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ARTICLE

Second-Order Arguments, or Do We Still Need Tolerance in the Public Sphere?

Aleksei V. Loginov
Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

ABSTRACT

A number of widely discussed court decisions on cases of insults against religious feelings in Russia, such as the relatively recent "Pokemon Go" case of blogger Ruslan Sokolovsky or the lawsuit filed against an Orthodox priest by Nikolai Ryabchevsky in Yekaterinburg for comparing Lenin with Hitler, make pertinent the question of why toleration becomes so difficult in matters concerning religion. In this paper, I revise the classical liberal concept of toleration (David Heyd, Peter Nicholson, and John Horton), arguing that it is challenged by contemporary philosophers, who see no room for applying this concept in the "domain of identities". The most prominent case of "primordial" identity, that is, the notion of identity as a given, is the claim of devoted believers for recognition. Should we replace the principle of toleration by the principle of recognition since the latter better corresponds to identity claims? To address this question, in the first part of the article I describe the mechanism of tolerant attitude (Nicholson, Heyd) and in the second part, I analyze the debates about the possibility or impossibility of inner religious toleration (Avishai Margalit, Cary Nederman, and Maxim Khomyakov) and further compare toleration and recognition as normative principles. In the light of the debates I took part in the conference hosted by the University of Southern Denmark in October 2019 as part of the project "Religious Majority/Minority in Public Space in Russia and Northern Europe: Historical-Cultural Analysis", I come to the conclusion that the principle of toleration is preferable to the principle of recognition because the "second-order" arguments for toleration in a secular state will be universally acceptable (pragmatic argument) and, therefore, the principle of toleration is more logical

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alexeyloginov@urfu.ru

(analytical argument). Following Peter John's thesis about minimal recognition embedded in toleration, it may also be concluded that we need a normatively charged idea of citizenship, which could provide us with universal "second-order" foundation.

KEYWORDS
tolerance, religion, recognition, identity, citizenship

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Introduction

Contemporary society is ridden with conflict, especially religious conflict. Broadly understood, any conflict can be described as religious if at least one of the sides involved makes references to a certain religion in its claims or argumentation. Even though in this case the conflict may still be rooted in economic or political disparity – the fact that both political theoreticians and practitioners are well aware of – it does not exclude the possibility of an opposite situation – that the conflict is rooted in religion or stem from different interpretation of the sacred texts (Stepanova, 2017). The growing number of religious conflicts makes it pertinent for political and social theory to revise the already existing instruments of analysis and to develop new ones for efficient peacemaking and peacekeeping in such situations. One of the possible solutions could be the promotion of toleration (or tolerance), primarily in its egalitarian and liberal meaning, in post-secular society.

It should be noted that much effort was put into the promotion of tolerance in Russia some ten years ago and the academia made a major contribution to this trend. However, recently, this trend has been subsiding**.** Can the results of that intellectual work aimed at finding grounds for toleration be of any use in solving the conflicts that rage in the public space of contemporary Russian society? This refers primarily to the so-called "difficult cases" which made the news and were widely discussed in Russia: that of blogger Ruslan Sokolovsky, who played Pokemon Go in a church (Sokolovsky! Nichego Sviatogo, 2017), and the libel lawsuit filed by Nikolai Ryabchevsky against archpriest Evgeny Popichenko for comparing Lenin with Hitler. In the latter case, during the course hearing, the defense lawyer suggested that the plaintiff should demonstrate their kinship with the alleged object of insult (Ignatova, 2018). The first case triggers debates about the balance between the right to freedom of conscience with its 'lexical priority' – the right to freedom of speech – and the right to protection of religious feelings. This case has already been discussed in academic literature the following way:

> The notion of 'religious feelings of the believers' is highly problematic. It cannot be clearly defined since feelings are subjective and when religious feelings are separated into a distinct category it is either narrowly understood in specifically

> confessional terms or it is completely devoid of any specific content as religious feelings are compounded with religious beliefs and convictions. Thus, if under the guise of religious feelings it is religious convictions that are to be protected, we face inevitable violation of the right to freedom of conscience for non-believers, while positively discriminating religious believers, as well as freedom of speech for all, as freedom of speech is lexically prior to freedom of conscience and religion (Menshikov, 2017, p. 35).

