative reactions. Horton notes something similar (1996: 34) which he points out may be thought paradoxical (see Horton, 1994). Newey’s discussion of the “ensorious tolerator” (1999: 107ff and elsewhere) is helpful in dispelling the paradox, but it can also be dispelled by noting that though the agent who has more negative reactions is less *tolerant*, he may *tolerate* more (see the discussion about *tolerance* below). Indeed, Williams’s point (above) is simply that “being liberal” (in the colloquial sense) requires being tolerant, not tolerating. The need for a negative reaction—for toleration, not tolerance—will be condition five (opposition).

Having a negative reaction to something is not enough to make noninterference with it toleration. One may refrain from interfering with it, after all, because one recognizes that one has no power to stop the disliked behavior, because the opposed other is physically stronger or, differently, because others have rights “even if they exercise those rights in unattractive ways” (Walzer 1997: 11; see also 59). Noninterference we resign ourselves to because we can’t do otherwise is not toleration but a matter enduring what one does not like—a sort of resignation, “mere restraint” (Heyd 1996: 14), or “a kind of moral stoicism” (Walzer 1997: 11). The person engaging in this form of noninterference resigns herself to living with others for the sake of peace, as if in a sort of *modus vivendi* (see John Rawls, 1999a, esp. 430-433) or “pragmatic compromise” (Heyd 1997: 4; see also Walzer 1997: 10).

If these descriptions are accurate, why don't we consider these activities toleration? Why, that is, does one's resignation to one's inability to prevent some behavior not count as toleration? Simply put, it's because we think toleration is something we do *for the right reasons*. The presence of those reasons matters. We might say that one *endures* what one (believes one) *has to*; one *tolerates* what one (believes one) *should*.

To be clear, etymologically, the Latin root of toleration, "tolerantia," is "broadly intended to label ... the general notion of enduring," as Preston King points out (King 1976: 12; see also Creppell 2002: 5). King also notes this, though, as a distinct use. What is here called "resignation," King calls "'acquiescence' or 'sufferance' or 'endurance';" "toleration" is different and likely requires what is below called the *believed power* condition (King 1976: 21). George Fletcher similarly points out that in German, Hebrew, and Russian, the "same root generates both tolerance and patience" (Fletcher 1996: 237 note 12) but adds that "people [have to] *care* enough to be tolerant rather than indifferent" (237; emphasis added). There are often times when the concepts seem to overlap, at least in ordinary language. We say, for example, that one endures a pain and that one tolerates it (or builds one's tolerance toward it). If something could be done about that pain—taking an analgesic, for example—but one intentionally and on principle refrains from doing so, it may be toleration as well.

Importantly at this point, noninterference must be *valued* or properly *principled* for it to count as toleration. This will be condition three (value). It is obvious, but worth pointing out, that for a case of noninterference to be principled, it must also be intentional—one does not act on one's principles by accident. This will be condition two. (While an action could be intentional and unprincipled, it cannot be principled and unintentional. Hence, we could consider the intentionality requirement a subcondition of the value condition.)

One must refrain from interfering for good reason for one's noninterference to be toleration. That one must act for good reason means that one's belief states matter when determining if one is tolerating or merely not interfering. Belief states matter in a second way. Consider a new example. Say Albert tries to persuade his sister not to have an abortion but then stands aside when she leaves to go to the family planning clinic. Surely, Alex may be tolerating her action. His attempt at rational persuasion—which, as will be made clearer in below, should not be considered interference—failed and he does not interfere with her actions, which he nonetheless opposes. Now it may be that Albert is merely enduring his sister's actions—that because he has no (legal) right to interfere, he could do nothing and so must have resigned himself to her action. This *may* be the case, but it need not be. Perhaps Alex mistakenly thinks he does have a (legal) right to interfere. If so, he may not be merely resigning himself to her action. He may be standing aside because, though he believes he *can* interfere, he also believes he *should* not—i.e., he may well value his non-interfering or her right to proceed so that his non-interference is based on a principled reason, as indicated is needed in condition three. What we also should notice now is that this case clearly suggests that *believing one has the power to interfere* is relevant to toleration. It will be condition seven (believed power).

The previous paragraph assumed that what was at issue was the lack of a legal right (of Albert's) to interfere with his sister. Some may think it is a moral right that is at issue; i.e., they may claim that Albert has no moral right to interfere with his sister's action. For that to make it such that the case is not one of toleration but one of mere resignation to what he cannot change, the moral prohibition indicated by the absence of a right must be accompanied by an internal compulsion to abide by morality. If there were none, he would be able to interfere by disregarding morality. Delving further into this requires looking to the internalism-externalism

debate. If someone (a third party to the above debate) were to think that Albert had, in the example, a moral right (perhaps accompanied by a legal right) to interfere, then it is indeed possible that the case is one of toleration.

Two caveats should be recognized at this point. First, as motivations and belief states generally are often mixed and/or confused, there may be cases where determining whether an act is one of mere resignation or one of toleration is near impossible; indeed, it may be that there is no sharp line between the two. Second, complicating the first, there is a common use of the word “tolerance” (itself discussed below) which is equivalent to endurance—one “builds one’s level of tolerance/endurance.” Given that and the oft conflation of tolerance and toleration, confusions are not infrequent.

We have now (briefly) elucidated the seven likely conditions of toleration. They are:

1. the presence of an *agent*
2. who *intentionally*
3. and *on principle*
4. *refrains from interfering* with
5. an *opposed*
6. *other* (or their behavior, etc.) though
7. she *believes she has the power to interfere*.

Each of these will be examined below. First, though, we continue our examination of concepts that are distinct though related to—and sometimes conflated with—toleration.

### **B. A Principle of Toleration**

It will be noted that the seven conditions of toleration do nothing to tell us when we should interfere or refrain from interfering. Their joint presence indicates that toleration is present, not that it *should* be. When we say that toleration is at the heart of liberalism, we mean

something like toleration's presence in society is morally important. Indeed, its presence is of paramount moral importance. Its absence suggests a society is not liberal—or rather suggests either that the society is not liberal or that the society is so harmonious that liberalism is irrelevant because none of its members oppose how any of their compatriots live (whether because they are indifferent to many of those compatriots or have universal love toward them). Assuming we won't attain utopia any time soon, liberalism thus must include a view about *when* toleration should be present—no one thinks it should always be present. We should not, for simple examples, tolerate murder and rape. Liberalism thus requires a normative principle (or principles) of toleration to adjudicate interference.

In order to have a *principle of toleration*, one must be clear about what toleration is. With a clear understanding of toleration, we can move on to discuss possible principles and defend one (or more) against others. Toleration itself, then, is not a principle. It is a form of behavior (refraining from interfering). That behavior must be principled, as we saw above and will discuss further below, but that is a different matter. Again, being able to identify toleration is not the same as knowing when we should or must tolerate or knowing when we should or must not. This is why understanding what toleration is cannot be sufficient for moral or political philosophy—in itself, it provides no normative guidance. We need a normative principle (or principles) of toleration for that purpose. (That is not the topic of this chapter, but see my 2014, 55-85.)

### **C. Pluralism, Multiculturalism, Diversity**



Toleration is not pluralism, the view that insists there are multiple genuine values. Nor is it “enthusiastic endorsement of difference” (Walzer 1997: 11; see also Langerak 1997: 111) that might be better associated with multiculturalism.

There may be multiple genuine values and if there are, we ought usually to tolerate (or at least not interfere with) people acting in ways meant to promote those values. This means, though, that pluralism and toleration are distinct. Believing that X is a value (or that X and Y are values), tolerating X (or X and Y), promoting X (or X and Y), and tolerating the promotion of X (or X and Y) are all different. One does not tolerate what one promotes. It may, of course, be that we recognize values without promoting them in any significant way, but to recognize X as a value is to recognize it as something not to oppose. (Should one, perversely, oppose a value, one might be able to tolerate it. Still recognizing it as a value and tolerating it are different. Recognizing that there are multiple values is distinct from toleration.)

Importantly, the claim that there is cultural diversity is distinct from pluralism understood as the view that there are plural values. The first is an empirical claim only. Saying *there is* cultural diversity is not saying there *should be* cultural diversity nor *why* there should be. Multiculturalists presumably believe not only that there is cultural diversity, but also that there *should be*. Some may believe the latter claim because they believe different cultures instantiate different values; some may believe it because they believe different cultures instantiate the same values but in different ways. We need not pursue those questions here.