The second case apparently implies the need to prove that secular views as well as religious views can be constitutive of human identity and the feelings based on these views can be offended in the process of communication in the public space. Therefore, the question arises as to whether toleration, or to be more precise, its classical liberal (negative) version can be effective as a tool for solving such conflicts in modern pluralistic society? Or should the principle of negative (liberal, minimal) toleration be replaced by the principle of *acceptance* of the differences significant for one's identity since this principle is unable to regulate the relationships between the majority and a minority or between minorities? (For more on this see Ceva, 2015).

Characteristics and Structure of Toleration

Toleration can be briefly described as a virtue of non-interference in the existence of a deviation seen as morally significant by the subject of toleration. Peter Nicholson (1985) points out five major characteristics of toleration:

1. Deviance. A pivotal requirement here is that the subject of toleration should disapprove of the other party's beliefs or conduct, in other words, the very fact of difference should be considered as essential.

2. Importance of the deviation. The subject of toleration should find the deviation significant, important.

3. Moral disapproval of the deviation. The subject of toleration is aware of their own negative attitude to the deviation and this attitude has moral (not aesthetic, pragmatic or any other) underpinnings. Since disapproval has a moral character, the subject may feel that the evaluations they express are of social significance, that they are speaking on behalf of other people, because moral norms, unlike aesthetic preferences or specific pragmatic interests, are not localized only in the sphere of private life of individuals.

4. Power (to suppress deviation). This means that you have the power (which interpreted rather broadly by Nicholson: from the real ability to use physical coercion to the potential ability to influence the situation through criticism, propaganda and so on) or the ability to suppress the deviation. Therefore, we cannot speak of toleration in situations one is powerless to change.

5. Non-rejection. Even though one has the power and morally disagrees with a certain practice, one still chooses not to interfere with the practice or not to prohibit it.

Nicholson comes to the conclusion that toleration is a moral idea and puts forward the fourth (debatable) characteristic of toleration – goodness, explaining that

the tolerator is morally virtuous, that is, does what is morally right (Nicholson, 1985). Some philosophers, for example, Robert Forst (2003), identify fewer criteria. In Forst's opinion, we can speak of toleration as long as the following three conditions are met: first, the subject of toleration disapproves of the deviation; second, the subject of toleration can interfere (act against the deviation) but chooses not to interfere; and third, still there is something in deviation that the subject of toleration cannot accept completely. In general, all the conceptual debates surrounding toleration are connected to the paradox inherent in this definition and widely discussed in Russian and international literature (Horton, 1994; Khomyakov, 2003). If we take a closer look at the relationship between Nicholson's criteria 3, 4 and 5 or Forst's transition from the first requirements to the second, we will see that toleration implies the subject's choice of non-interference in a significant situation despite their personal moral beliefs. As Bernard Williams (1996) puts it, it is "impossible" or extremely hard to be tolerant. Does it mean that objects of tolerance are bound to disappear, as they fall into classes of those phenomena which either can be tolerated (minimum disapproval, criteria 1–3 in Nicholson's definition are not met) or are absolutely intolerable (criterion 5 in Nicholson's definition is not met)? People obviously can find ways to get along and live together even though their moral principles are sometimes at odds with each other.

Therefore, there should be some special grounds to justify "switching" from personal disapproval of a deviation (the disapproval itself does not disappear) to refraining from action of coercion. In my view, there are two possible ways. The first way is that we need to prove that toleration in our value system occupies the supreme position. In this case the imperative of interference on the level of first-order morality is weakened and this is the way chosen by Nicholson, who contends that tolerance is a moral ideal. The second way is to find other arguments, outweighing moral disapproval of the subject of toleration in specific cases, and try to conceptualize them to reach the level of theory. The first way seems quite problematic since we have to agree beforehand with the view that toleration is a supreme value in order to make it work *in practice*. The second way opens the door for a multitude of philosophical, historical, psychological, and cultural studies. The theories of toleration which follow the second way generalize and formalize these premises. Is it possible to imagine the work of tolerant consciousness as using second-order arguments? My answer is yes. At first view it appears that in this case, the so-called paradox of toleration can be resolved: If one's moral disapproval is based on certain grounds (first-order arguments) but is neutralized by *other,* weightier arguments (second-order arguments), then there is a chance of avoiding moral schizophrenia – a situation when both disapproval and non-interference (acceptance, toleration) are based on the same premise.

According to the classical theories of toleration, toleration implies a "switch" of the subject's attention from "morally objectionable" beliefs to the person who upholds them, followed by balancing of arguments in favour or against interference. In David Heyd's view, "the virtue of tolerance consists in a switch of perspective […] Thus, to be tolerant one must be able to suspend one's judgement of the object, to turn one's view away from it, to treat it as irrelevant, for the sake of a generically different perspective" (Heyd, 1996, p. 12). Real toleration requires us to see a certain action or belief as "anchored"

in the personal background of the object of toleration. This background consists of motivations, intentions and other beliefs, in other words, the whole cognitive system of this person: "We do not tolerate opinions and beliefs, or even actions and practices, only the subjects holding disliked beliefs and the agents of detested actions" (Heyd, 1996, p. 140). It is true. But why do we tolerate these people? What outweighs our disapproval of their actions? In other words, we "switch" to second-order arguments turning these people into valuable (or describing them as such). What is important is our willingness to value people more than our detestation of what we had to face when we dealt with them. I believe that specific cognitive and psychological features of this or that person do not play a significant role in the situation of toleration unless they are a part of our ideas (or theory) *about him or her.* Broadly speaking, if I have to deal with a detestable person and I have a more or less clear idea about which of their personal qualities have led to the appearance of deviation, these qualities as such, outside of the theory about why I have to take them into consideration, will not have the force of second-order arguments[1].

I also think that the perceptual shift does not have to be directed specifically at the personality of the tolerated: what is important is for the tolerator to switch the attention from arguments in favour of interference to arguments against interference (even in the absence of real experience of interaction with the object of toleration). In my view, Heyd is right to point out that empathy, an ability to put oneself into the other's shoes, provides a good training of our cognitive and psychological ability to be tolerant. To sum it all up, we can say that in order for toleration to appear logically possible in each and every sphere of society, it should either be the "first commandment" in itself or we should find grounds (second-order arguments) for non-interference.

Toleration always serves as a principle of interpersonal communication. In the domestic policy of a state, that is, in the way state institutions treat individual citizens and groups, neutrality is necessary and sufficient. The key challenge for the classical theory of toleration is that it can no longer be applied (it is both unproductive and dangerous) to the sphere of primordially described identities. There is a widely spread view about the "end" of liberal toleration just because it cannot be applied to conflicts in contemporary societies – these conflicts no longer tend to take the form of opinion conflicts (opinions can be separated from those who express them) but instead turn into identity conflicts (separation is impossible or difficult) (Khomyakov, 2013). Identity of a devoted believer can serve as a good example of such identity – identity as a given. Is inner religious toleration possible in this case? In other words, it is possible to tolerate a representative of another religion or an atheist, if one morally disapproves of the very fact of existence of this religion or atheism and has the power to interfere? Is it possible that one will choose to refrain from interference proceeding from religious, that is, "inner" premises? I am going to discuss these questions in more detail in the following parts of this article. It should be added that the second-order arguments for

[1] In this case it would make no significant difference if toleration was realized through the mechanism of weighing the two sets of arguments – in favour of interference and in favour of non-interference – or of there was a "perceptual shift" from religious views to the person adhering to these views, as Heyd (1996) described it, since some kind of foundation still is required for this shift to happen.

religious toleration can be (a) religious in their nature, that is, stem from the core of religion, or (b) external but evidently holding more force than religious arguments to preclude the disapproval based on the latter.

Debate on Religious Pluralism

Avishai Margalit (1996) believes that religious toleration and religious pluralism are impossible due to the following reasons:

1. Revelation is propositional, that is, it is uttered in the way allowing for evaluation of truth and falsity;
2. Revelatory truths are constitutive of religion and of religious salvation (salvation is dependent on veracity of the fundamental religious propositions);
3. Religions become inherently valuable because they open a path for salvation (based on revelatory truths) to an individual;
4. There are contradictions between the truths of each pair of the three traditional monotheistic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam);
5. The fact that the source of truths is revelation means that a "false" religion, unlike, for instance, erroneous scientific theories, does not hold any value;
6. Premises 1–5 correspond to the historical reality of the three major religions (Margalit, 1996).

This reasoning seems logically immaculate and it leads us to the question about inner religious toleration:

> How can, for example, a Christian, for whom belief in the Holy Trinity is a necessary condition of salvation, be tolerant towards the concept of the unity of God, which rejects the Trinity doctrine, in Judaism or vice versa? Accepting one, aren't we bound to reject the other, which means that this rejection contains an imperative for a believer to fight to the best of their ability against any beliefs that are false, heretical or sinful (and therefore corruptive)? A. Margalit's argument might seem compelling and the feasibility of religious pluralism might cause doubt only if we disregard the complexity of the issues in question (Khomyakov, 2004, p. 387).