Cultural diversity itself may or may not be a value. (Arguments in favor are familiar; for an argument against it, see Susan Moller Okin 1999; for a broader discussion, see chapter 9 of my 2018.) While toleration would make diversity possible, the latter is not required for the former (see Newey 1999: 4 and 28-30). If no one brings different cultural (or other) views to the

table, as it were, there likely is simply less to tolerate and the advocate of toleration need not be concerned. Of course, the advocate of multiculturalism may seek to bring different cultures to the table, perhaps wanting to promote them all. The advocate of multiculturalism, that is, promotes multiple cultures. Of course, she is thereby precluded from tolerating them—again, one does not tolerate what one promotes. She may, on the other hand, seek to encourage the toleration of one or more of the cultures she promotes *by others* who oppose those cultures. If she does, she will seek to provide good principled reasons for those with opposition to particular cultures to refrain from interfering with them. Toleration and enthusiastic endorsement of difference may form a spectrum of related responses to diversity.

Those advocating for the value of multiple cultures may wish to make toleration more intertwined with their view. Ingrid Creppell, for example, adds a condition to toleration that she takes to be of fundamental import: “one stays in a relationship with the person or group with whom one is in conflict [i.e., opposes]. ... the parties remain in the presence of one another in a nontrivial way” (Creppell 1996: 4). Depending on what is meant by “nontrivial” or “the commonality of the ensuing relationship” (ibid), this may be what might be called a *diversity* condition for toleration (see my 2004a), as discussed below. Creppell’s “nontrivial ensuing relationship” seems, though, to mean something more and may be problematic. An act of toleration is, as Creppell notes, “a unilateral act of one person toward another” (ibid)—when one person tolerates another, the other may be tolerating the first or not (indeed, may be doing nothing regarding the first). There thus does remain a relationship, but it remains trivially. It is unclear, then, why the conception of toleration must thereby be “one that acknowledges the fundamental feature of the maintenance of [nontrivial] relationship[s]” as Creppell would prefer. That is, it does not seem that “toleration is about what connects persons to one another in a

significant way despite differences and conflict” (Creppell 2002: 6). Toleration is simply one way to react when there are differences—regardless of the presence or absence of a connection. If this is mistaken, it would appear that there is no role for toleration in situations where the two involved groups have no significant connection. To take one simple example, if the U.S. decided to, it could interfere with, rather than tolerate, Iceland. It could also tolerate Iceland. This is true whether there are any significant connections between the two countries and their peoples.

Some will think the idea that tolerating and tolerated parties must remain in the presence of one another is plausible and shows that there is cultural diversity when one group tolerates another. That seems right. The point here is not that there is no cultural diversity—there obviously is. The point is only that such diversity is not necessary for toleration.

Though toleration does not require cultural diversity, it may seem to require *some* form of diversity. Indeed, as already mentioned, some defend a “diversity” condition for toleration, believing that this follows directly from the opposition condition—if there were no diversity, there would be no differences and if there are no differences there would be nothing to oppose and so nothing to tolerate. Churchill, for example, claims “Toleration arises in ‘circumstances of diversity,’ i.e., when people are aware of salient differences existing among them” (191). Similarly, Larmore claims it is “because reasonable persons disagree about the value of various conceptions of the good life, [that] we must learn to live with those who do not share our ideals” (Larmore 1987: 23; see also Nicholson 1985: 160; Deveaux 1998: 409; Oberdiek 2001: 38 and 47-48; Rawls 1999b: 11-12 and 131 ff.; and Rawls 1993: 36 and elsewhere).

Despite the above claims, however, the sort of diversity that must be present for toleration may well be trivial. Consider the claim that Mary can tolerate Paul’s snoring even if Mary is also a snorer—indeed, even if everyone snores. The lack of diversity here would not

make toleration impossible. Of course, someone might claim that when Mary refrains from interfering with Paul's snoring, there is diversity simply because they are two different individuals, in two different spatial locations. This is utterly trivial; as a condition of toleration, diversity is redundant—it adds nothing to the opposition requirement. Mary can tolerate Paul's snoring because Mary opposes things that keep her awake, whether or not they are things she also does.

Diversity as a condition of toleration is at best redundant. Worse though, including it as a necessary condition of toleration might lead some to mistakenly declare an absence of toleration where it is present. Some might think, to continue the example, that Mary cannot tolerate Paul's snoring because they have snoring in common and so there is no diversity. Yet most would likely say that Mary does (or at least can) tolerate Paul's snoring. We should not let this lead us astray. Though diversity is not required for toleration, there is a great deal of diversity and a great deal of opposition to different elements of that diversity—and hence a great deal to be tolerated.

#### **D. Permissiveness, Relativism, Pessimism**

Toleration is not mere permissiveness, wherein one cares (having a negative reaction) but is either (i) a relativist who believes that one's view cannot be shown to be better than that of the person potentially interfered with, or (ii) a pessimist about the possibility of (perhaps cross-cultural) dialogue.

As has been frequently noted, the relativist cannot offer any defense of toleration; all he can say is "I approve of it"—and he can only mean this in some emotive sense, not in any way rationally defensible. If it were rationally defensible, it would not be relativist—there would be an objective claim about the value of toleration. The concern here, then, is not "an

indiscriminate toleration at times indistinguishable from relativism” (Wolfson, 39). Indeed, toleration *is* a well-defended value. (For arguments in favor of toleration, see Rainer Forst 2013, especially 399-446 and my 2014, 125-150 as well as chapters 4 and 5 of my 2018. For arguments that toleration accords better with objectivism than subjectivism, see Graham 1996, esp. 46-48 and 55-58; Williams 1991, esp. 204-8; and Oberdiek 2001: 14-16.) This is important; “toleration does not mean we lack commitment to our own ideals, or are surrendering them. We are enjoined not to suppress ideas of which we disapprove: we are not being asked to like or support or encourage them” (Nicholson 1985: 170). In a nutshell, the relativist seems to think he can’t interfere because he can’t show that his view is better than his opponent’s and so merely resigns himself to suffering the disapproved of activity. He is permissive because of that resignation brought on by his relativism.

The situation of the pessimist about dialogue is perhaps less clear than that of the relativist. It may seem that the pessimist thinks her view is objectively valuable but simply does not believe she can convince the other—the one with whom she chooses not to interfere—of that value. Perhaps, then, her noninterference is actually principled so that she is tolerating. If so, she would not be tolerating *because* of her pessimism. Her pessimism might prevent her from engaging in dialogue with the opposed other, but if she tolerates, she does so for some other (principled) reason. Absent a principled reason, she does not tolerate. She likely merely endures, perhaps accepting a *modus vivendi* as discussed above.

### **E. Neutrality**

Toleration is not the same as neutrality. One can remain neutral between two parties by failing to tolerate either—perhaps even by killing both. Moreover, one can tolerate X—say a

disliked religion—while clearly disapproving of it. So too, one may endorse one religion (e.g., a state might give it favorable tax status) while tolerating other religions. All of this should be fairly clear. Say Phillip wholeheartedly endorses and practices Judaism, the religion of his parents. Perhaps Phillip loves Judaism and thinks it vastly superior to all other religions. This would make it impossible for him to tolerate Judaism, but not other religions. Indeed, if he thought Judaism vastly superior to other religions, he would presumably oppose (factors of) those other religions, thus leaving open the possibility of toleration. Still, Phillip might think some of those other religions worse than others. He might think, for example, that Christianity should be tolerated but that Satanism should be suppressed. If that were the case, Phillip would not be neutral toward the three religions; he would endorse one, tolerate another, and advocate suppressing the third.

It's worth noting that neutrality is here used as a form of comparison (perhaps coupled with a resulting behavior). If one is neutral about X and Y, one compares them (either to each other or to a third thing) and acts in the same way toward each of them. Similarly, there can be a neutral comparative attitude where one feels neutral with regard to two or more things—i.e., feels the same about both—with or without a negative response to them. One may be indifferent between X and Y, perhaps thinking both heinous. By contrast, having a neutral attitude toward a *single* thing (non-comparatively) implies that there is no negative response; this would rule out the possibility of toleration.

Understanding neutrality as just discussed helps us understand the relationship between toleration and neutrality—or, perhaps better stated, the relationship between toleration and *liberal* neutrality. If, as will be discussed below, an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.), though she

believes she has the power to interfere, a liberal state could only be appropriately neutral if it intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering with any individual or group (or its members, or its or their behavior) even though it (or its agents) believes it has the power to interfere. That is, liberal neutrality can be understood as the liberal state having a policy of *equal toleration*. (For more on this, see my 2004b and Balint 2015 and 2017, chapter 3.) For a contrasting view about this, see, Oberdiek, who claims that a substantive liberalism based on toleration must abandon neutrality (116). In her discussion, Anna Elisabetta Galeotti is concerned with “the acceptance, and hence the inclusion, of a different trait, behavior, practice, or identity in the range of the legitimate, viable, ‘normal’ options and alternatives of an open society.” While this, she says, does not evaluate “the actual content” of the difference, it negates “the majoritarian definition of something as different” (Galeotti 2002: 14-15). She may be right, but this reads like a definition of neutrality, not toleration (she discusses neutrality more extensively on 53-65). Neutrality has been criticized, of course, but a neutrality of procedure with regard to competing individuals, groups, or ways of life is likely as defensible as toleration.

As an aside, it is interesting that some early modern thinkers seem to think a state could reasonably tolerate multiple religions while treating them differently. Pierre Bayle seems to have thought, for example, that religious groups could be differentially taxed and even that a religion could be tolerated while its practitioners were not allowed to *publicly* display their religiosity (see my 2021, forthcoming). Strictly speaking, this latter is correct: the displays of religiosity would not be tolerated though the religion was. Bayle, though, was likely mistaken about differential taxation. Taxation is a form of interference. While one might tax individuals while tolerating their religions, taxing their churches interferes with those churches and thus is not toleration thereof.

## **F. Tolerance**

Finally, it is worth distinguishing toleration and tolerance. It is helpful here to consider the grammatical usage of the terms. While “tolerant” is an adjective, “tolerate” is a verb. “Tolerance” and “toleration,” on the other hand, are both nouns. As acts of toleration are, it is likely to be thought, tolerant actions, there is certainly a sense of “tolerance” which is synonymous with “toleration.” “Tolerance,” though, is ambiguous between that sense and (at least) two others. In a second sense, tolerance is simply endurance—this is the sense of the term in the phrase “building one’s tolerance” to some drug, to heat, or to an activity. This is sometimes mechanical—as when we talk of the tolerance of a screw, of a type of wood or metal, etc. In the third and more important (for our purposes) sense, tolerance is a moral attitude or virtue. While the first sense—where tolerance and toleration are synonyms—is common, so are the other senses. As such, in the name of clarity, let us reserve “toleration” for the activity, “endurance” for the second sense, and “tolerance” for the attitude (or virtue). Similarly, Walzer (1997) distinguishes between tolerance as an attitude and toleration as behavior (xi) and Oberdiek (2001) distinguishes between toleration as a practice and tolerance as a virtue (vi, 23-24; but see 10, 17, 29-31).

While the attitude of tolerance (“he is so tolerant”) and the virtue of tolerance are often treated as equivalent; they are not. Nonetheless, we need not worry here about the difference between attitudes and virtues (or between practices and behaviors). Newey develops what is likely the most sophisticated areteic account related to this discussion (1999: 105; see all of his chapter three). His is an analysis of tolerance rather than toleration. He notes that he employs a shift in terminology from toleration to tolerance, but claims that this is “not indicated to align itself with any systematic semantic distinction in ordinary-language uses of the terms” (52, note



35). For an argument that we should not be concerned with the difference between toleration as a virtue and as a practice, see King 1976: 13.

While toleration (the activity) and tolerance (the attitude or virtue) are related, the relation is unclear. One can tolerate another's behavior without at all being tolerant of it. Fletcher points out that some forms of intolerance may be more of a "psychological condition than a moral failing," as, for example, when Kant is intolerant of noise (Fletcher 1996: 231). Perhaps Jane simply can't stand, but nonetheless values not interfering with, her neighbor's playing rap \ or disco music—and so refrains from interfering. Her increasing aggravation makes clear her lack of tolerance even while she tolerates the music. Toleration and intolerance are compatible. It might seem toleration is also compatible with tolerance—i.e., that we can tolerantly tolerate though we cannot indifferently or resignedly tolerate.

Often when people claim to "have tolerance for X" they seem to mean they "do not mind X" (or, even, they "appreciate X"); "intolerance" is akin to dislike in such cases. Used this way, tolerance may not be compatible with toleration. One might have tolerance for ("be tolerant of") a behavior that one does *not* tolerate: one might be tolerant of profanity from neighbors and fail to tolerate it, at least in particular circumstances (when one's child is nearby, for example, one might interfere with the behavior that one does not find particularly offensive). One might lack tolerance and fail to tolerate: one might not tolerate the loud parties of a neighbor (by calling the police) because one is intolerant of such public nuisances. (One might lack tolerance and fail to tolerate for a very different reason: one might not interfere with the behavior of a despised rival whom one is intolerant of just so that rival will face more dire consequences than one can mete out oneself. This is not toleration; see the discussion of the value condition below.) Finally, one might lack tolerance and practice toleration (as with the music tolerating example above): Jane is

intolerant of, but tolerates, the music playing. So, we have tolerance without toleration, intolerance without toleration, and intolerance with toleration. Can we have tolerance with toleration? Does one have tolerance, for example, if one is hoping that by tolerating the behavior (the playing of opera, perhaps), one will come to appreciate it? This is unclear, for that may render tolerance mere endurance, or it may too much resemble endorsement of the behavior to be indicative even of toleration.

While the examples thus far discussed might be questioned, they show that tolerance and toleration are distinct. One might think that tolerance is something other than “not minding”—one might, e.g., want to define tolerance as an attitude (or virtue) that occurs with toleration. Such issues can be set aside since they are indicative only of the fact that we are not clear about what *tolerance* is. While a conceptual analysis of the attitude would certainly be valuable, that is not the task here, though it’s worth noting, with Peter Gardner, a distinction between two different senses of the attitude:

dispositional tolerance need not involve disapproval or dislike by the person who is dispositionally tolerant, though its objects are what attract, or are likely to attract, dislike or disapproval from some quarters. Deliberative tolerance, however, always seems to involve disapproval or dislike by the person who is deliberately tolerant, at least initially, for then there is the temptation not to be tolerant and deliberation about whether he should or should not be tolerant (Gardner 1993: 92).

Deliberative tolerance is often what we think of in discussions of toleration. This explains our unwillingness to say we are being tolerant if we refrain from interfering with someone in order that further harm befall him—as discussed in connection with the value condition (3) below. We would certainly not be displaying *dispositional* tolerance in such a case. Presumably, it is deliberative *intolerance*.

We now have a good idea of what toleration is not. We turn to the definition of toleration, by considering the seven conditions specified above:

1. the presence of an *agent*
2. who *intentionally*
3. and *on principle*
4. *refrains from interfering* with
5. an *opposed*
6. *other* (or their behavior, etc.) though
7. she *believes she has the power to interfere*.

If we adopt all of these conditions, we would say that *an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.), though she believes she has the power to interfere*. The rest of this chapter provides further discussion of these conditions.

Before moving on, it should be recognized that the division of the conditions is to some extent arbitrary. One could, for example, have one condition combining the “agent” and “object” conditions into a relational factor. There are, moreover, interestingly different approaches to identifying phenomena that are related to, but different from toleration. (See, e.g., King 1976: 54-60 and Creppell 2002: 20-21.) For an entirely different approach, see Fotion and Elfstrom; they discuss toleration as a far broader notion than that considered here, one that includes some of the concepts distinguished from toleration above. Rather than exclude these, Fotion and Elfstrom analyze all the ways *we talk of tolerating*. Galeotti also seeks to broaden our understanding of toleration; she does so in order to argue that when we claim we should tolerate minorities we mean (or should mean) more than that we should allow them freedom to pursue their own conception of the good—we also mean (or should) that we must grant them recognition (i.e., endorsement as morally acceptable; see 10; see also Creppell 2002: 4-6). On the view discussed here, that conflates toleration with endorsement. In contrast to Fotion and

Elfstrom, Galeotti, and Creppell, this chapter concerns *the core idea* of toleration; this is consistent with recognizing that people often speak more loosely. (See also Budziszewski 1992.)

And now the conditions. Each of the following conditions is likely part of an adequate definition of toleration. There is some debate about each.