Logically, inner religious toleration is possible if Margalit's arguments are weakened (but still retain some weight otherwise what we get is acceptance) and/or if we manage to find weightier arguments to prove that the perceptual shift *ad hominem* described by Heyd (1996) as a mechanism of tolerant consciousness (intolerance to sin appears to hold less power than the arguments in favour of the "sinner") would make sense. It should be noted that since our task is to justify the possibility of inner religious toleration, we first of all need to search for and describe the religious "component" of the first- and second-order arguments. According to Maxim Khomyakov (2004) and Cary Nederman (2011), history of thought provides a range of conceptions which can weaken Margalit's arguments. Let us consider these counterarguments.

1. Skepticism undermines the propositional nature of revelation: "Moderate skepticism of religious theories undermines but does not shatter the propositional

nature of revelatory truths, in reality the adoption of skepticism by certain thinkers often led them to more tolerant attitudes to other religions" (Khomyakov, 2004, p. 393).

2. The indifferent things theories (*res adiaphora*), popular in the Reformation era (John Locke), can also weaken the second of Margalit's premises. There is, however, a logical risk inherent in these theories associated with their bringing together toleration and indifference.

3. The third premise cannot be disputed (the value of religion lies in the fact that it grants a path to salvation) but it can be expanded: the value of religions can be connected not only to the fact that they give a path to salvation but also to the fact that religions can help maintain moral standards and "social order" in societies. The subtlety of this argumentation is that moral standards and social order have to somehow fit into the way the subject of toleration understands the religious good and this understanding has to proceed from the revelation truths otherwise a religious argument will be replaced by a purely functional argument.

4. Margalit's fourth premise is weakened by rational reductionism (for example, Nicholas of Cusa formulated the principle of religious peace ("*una religio in rituum varietate"*), mysticism (if all things are theophanies, then toleration to differences in this world is justified), and early nationalism (nations "develop their own ways of worshipping God (signs for the signified) and people performing their rituals (differently) worship God in the way most pleasing to Him" (Nederman, 2011).

5. Finally, the counterarguments to Margalit's system of premises will be pragmatism (from negative pragmatism, in which interference would be deemed too costly, to functionalism, in which moral disapproval of the subject of toleration would be compensated by the good the object of toleration brings into society) and the liberal discourse of human rights (Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill), in which

> intoleration is unacceptable not for the reason that we "almost agree" with deviation and not for the reason that the supposedly deviant individuals deserve respect because they contribute to the social good of society but for the reason that any person (including those whose views and conduct deviate from what is considered to be a moral norm) has an inalienable right to live the way they think best (Khomyakov, 2004, p. 398).

This, however, does not mean that the topic of this debate is exhausted. The first and the most natural reaction to these arguments would be a certain intellectual confusion. First, is skepticism really compatible with religion and revelation truths which need to be taken on faith? The point might be that

> revelatory propositions are either false or true, that is, revelation is propositional, but we (due to the deficiency in our capacity to make judgements or for other, deeper reasons) are unable to ascertain the truth or falsity of these propositions. We only assume that our religious beliefs are true but it is not enough to justify intolerance towards heretics" (Khomyakov, 2004, p. 392).

I believe (despite the weight of the skeptical argument and the support provided for this argument by agnosticism) that in this form this argument will be valid only *within the framework of academic debate*. The question about how a supposition (hypothesis) and *at the same time* faith in the truth of this hypothesis coexist (or can coexist) in religious consciousness deserves to be a subject of more detailed discussion. Nevertheless, the following statement more or less sums up the idea: "The mitigation of the disagreement in scepticism, however, would not lead to toleration if it was not conjoined with certain forms of positive appraisal respect. In the majority of the cases of theological scepticism, this is a respect for God's omniscience and his absolute right to judge" (Khomyakov, 2013, p. 228).