**1. Agent (“an agent tolerates when she ...”).** Toleration is practiced by an agent. Importantly, this does not require discussion of the agent’s character, attitude, or virtue. Even evil agents can refrain from interference (condition four below) for good principled reasons (condition three below). When Churchill claims that toleration is “an attribute of moral character; it pertains to the attitudes, motives, and behavioral dispositions of those who voluntarily forbear from interference with speech or conduct” (Churchill 1997: 199; see also Oberdiek 2001: 40-41) he conflates tolerance and toleration. Distinguishing them makes clear that it is properly a requirement of the *behavior* of an agent that this condition makes explicit. We could consider that a subcondition:

a. *Behavioral.* To tolerate X is to engage in a particular type of behavior.

Some might prefer to consider this a separate condition, but it need not be as it is also brought out in condition four: *refraining from interfering* is behavioral. Interestingly, the behavior exercised in toleration is negative: one *refrains* from performing a certain action (this may or may not require some performance). This is clear enough, though it is analytically difficult to explain (a thorough explanation would involve intentions—as also with condition two below).

**2. Intentional (“an agent tolerates when she intentionally ...”).** Acts of toleration must be intended. We do not say of an agent that she tolerates X if she does not interfere with X merely because she never considered doing so. She must intend to refrain from interfering if the

noninterference is to count as toleration. Hence, Churchill tells us that toleration requires “voluntary forbearance or voluntary leaving others alone” (Churchill 1997: 192). Inaction is not enough; it must be chosen. One does not tolerate one’s child smoking, for example, if one does not know one’s child is smoking and for that reason alone forms no intentions regarding the child’s smoking. Given this, there is, minimally, one subcondition:

- a. *Belief*. One must believe one is not interfering with the doing of X. Toleration “involves awareness; one cannot ... [tolerate] what one is ignorant of” (Gardner 1993: 85; he uses the term “tolerance”).

There is no reason to consider this sort of a belief a separate condition or to spend much time discussing it; no one disputes it. The “belief condition” discussed below is more significant (and somewhat controversial).

That an act of toleration must be intentional might seem to indicate that toleration requires a particular attitude (or one of a limited range of attitudes). This might be a form (or underlying component) of the attitude of tolerance. This attitude (or pro-attitude), however it is fleshed out, is *minimal*, meaning it does not require any positive or negative *emotional* evaluation of *the act of toleration*; that act is positively evaluated (by the actor) only in that it is the result of a commitment to a particular value, as discussed next. (As will be discussed below with condition 5, a less minimal reaction toward *the possible object of toleration* will also be necessary).

Some—for example, Churchill as quoted above—prefer to say that toleration must be voluntary, rather than intentional. This difference is likely unimportant for the following reason. What is voluntary is necessarily intentional, so those claiming the acts must be voluntary can accept that they must be intentional. What is intentional, though, is not necessarily voluntary.

This may cause concern, but the next condition is that toleration requires that one act on principle and if one intentionally acts on (not merely “in accord with”) one’s principles, one must be doing so voluntarily. Because the next condition is widely accepted, if there is a difference between a Churchillian requirement that toleration be voluntary and the claim that it be intentional, it is merely verbal.

**3. Value (“an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle ...”).** To be tolerating some X requires that one’s refraining from interfering is based on principle; put another way, one’s noninterference must be due to a good reason. This is not obvious. It is a difficult matter and some may doubt the requirement. To see why it is necessary, consider again the case of tolerating (or not) one’s child’s smoking.

Should one learn of the child’s smoking, one must decide whether to interfere or not. Most parents would at least try to rationally persuade the child to discontinue the unhealthy habit. Some might go further, but others might not. Why would they not? One reason would be to allow the child to develop into an autonomous adult. That would, presumably, indicate that the parent was tolerating the behavior. By contrast, if the parent decided not to interfere because he thought there was nothing he could do (or because it wasn’t “worth the effort” or because he simply didn’t care), he would not rightly be said to be tolerating the smoking—he would be resigning himself to enduring it or merely being permissive. The difference is that in the first case the noninterference is principled—based on a value—while in the latter case, it is not.

It is worth noting here that talk about state actions of toleration is likely different than talk of individual actions. Some may think that if a state does not interfere with cigarette smoking because it has determined that its attempted interferences do not work, that it would

rightly be said to tolerate smoking even though it does not do so for a principled reason. In the case of states, however, there may be principles behind the policies of toleration, but the state itself does not have intentions. Thus, when we talk of *state toleration*, we are actually talking of *state policies of toleration* (see my 2014: 17-18). In the present case, perhaps the state has a policy of tolerating smoking because it has determined that to be the best way to reduce smoking

In agreement with the value condition, Jeff Jordan notes that if “S morally tolerates P’s doing X” is true, “S believes that she is doing a good [or *right*] thing by doing nothing” (Jordan 1997: 213; see also Galeotti 2002: 22; for our purposes, goodness and rightness are equally values). S believes, that is, that she acts on principle. (A belief subcondition might be added here as it was for the last condition. Again, though, it’s not worth further discussion. While some deny toleration must be principled, no one who believes it must be would deny that there must be belief that it be principled.) The reasons S believes that, though, may vary. It may be that toleration (or one of its components) is itself taken as a value, or it may be that the value is autonomy, such that toleration is “a manifestation of respect for persons” (Churchill 1997: 201). More precisely, Churchill tells us, toleration may be a “manifestation of the disposition to subject one’s [dislike or] moral disapproval of another’s belief or behavior to one’s respect for the other’s attachment to the belief or behavior in question” (ibid.; see also 193). The point bears repeating: the “decision to tolerate is [or may be] a decision that your respect for the exercise of choice by other people should have priority over your opinion that what they have chosen is bad or wrong” (Raphael 1988: 139; see also Nicholson 1985: 160 and Oberdiek 2001: 24 and 39). The point here is that for it to be an act of toleration, one’s noninterference must be based either on respect for the other tolerated (or their autonomy or rights) or on a principled belief that toleration (or one of its components) is a value.

It might be thought that the value could be the attitude of tolerance. Since the attitude of tolerance may itself be based on evil (dis)values, thereby inviting, at a different level, the conundrum that follows, this is likely mistaken. (For related discussions, see Horton 1996, 31-32 and 38-41 and Joseph Raz 1988, 162. For a contrast, see Barbara Herman 1996: 6.)

If the principle or value that satisfies this condition did not have to be either respect for the other or the value of toleration itself (or one of its components) and could be anything the agent chooses, there would be a conundrum that can be seen by considering an example provided by Gardner. In his example, “I do not stop a person from doing something I regard as wicked precisely because I believe far harsher treatment than I could ever mete out, awaits that person if he carries on what he is doing ... [or] because I recognise that it would be disadvantageous to me to do so” (Gardner 1993: 90). If any value will do, either of these reasons would provide an example of toleration. Yet, surely, they do not. The reason, it seems, is that in Gardner’s example, the restraint is due to improper reasons—perhaps because the agent values pain in others (see Newey 1999: 20). Such conundrums do not arise with the current formulation: not interfering because pain is valued is not refraining from interference because one respects the other or because of a principled belief that toleration (or one of its conditions) is a value.

Some may worry that there is a circularity in the idea that toleration requires taking as a value toleration (or one of its conditions) such that toleration seems to be analyzed, in part, with reference to values, one of which might be toleration. If this is circular, it is not viciously so. This is because “my valuing X” might be analyzed without analysis of X. Hence, it is reasonable to say “when I tolerate, I may be acting on a principle such that ‘I will tolerate’.” If that is viciously circular, the solution is likely to define the value condition as satisfied either by the value of the other—i.e., respect—or any of the *other* conditions of toleration. The value could



not, then, be toleration or (obviously) the value condition, but could be any of the remaining conditions. Several of my examples below are cases where noninterference is the value.

It may be asked why we cannot simply say that toleration requires respect for the other(s) tolerated—full stop. Some do take that view. David Heyd suggests that “to be tolerant one must be able to suspend one’s judgment of the object, to turn one’s view away from it, to treat it as irrelevant, for the sake of a generically different perspective ... [It] require[s] an impersonal judgment of beliefs and practices, that is, in abstraction from the person holding them” (Heyd 1996: 11; see also Creppell 2002: 29). “Toleration is,” he claims, “thus a sub-category of respect” (Heyd 1996: 12; see also Scanlon 1996: 235). Notice, though, that because Heyd believes the value endorsed when tolerating must be that of the other and that persons are the only beings due such respect, he concludes that only persons can be the objects of toleration (14). There is, though, good reason to believe that other sorts of things can be the objects of toleration, as we will see in the discussion of the object condition (#6), below. That is one clear reason to think other values must be capable of satisfying the value condition.

So, why insist that this condition can also be met by a principled belief that toleration (or one of its components) is a value? The answer is simply that there are times when it seems entirely appropriate to claim to tolerate the behavior of X when X is not a being we respect—or, in any case, when such respect does not explain our toleration. X may be a small child whose constant demands irritate or X may be a pack of wild animals whose behavior is destructive of one’s property. We do not, though, respect such beings (certainly not as equals) even if we do (at least, *may*) value their being able to do as they are doing—that is, we value tolerating them or the noninterference. Our refusal to interfere with them likely counts as toleration, in part, because we *value* the noninterference.

Further discussion is required regarding this difficult condition. Imagine that you cultivate a garden for aesthetic reasons and a deer comes in and eats at it, detracting from its aesthetic value. You deplore this loss of aesthetic value, but you choose not to interfere—perhaps because you think the deer is due respect, but perhaps not. If you do think the deer is due respect, it may be that your refraining from interfering is toleration. Importantly, though, even if you do *not* think the deer is due respect, it may be a case of toleration.

If you are to be tolerating the deer, the value preventing you from interfering with it cannot be mere aesthetic appreciation of it (or the scene with it, or all of nature). If you refrain from interfering because you aesthetically value the deer (or the scene, or all of nature) more than keeping the garden, you are not tolerating the deer, because you do not oppose it or its activity, as required by condition 5 (below). It would, in fact, seem that you *endorse* the deer or its activity. However, your opposition to the loss of the aesthetic value of your garden may allow that you tolerate *that loss*, which is conceptually distinct from tolerating *the deer*.

Toleration of the loss of the aesthetic value of your garden may be based on the value of (or inherent in) the deer. Toleration of the deer itself or its activity is also plausibly based on the value of (or inherent in) the deer—we can distinguish a value inherent in X or Xness while opposing X or this particular X—but it need not be. (For our purposes, the related values of the other, respect, and autonomy (or some other value inherent in the other) can be treated the same way though they are different.) One might not value the deer at all and still tolerate it if one refrains from interfering because one values not interfering (we will see much the same about people as objects of toleration in the discussion of condition #6 below).

Some may find it implausible to think noninterference can be valued for its own sake and insist that it can only be valued instrumentally as a means of showing respect or preserving

aesthetic value. That the latter is mistaken can be seen by considering Stoicism (in the classic sense, not what is discussed in A above; for related discussion, see Newey 1999, chapter 3). The Stoic refrains from interfering as a means of achieving *eudaimonia*. Noninterference in such cases is valued instrumentally on that ground alone and not as a means of showing respect or preserving aesthetic value. To see that the value might not be instrumental at all, another example will be helpful.

In cases of extremely ravaging animals (e.g., elephants in southern Africa), we may well want to refrain from interfering with their behavior though the resulting devastation would not be considered a positive aesthetic value and though we do not think it will aid our achieving *eudaimonia*. While some may grant respect to the animals, even those who do not might think we should refrain from interfering—the *should* suggesting it is not mere endurance. They might simply value, for example, not poisoning (or trapping, or what have you) the animal in question (deer, elephant, or other); this is decidedly different from thinking one should not poison the animal because of *its* value (or because of one's pursuit of *eudaimonia*, or because of some aesthetic value). Though autonomy may be the more canonical value in cases of toleration (demanding toleration as respect; see Creppell 2002: 21), so long as either of these values—of the other or of toleration (or one of its components)—provides the basis for noninterference, we would have a case of toleration (assuming the other conditions are also satisfied). Newey (1999) comes close to this point when he says “non-prevention [may] be regarded as an end in itself” (158-59), but he backs off when he says the nonprevention “might be counted as an instance of respecting” autonomy (159). The important point, again, is that if it isn't respect that is satisfying the value condition, it seems that it must be toleration itself or one of its components—perhaps noninterference.

One further point should be recognized here. Including “value” as a condition of toleration may seem to make toleration ineliminably normative. This is true, but may be misunderstood. There *is* an ineliminably normative component of the definition. The value behind the principled noninterference, like any value, is normative. That value, though, is prespecified: it is either respect of the other or toleration (or one of its components) itself. While there might be a question as to whether these are genuinely values, that question is separate from an analysis of toleration. To know whether an act counts as an act of toleration, one needs to know if the actor acted according to one of these values, not whether or not *we should consider them values* and not whether or not *we should act according to them*. Put another way, if it turned out that these values were not genuine values, it would make no difference—toleration would still be acting in accord with them. After all, an individual might act in a principled fashion, believing a value is present, even when it is not. Or the individual may act mistakenly believing that value is weighty enough in a specific case when it is not. For example, Joe might refrain from interfering with his neighbor Herman who is throwing rocks at passersby because Joe takes Herman to be a rights bearer (or autonomous subject). In such a case, Joe might accurately be described as tolerating Herman *even though he morally ought not*. This is enough to show that the normative element of the concept does not settle any moral issues. The normativity of any given case of toleration is distinct from the normativity of the value condition of toleration.

We should note that one may value noninterference as instrumental to the attainment of a variety of goods and still satisfy the value condition. If this were not the case—if, for example, one would not be tolerating if one refrained from interfering in order to promote peace—then some views usually considered liberal (perhaps Judith N. Shklar’s “liberalism of fear” or any

view relying on a *modus vivendi*), would not be liberal since liberalism requires toleration. It is more plausible that noninterference may be valued instrumentally for some goods, but not others. The aesthetic value one gets from not interfering with the deer, for example, seems not to allow for toleration. On the other hand, the Stoic does seem to tolerate when he refrains from interfering in order to attain *eudaimonia* and most would likely say that when one refrains from interfering to promote peace, one is tolerating. The range of values for the sake of which one might instrumentally value noninterference and be tolerating properly speaking, is not one that can be fully specified here. Likely, guidance to do so can be derived from consideration of what toleration is not, as discussed above.

**4. *Noninterference (“an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering ...”).*** This is the condition at the heart of toleration. Questions about whether someone is or is not properly said to be tolerating another usually arise only when the person is not interfering and claims to be tolerant or tolerating. Philosophically, this is where things get interesting and we begin to ask questions like “Did she mean not to interfere? If so, did she mean to tolerate when she refrained from interfering? Were her reasons appropriate to toleration?” If, by contrast, you interfere in my behavior, you clearly fail to tolerate it and these sorts of questions do not arise (though we may ask if you should have refrained from interfering, we will not ask if your action counts as an act of toleration). If “S morally tolerates P’s doing X” is true, then “S takes no steps to interfere with P’s doing of X” (Jordan 1997: 213; see also Churchill 1997: 191; Horton 1993: 4; Horton and Nicholson 1992: 3; Nicholson 1985: 160; Oberdiek 2001: 66; Raphael 1988: 139; and Rawls 1999b: 59). Put simply, toleration requires

that there be no interference—there must be no action aimed at preventing the behavior in question.

Despite the wide agreement about this condition, some might claim that it is not quite right and that *condemning* a behavior even without interfering with it would be to fail to tolerate it. Gardner, for example, claims that “not condemning something as disgusting and corrupting, despite one’s inclination to do so, may be a matter of being tolerant” (Gardner 1993: 85; see also Fotion and Elfstrom 1992: 5) or, someone (perhaps not Gardner) may add, a matter of toleration. Depending on what is meant by “condemnation,” this view may be mistaken.

It seems clear that Maria can express her dissatisfaction to Tina with the latter’s lateness to work and yet tolerate the behavior—by, for example, not firing her. Condemnation, there, is a matter of dialogue aimed, presumably, at persuasion (not to repeat the behavior). As others have noted, people can tolerate when they “condemn and then stay their intervention” (Fletcher 1996: 237); “I may tolerate someone’s behavior while expressing disapproval of it” (Webb 1997: 415-416). Toleration does not rule out rational persuasion. If, however, condemnation means something more powerful, such as coercion, it would be incompatible with toleration—because it would be interference.