Second, the theory of indifferent things appears to border on indifferentism and, therefore, the second and third criteria of toleration in Nicholson's definition will be weakened to an extent that it would be more appropriate to speak of transformation of toleration into neutrality. Moreover, rational reductionism is quite suitable for addressing these tasks on the condition that we share the premise that revelatory truths do not just take the form of propositional statements but can be subjected to rational analysis (in this case our mind – as opposed to skepticism – should have *a strong ability* for reasoning). As a result, we would be able to find something that different religions have in common, these shared grounds will be properly substantiated and adopted as a practical guidance for people who "happen" to have faith. On the other hand, if the strategy of reductionism proves to be successful, this will eliminate the first of Nicholson's items – significant deviation. Mysticism appears to be a religious although excessively narrow argument – up until the point when we can demonstrate that it is possible to transfer mystical medieval theories into the modern context. Early nationalism the way it is described by Nederman, in my view, cannot be easily transferred into the modern context or, in other words, it is hardly compatible with nationalism in its modern understanding, at least the way Benedict Anderson (1983) and other proponents of the constructivist approach saw it. This argument (diversity of nations means diversity of ways to worship God) leaves little space for the third criterion in Nicholson's definition (moral disapproval). Functionalism as defense of religious toleration is quite effective but to what extent can this argument be described as religious? With a considerable degree of simplification, we may suppose that this argument can be religious only in the case when salvation of the soul is inseparable not only from the faith in revelatory truths but also to a certain level and order of social, that is, secular life.

Finally, the human rights discourse in its liberal understanding does not change the balance of power: religion, *along with any other* lifestyle not prohibited by the law, becomes a matter of personal choice of individuals and up until the moment when a certain lifestyle becomes harmful to other people, it should be tolerated out of respect for the right of a person to freely choose whatever they wish in accordance with their (diverse) nature. It is likely that toleration of this kind will turn out to be just a particular case of negative liberal toleration, whose endless potential is insistently emphasized by difference-blind liberalism. The practical implication of such perspective would be a complete and real separation of the state from the

church and consequent "privatization" of all group differences (including religious ones) by an individual (Barry, 2013).

I think that there is a certain tension inherent in this debate associated with different argumentation formats or with different criteria for including religions in the "ring" (here I am alluding to Margalit's seminal work "The Ring: On Religious Pluralism"). For example, Margalit builds a logically immaculate model and invites us to launch a scholastic assault on his "fortress". Proponents of the possibility of inner toleration can breach Margalit's "fortress" by using examples from history and practices mirrored in the intellectual reflection of different epochs. If we look at those religions that John Gray considers to be the least prone to inspire confrontation in his chapter on the post-liberal perspective of toleration, we will find that "for the post-Christian unbeliever, as for the adherent of particularistic faiths such as Judaism, Hinduism, Bonism, Shinto and Taoism, which make no claim to possess a unique truth authoritative and binding for all people, old-fashioned toleration is irrelevant in respect of the religious beliefs of others" (Gray, 1995, p. 42). Nevertheless, at this stage appeal to purely religious argumentation as a core element of inner religious toleration appears problematic to me, which renders the whole phenomenon of inner religious toleration problematic as well. My thesis in its strong and weak versions is as follows:

1. Toleration in religious matters *becomes logically possible* when it is based on what cannot, strictly speaking, be called religious argumentation – the argument about salvation of the soul if one follows the revelatory truths.

2. If the second-order arguments in relation to *non-religious and other objects of toleration* remain religious, they cannot be presented as universal and shared by all members of contemporary society.

From the list of "external" arguments such as pragmatism, functionalism, and human rights, it is the latter – the liberal concept of autonomy – that proves to be the most stable: one would be tolerant towards deviation even if interference is both cheap and efficient and even if the object of toleration does not contribute to the common good in any way. Religious toleration becomes possible where classical negative toleration is possible and on the same grounds. Does it mean that minimal negative toleration is what we need to promote? Or should it be turned instead into positive toleration – the attitude to differences based on valuing the differences as such?

Toleration in the Public Sphere: "Parade of Identities"

Among the arguments against toleration, one can come across the argument shrewdly expressed by Thomas S. Eliot the following way: "Christians don't want to be tolerated" (as cited in Khomyakov, 2013, p. 231).

> For example, if a devoted believer, in her thinking about herself, doesn't really make a distinction between her "self" and her "religious commitments", she wants to be recognized exactly as a religious believer, and not as merely as a human being who has certain rights. But this is exactly what toleration cannot provide, since it consists of "bracketing" the disagreement and, therefore, of not paying attention to

> her religion. Those who see themselves as bearers of thick identities are then seen by the tolerators merely as humans. I wonder if this is not one of the meanings of a famous saying of T. S. Eliot, "the Christians don't want to be tolerated", or Goethe's claim that "to tolerate means to insult" (Khomyakov, 2013, p. 231).