Perhaps this is too quick. Gardner’s point, after all, is about one’s behavior when one refrains from condemning—not about what happens when one *does* condemn. Presumably, he does not mean to be discussing occasions where one simply refrains from voicing one’s condemnation (which may itself be seen as a behavioral form of noninterference). His point, rather, is that despite having a negative *emotional* response to some activity—the homosexual behavior of Jack and Jim, for example—George might recognize that his feelings are not sufficient reason even for condemning the activity, much less legally or physically interfering

with it, so that the question of whether to interfere is never raised (even to himself). George does not allow himself to make an intellectual judgment based on his purely emotional response—he intentionally and on principle refrains from forming the condemnatory judgment (assume, for the sake of argument, that such is psychologically possible). That sounds at least superficially like toleration and some may think such restraint is a way of tolerating even though it is nonbehavioral. This is better understood, though, as the cultivation of the virtue of tolerance or perhaps merely the “building of one’s tolerance”—i.e., endurance level—as discussed earlier. It may well be a valuable character-building activity, but it is not then toleration (of course, practicing toleration may also sometimes serve as an aid in character-building).

The cultivation of virtue that we talk of when we speak of “building tolerance” is where the analogy to mechanical tolerance comes in: it is a matter of variation that can be accepted. The more variation one can “tolerate,” the more tolerant one is; the more variation a mechanical apparatus can “tolerate” in its component parts, the greater its degree of tolerance (for example, if it requires a 5 mm screw but can tolerate a 4 mm or 6 mm screw, it has greater tolerance than if it can only tolerate a screw as small as 4.5 mm or as large as 5.5 mm).

Return to George’s resisting making a judgement about Jack and Jim. The issue is not simply a question of how to properly describe George’s nonbehavioral (purely psychological) activity—as if offering a better description would show it to be (or not to be) properly called an example of toleration. If, in this example, George *is* tolerating, it would mean that the “refraining from interfering” condition can be no part of toleration. Who, after all, is it that George is refraining from interfering with? Not Jack and Jim—*ex hypothesi*, the question of doing so is not even raised (that there is no interference does not mean there is *refraining from interfering*). Is it George himself? Apparently not—indeed, he seems to be clearly interfering

with his own mental life (stopping himself from forming the condemnatory judgment). It might even be accurate to say that George *fails to tolerate* his own otherwise natural response (though for good reason). While there is no need to deny that George's nonbehavioral activity is *related* to toleration, we must recognize that either it is not toleration or toleration is here (and by most theorists) radically misconceived—because conceived of as involving behavior that is refraining from interfering. The former seems more plausible.

Tolerance (the attitude or virtue), the activity of developing such tolerance, and toleration—as well as other concepts—are part of a cluster of related notions. Someone who, like George, works to cultivate tolerance (or any virtue) is surely different from (and perhaps better than) the person who simply does not care at all about his negative responses to others. He is also different from (and perhaps better than) the agent who tolerates without trying to change his views.

Again, toleration is a behavioral matter (condition 1a) requiring that one not interfere. “To tolerate an action or behavior is to permit it to take place, to take no steps to stop it” (Webb 1997: 415).

Horton claims that because there may be a lack of clarity regarding whether a particular act counts as interfering, “toleration is often a matter of degree” (1996: 28; see also Horton 1985). Though there can be a lack of clarity in this regard, the conclusion is not warranted: in the relevant sort of cases, it might be better for us to simply admit we are *unsure* if there is toleration, rather than saying there is “more or less” toleration. Consider this further.

“Interference” can be understood to be any act that has the effect of impeding or preventing—even partially—an agent from doing as they wish, intend, or will. That is, it is a hindrance or obstruction. That an interference may only partially prevent an agent from doing as



they wish is important as it allows us to say that toleration is a binary matter—one either tolerates or one does not. One may decide not to tolerate another’s act and *fail* to stop them from doing as they wish. This would nonetheless be a case where one does not tolerate even though one might have acted more aggressively or forcefully in not tolerating. If one decides not to tolerate another but is then overpowered by that other while interfering with them, we do not say that one tolerated the other “but to a lower degree or extent than one might have.” We simply note it as a failed attempt at interference (non-toleration). Take a simple case: Jerry decides not to tolerate Tom walking across his yard, but Tom is too quick and simply rushes past Jerry across the yard. Jerry did not tolerate Tom’s action—to any degree.

Perhaps this will seem counterintuitive because it is the case that people can be *more or less tolerant*. Consider that three people, X, Y, and Z, may all disapprove of pornography and yet disagree about what should be done. X may think she has no moral right to interfere with its sale or consumption, Y may think that its sale can be restricted to licensed purveyors (and so not strictly prohibited), and Z may think its production and sale ought to both be illegal. X seems more tolerant than Y and Z and Z seems the least tolerant, but if X *tolerates* more it is solely because more acts (and/or kinds of acts) are tolerated on her legal scheme than on Y’s or Z’s. There is no real question of “degrees of toleration” where this means a particular act may be more (or less) an act of toleration than another act, vis-à-vis the same object. One either tolerates an object or not. While there may be a question of degree of tolerance, there can only be questions of scope of toleration.

One more example might be useful: if one uses an only partially effective spray (“Deer-Off”) to prevent deer from eating at one’s garden, one may realize that one will fail to interfere effectively with as many deer as one would interfere with using an electric fence (perhaps costs

make the latter less feasible). Again, though, one can try to *not tolerate* and fail; this seems to be the case here: the person is not tolerating the deer when he uses the Deer-Off, but he is unsuccessful (or partly unsuccessful). Given the second condition (intentional), *unsuccessfully not tolerating* is not the same as *successfully tolerating*. Again, though, the Deer-Off user may be more tolerant than the user of an electric fence.

**5. Opposition (“an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering with an opposed ...”).** Toleration requires that what is tolerated is, in some sense, opposed by the one tolerating it. There is a great deal of disagreement about whether that opposition must be moral opposition or if it can be mere dislike. A few reject the requirement entirely. Creppell seems to reject it as making toleration less (or ir-) relevant to political discourse since much of what we talk about is not interfering when we merely have differences, some of which are not opposed (2002: 3-4). While it is true that we are concerned not to have interference in situations where there is no real opposition, whether that is weighty enough of a consideration is an open question. We have, after all, a related concept about state interference that does not require opposition: neutrality (see earlier discussion). In his 2017, Balint claims that opposition is not always necessary for toleration, but only after explaining that there is both a narrow and a broader, more general, notion of toleration and that opposition *is* required for the former. In other words, Balint recognizes that opposition is a necessary component of toleration in the strict sense and then notes that we sometimes use the word more loosely. Creppell’s notion fits with that broader understanding of the term. This chapter is about the narrower use of the term.

The more inclusive way to define toleration given the opposition condition is to allow the opposition to be moral *or* mere dislike, so that “there must be some conduct which is disapproved of (*or at least disliked*)” (Horton 1993: 4, emphasis added; see also Mendus, 15; Newey, 42; Deveaux, 409; Oberdiek, 38, 48-51; and Galeotti 2002: 20-22; see Galeotti 2002: 50-51 for the claim that only moral disapproval results in “an intriguing moral puzzle”). Ordinary language seems to agree that there must be a “dislike or antagonism to the behavior, character, or some feature of the existence of its object” (Raz 1988: 163; see also Raz 1986: 40). Still, several authors take moral disapprobation to be necessary, claiming that mere dislike is not enough.

Jordan claims that if “S morally tolerates P’s doing X” is true, “S believes that the doing of X is morally wrong” (Jordan 1997: 213; see also Raphael 1988: 139). What is necessary, Churchill also claims, is “moral disapproval, that is, disapproval based on reasons rather than on simple dislikes, negative feelings, or biases” (Churchill 1997: 199; see also Raphael 1988: 139, 142; Horton and Nicholson 1992: 3; Nicholson 1985: 160). Regarding the sort of opposition involved in toleration, these authors have a restrictive view.

On the broader understanding of toleration, one can tolerate another’s behavior (say listening to or playing rap music) that one dislikes, though one recognizes that there is nothing morally wrong with it. Surely, this is the way we ordinarily speak—we do claim to tolerate things like rap music that are clearly not immoral. It is important, though, that it is not enough that one merely *not like* the behavior not interfered with—for one may be merely indifferent to X when one does not like X, and one does not tolerate what one is merely indifferent to (as discussed earlier). Still, dislike seems sufficient for the opposition condition.

Warnock claims that the distinction “between the moral and the non-moral” cannot be maintained (Warnock 1987: 126; but see also King 1976: 41-43). Langerak says: “I agree with

those who argue that we probably cannot draw a line between what we dislike and what we disapprove and that, in any case, the issue of toleration can arise whenever there is disagreement about any matter regarded as important, be they mores or morals” (Langerak 1997: 111). We can remain agnostic about whether the distinction can be maintained. If Warnock is correct, the broader understanding discussed in the text is given further support—if there is no way to maintain the distinction between non-moral dislike and moral opposition, then opposition based on one makes room for opposition based on the other.

What is indicated on either the narrow or broad formulation is that difference or diversity alone is not enough, for there can be differences without any toleration in a utopian state where all individuals are either indifferent to one another or love one another and embrace one another’s differences (again, as discussed earlier). “The point to notice is that everyone in this debate agrees that toleration is to be sharply distinguished both from indifference toward diversity and from broadminded celebration of it” (Langerak 1997: 111). It is necessary that the behavior tolerated be *opposed* by the tolerating agent—whether that opposition be dislike (in contrast to mere “not liking”) or moral disapprobation. There must be “objection to the item said to be tolerated” (King 1976: 25-26; see also 44-51).

In an interesting discussion, Gardner suggests that claiming the Dutch are tolerant (dispositionally) does not necessarily mean they disapprove of many things, adding that we “might think that one of the reasons for the Dutch being so tolerant is that they disapprove of so little” (Gardner 1993: 86; see also Newey 1999: 180). If, though, the Dutch act as they do because they are *indifferent* to so much, it hardly seems appropriate to say they frequently tolerate. They must at least dislike what they tolerate. But Gardner also claims: “People can be tolerant where they dislike or disapprove, but they can also be tolerant where others, but not they

themselves, do, would, or would be likely to, dislike or disapprove. In fact, people may be tolerant about what they, but not others, like or approve ... People can be tolerant without realizing it” (Gardner, 87). It hardly seems appropriate, though, to say that one rap musician *tolerates* another rap musician’s making rap music that the first likes just because others dislike it. “Whether a person is tolerant or not depends on his reasons for action. Himmler did not tolerate Hitler when he did not kill him” (Raz 1986: 402 and 1988: 162). Gardner, however, is talking of tolerance rather than toleration and this may be one way the attitude and behavior differ.

Joseph Raz adds a condition such that “the intolerant inclination is in itself [at least in the eyes of the person experiencing it] worthwhile or desirable” (1988: 163 and 1986: 403; bracketed material in the latter; see also Newey 1999: 21-24, on his condition T1). This may indicate that he accepts the narrower opposition requirement, as it seems to demand a principled opposition; it may indicate that the opposition must also be valued in some way. He also offers two additional “features” that are worth brief consideration here: “First, only behavior which is either unwelcome to the person towards whom it is addressed or behavior which is normally seen as unwelcome is intolerant behavior. Secondly, one is tolerant only if one inclines or is tempted not to be” (Raz 1988: 163 and 1986: 403). He is discussing tolerance, but there is reason to doubt that the behavior one refrains from when one tolerates need be behavior that would be unwelcome or normally seen as unwelcome: I can fail to tolerate Cindy’s continuous self-deprecation and she may well appreciate my non-tolerating response (she may, in fact, not welcome toleration thereof). The second idea, that one cannot be tolerant if one is not tempted not to be, accords both with the opposition condition (in either its narrow or broad interpretation) and with deliberative tolerance (as discussed earlier).

Finally, it is worth noting that this condition—that one can only tolerate X if one opposes X—stalls any argument against toleration of a particular behavior that claims such toleration involves endorsement (for example, claims that we should not have laws tolerating homosexuality, abortion, or condom usage because we do not endorse those behaviors). If we can only tolerate X when we oppose X, we can't be endorsing X when we tolerate it (see Webb 1997: 422). Should it be suggested that one can be opposed to something and not be aware of that opposition, it should be admitted that toleration requires such awareness. (This is made explicit in subcondition 2a.

**6. Object (“an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.) ...”).** This condition is obvious: there must be something tolerated. What is less obvious is what sorts of things can be included in the class of objects one can tolerate. One can at least be said to tolerate persons, beliefs, behavior, and practices. This list is not likely exhaustive; we've seen that a great number of things can be tolerated.

Churchill claims that the “objects of toleration ... are not persons per se, but beliefs, attitudes, behavior (including verbal), and practices subject to change or alteration by the persons who hold these beliefs and attitudes or exhibit or participate in the behaviors in question” (Churchill 1997: 201; see also Mendus 1989: 16 and Oberdiek 2001: 40-46; this view is in direct opposition to Heyd's view, discussed above, according to which *only* human beings can be the objects of toleration.) If this is correct, when we speak as if we tolerate a person or a group, we are elliptically indicating that there is something about the person or group or what they are doing that we are tolerating. On this view, properly speaking we do not tolerate *John*, but

*something John does*—perhaps his loud music playing. If that is right, toleration is “quite compatible with full respect for those with whom we disagree” (Scanlon 1996: 226). On its face, this sort of claim seems plausible. However, as Mendus notes, this means that strictly speaking, talk of “racial toleration” is misleading: what is involved is not so much tolerating a racial group, but tolerating certain behavior or activity of (or believed to be of) the group. She endorses this view (Mendus 1989: 17).

Consider further racial toleration. There likely are racists who are racists because they falsely associate a particular set of behaviors with people from the racial group they hate. Perhaps they hate black people because they think black people and only black people create and listen to rap music. In such cases, Mendus’s (et al) view seems plausible. But there are also racists who would recognize the mistake of these naïve views—they recognize, e.g., that some white people make and listen to rap music as well so that this fails to distinguish whom they hate from whom they don’t hate. Such racists simply hate a class of people, where that class is typically determined by some factor members of the class cannot change (black people, for example, cannot ordinarily change their skin color). Such racists might, despite their racism, be able to tolerate those they hate. They may choose not to stand near such people, but they may be prepared, for good principled reasons (perhaps the value of noninterference), not to interfere with those people nonetheless (for example, they might not try to interfere with the other’s riding the bus with them). They might, then, be tolerating the people they hate and not merely the behavior those people manifest.

We can tolerate people. Examples will be enough to indicate other things we can tolerate. We can tolerate behavior, as we’ve seen in various examples (we tolerate the playing of rap music, smoking, etc.). We can tolerate beliefs (some people apparently sincerely believe that

Donald Trump was a good president, for example, and we tolerate those beliefs—and a person's having of those beliefs). We can tolerate practices (for example, we might tolerate male circumcision though the evidence for its costs and benefits is unclear). Let us continue.

It is often suggested that toleration is an unfortunate behavior which we'd do better without if only we could get ourselves to lose irrational dislikes and disapprobations—racial prejudice, for example (see, e.g., Cranston 1987: 101 and Fotion and Elfstrom 1992: 129; the claim is generally framed, though, in terms of tolerance as a virtue). Given how many sorts of things we can tolerate, there must be a limit to this thinking. There are objects we do not like (rap music, for example) that we should tolerate and for which there is no good reason to think we should work to lose our opposition (condition five).

Of course, there may be things—even things generally and rightly associated with particular groups—that we should not tolerate (female circumcision may be in this category). It may be that one cannot conceptually tolerate oneself. This is plausible, but will hinge on one's conception of the self (since a homuncular view of the self would allow that one part of the self can tolerate another). It may also be that one could be *tolerant* with oneself.

**7. Believed Power** (“*an agent tolerates when she intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.), though she believes she has the power to interfere*”). In order for an act of noninterference to count as an act of toleration, the agent who refrains from interfering must believe she has the power to interfere. In one sense this is obvious: if the refraining from interfering must be intentional (as required by condition two; note that subcondition 2a requires only belief that one is not interfering—not belief that one could interfere), surely the agent must have to think about her not interfering and that suggests



that she thinks she could interfere. There is, though, some debate about how this condition should be formulated. Some think it must be possible for the tolerator to interfere, not merely that they believe it be possible.

It has been claimed that a person who tolerates “must be in a position to be able to interfere with the behavior of the tolerated; that is she has the ability to suppress, disrupt, or censure the offending speech or behavior, but refrains from doing so” (Churchill 1997: 192; see also Raphael 1988: 139-41; and Oberdiek 2001: 51-52). According to this, a person is not tolerating the opposed behavior if her refraining from interfering is, for example, due to state (police or military) prohibition—if S is physically or coercively prevented from interfering with P’s doing X, but absent that prohibition S would interfere (here, the law is assumed to be disabling), then S cannot be said to be tolerating X when S does not interfere. Still, there may be other sorts of cases where one cannot interfere and where we would nonetheless say one does tolerate.

If someone voluntarily refrains from interfering, on a principled basis, with opposed behavior that she *believes* she has the power to interfere with, though she does not have such power, it seems that she is properly described as tolerating the said behavior—actual power to interfere may be unnecessary. If Maria believes she can fire Tina for showing up late to work (and is opposed to the lateness) but refrains from doing so, we can rightly say that Maria tolerates Tina’s lateness—even if, as it turns out, only Helen has the authority to fire Tina. If on the other hand, Maria knows that only Helen can fire Tina, then her lack of interference seems not to be toleration, but endurance—she “puts up” with Tina’s lateness because she has no choice (alternatively, Maria may have a tolerant disposition). In short then, this condition requires that if “S morally tolerates P’s doing X” is true, then “S *believes* that she has it within

her power to interfere with P's doing of X" (Jordan 1997: 213; emphasis added). This accords with what we saw earlier, that "refusal to interfere must be more than mere acquiescence or resignation" (Horton 1993: 4; see also Horton and Nicholson 1992: 3; Nicholson 1985: 160; and Deveaux 1998: 409).

It is worth noting that if what has been said is correct, S may believe she has the power to interfere when she does not and she may have the power to interfere and not believe it. One result of this is that Maria may be tolerating Tina's behavior at 11 am, when Tina shows up late and Maria refrains from firing her though she believes she can, but *not* tolerating Tina's behavior at noon, when she learns that only Helen can fire Tina.

It is also worth noting that the *believed power* does not have to be legitimate authority. In the example just used, Maria at first believes she has such, but it seems clear, to use a different example, that two prison inmates can tolerate each other's activities, even though it is understood that neither has any right to continue those activities, nor to prevent the other from doing so. They each may believe they have the physical power to prevent the other from continuing the opposed activity, though they clearly do not have legitimate authority to do so (and, perhaps, they know this). That would nonetheless be enough to allow that they can tolerate each other.

One final worry about this condition is that while it allows for a broader array of activities to count as toleration than does a condition that one have the actual power to interfere, it may nonetheless be too narrow. Some would say that a counterfactual belief account of the power to interfere would suffice such that if one intentionally and on principle refrains from interfering (etc.), recognizing that one does not have the power to interfere, but one believes that they would not even if they did have the power, that one would be tolerating. This may be correct, but would require an even murkier intentionality than is normally involved in the

refraining from interfering. In the normal case, the intention is not to interfere. Absent an intention, though, one cannot tolerate—that is the second condition. Yet if one knows one cannot interfere, it seems unlikely that one can intend to not interfere, even if one could do so in some counterfactual situation. By comparison, it seems unlikely that one could intend to jump 30 feet high or to walk through a solid wall (it can be interesting to try developing such intentions). Perhaps it will be suggested that there is nothing very odd in the thought that “I wouldn’t interfere even if I could.” For reasons just discussed, though, explaining the statement turns out to be far more difficult than making it. In any case, such occurrences might be better described as the agent being dispositionally tolerant rather than tolerating.

### **Conclusion**

To summarize: if we accept all of the conditions discussed here, an act of toleration is (1) an agent’s (2) intentional and (3) principled (4) refraining from interfering with (5) an opposed (6) other (or their behavior, etc.), where (7) the agent believes she has the power to interfere. These conditions, jointly, would be both necessary and sufficient for toleration. Given the discussion throughout, some might argue, though, that some subset of these conditions is what would be necessary and sufficient. We cannot examine all of the possibilities.

To be clear, there are thinkers who prefer a broader understanding of toleration. Anna Elisabetta Galeotti, for example, notes that while “in the literal sense, contemporary toleration consists of an extension of personal liberty from the private to the public sphere ... this literal meaning ... by no means exhausts the meanings of toleration” (11). She is concerned with the “symbolic meaning” of toleration (for one helpful explanation, see Galeotti 2002: 100-101; for some defense of that approach, see 87-95). Ingrid Creppell also thinks we need a “broader

language of toleration” (xii) and in his recent book, Peter Balint distinguishes between toleration narrowly understood (comparable to what is discussed above) and toleration in a broader sense that “involves general permissiveness and need not involve objection or disapproval at all but simply not negatively interfering” (2017: 24).

By contrast to these thinkers, this chapter has been examining the literal and narrow meaning. The purpose is conceptual clarity only, not what might be called “linguistic legislation.” People often use the term “toleration” to mean something broader than what is analyzed above and there is certainly something valuable going on when we refrain from interfering with others and their behavior though we do not oppose them and cannot, in the strict sense, be said to tolerating them.

As already noted, it is important that the above presents no normative claims about when toleration is called for—that is, about what is to be tolerated. As King notes, toleration in its definitional “*logical* form is value-free; which is to say that the substantive instances which the form will embrace are not converted by that embrace into acts of restraint which will necessarily be adjudged right or good.” Toleration “is in itself neither good nor bad” (King 1976: 37 and 39). Noticing this wards off the claim that toleration is paradoxical as we can be required to tolerate what we think is wrong, and hence what should not be tolerated (see Mendus 1989: 18-19; and Williams 1996). One *can* tolerate what is morally wrong, but it is not necessarily the case that one *should*.

Of course, this is not true of moral or political toleration, which will specifically incorporate limits to what *should* be tolerated so that any act of toleration will be either good or bad. “Toleration as a moral ideal cannot be value-neutral, and for this reason too it must be

distinguished from the descriptive concept of toleration which can and should be value-neutral” (Nicholson 1985: 161).

Determining what that moral ideal is—that is, determining the proper moral limits of toleration—is, perhaps, the most important project in contemporary moral, political, and legal philosophy. There are questions regarding what individuals should tolerate, what private institutions like churches and businesses should tolerate, and what government should tolerate. These questions apply at local, national, and international levels. The questions are ubiquitous.

One might ask what should be tolerated regarding how individuals treat animals, whether we should tolerate businesses using animals (whether for research, labor, or agriculture) and various ways those businesses treat employees. We might also ask what a parent should tolerate of a child, what the community or state ought to tolerate of a parent with regard to her child, what the state ought to tolerate of cultural groups (and what those groups ought to tolerate of subgroups or individuals within them), what one state ought to tolerate of another state, what international institutions ought to tolerate, etc.

The questions of toleration apply to all manner of behaviors—presumably we ought not tolerate murder, rape, or theft—but ought we tolerate pornography, hate speech, anti-religious speech, anarchist speech? Ought we tolerate deplatforming of speakers or cancelling of entertainers who have been involved with some transgression of morality (or merely etiquette)? Should we tolerate those speakers or entertainers? On both the national and international levels, we might also ask whether we ought tolerate poverty, inequality, monopolizing activity in business, monopolies (which may not arise because of monopolizing activity)? Of course, most of us insist we ought not tolerate racism or sexism, but some may wonder if we ought to tolerate behaviors rooted in them—e.g. circumcision of females (or, differently, of males).

One way to approach all of the “applied” sorts of questions is to seek out principles of toleration (discussed previously). Many have been offered, including the harm principle, the offense principle, legal moralism, legal paternalism, and the benefit-to-others principle (see my 2014). Determining which of these, if any, ought to be adopted—or if there is some other principle that ought to be adopted—to allow us a systematic understanding of what should be tolerated and what shouldn’t, is of paramount importance.

In addition to the moral and political limits of toleration, one might be interested in a variety of puzzles toleration raises. For example, ought one tolerate someone who does not tolerate something one thinks should be tolerated? (This is the paradox of toleration.) For another example, ought the tolerating state tolerate those who would seek to limit or undermine its toleration? (This is the paradox of liberalism.)

Areas of concern related to toleration, it should be clear, are as extensive as they are important. This chapter does not touch on the normative questions, the questions of systematizing the normative, nor of the paradoxes that are of concern. Hopefully, by understanding toleration as an agent’s intentional and principled refraining from interfering with an opposed other (or their behavior, etc.), where the agent believes she has the power to interfere (or some variation of that), we are better prepared to address these vexing issues.

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