This maxim refers to unwillingness to consider one's identity as a result of choice (or possible reconsideration of this choice in the future). From this perspective, toleration may seem offensive to its object as if their own beliefs did not matter in view of the very possibility to choose. At this point, let us go back to the model of Heyd, who believes that in order to refrain from exercising one's power, a subject of toleration needs to switch their attention from what they choose and consider right to the person who adheres to these (or other) beliefs. Doesn't it mean, however, that your own beliefs are not taken seriously? What matters for us is what we have chosen while for those who are tolerant towards us what matters most is the person who has made this choice. "It seems to me that asymmetry between the tolerator and the tolerated on this matter can be explained by the fact that the subjects of the beliefs or the agents of the practices in question find it harder to make the perspectival shift […] because they identify with their beliefs and practices in a much stronger way" (Heyd, 1996, p. 16). A strong identification with one's views and actions can provide a foundation not only for the demand of "simple" toleration, when those who demonstrate toleration are always right, but also, to say the least, for the demands of different forms of recognition. Does it mean that toleration as recognition is a better version of toleration as non-interference? To answer this question, we need to make certain clarifications in our initial premises and in the general logic of our reasoning.

1. Toleration (negative, minimal) implies non-interference into what you morally disapprove of. In order to refrain but at the same time not be indifferent, one needs certain grounds. We can speak of toleration if the arguments in favour of non-interference are stronger than the arguments in favour of interference. If these are *different* arguments, then the paradox of toleration disappears:

> It is dissolved when one considers that what one really has is a *pro tanto* moral reason – an other things being equal reason – to intervene, but a *stronger pro tanto* moral reason not to intervene and hence an all things considered moral reason not to intervene. Thus, I may for instance have a pro tanto moral reason, given my strict outlook on sexual morals, to intervene in my neighbor's life of debauchery, but an even stronger pro tanto moral reason to respect her right to run her own life (as long as she respects the rights of others), given that I accept that a just basic arrangement of society should allow all of us the maximum degree of autonomy compatible with everyone's right to the same. There is no paradox or dilemma here, since the moral reason to tolerate simply overrides the moral reason to be intolerant (Binderup, 2011, p. 158).

2. For the liberals, autonomy – people's right to live the life they have chosen for themselves – serves as a preferable basis for second-order arguments (non-

interference). The breach of autonomy by default defines the boundaries of toleration.

3. In order to value autonomy more than lifestyle, you have to be able to distinguish between them, separate them from each other (perceptual shift). Such separation is either impossible or difficult or offensive for those who describe themselves in terms of thick identity.

4. Therefore, in order to minimize the conflicts rooted in encroachment upon someone's identity, including conflicts involving devoted believers, we need to move from understanding toleration as non-interference to toleration as recognition (for more on this, see Galeotti, 2002).

5. Recognition means that you start valuing precisely what is important for the object of recognition – his or her beliefs – rather than his or her right to have them. Such strategy should be productive in the conditions of identity claims.

Nevertheless, the potential of toleration as recognition has certain limitations[2]. These, which could be described as logical, genealogical and pragmatic counterarguments. The first limitation is connected to the "return of the paradox" in the form of a logical contradiction: what makes us experience moral disapproval is simultaneously what we have to recognize, that is, accept. Arguments "not to tolerate" and "accept", therefore, stem from the same premise. In the case of religious conflicts, the formula may be as follows: "I tolerate you, a heretic, for the reason that you are a heretic" / "I tolerate you, an atheist, because you are an atheist".

If we refrain from *disapproval*, then in the structure of toleration-as-recognition, toleration will all but disappear and we cannot speak of a coherent genealogy (history) of toleration, ending with toleration as recognition.

Finally, if we not *tolerate*, but *recognize* differences as differences, doesn't it mean that we are thus losing the foundation necessary for public consensus? What I mean here is that, instead of one common ground for toleration (or its limits) shared by all citizens of the state, we would, in the best-case scenario, have to deal with a multitude of objects of recognition, which means that we would also have to regulate the relationships between them. My pragmatic argument is that autonomy and respect for individual rights have more potential to become general "second-order" arguments among citizens than any other premises, since we are living in a society comprising atheists as well as religious adherents. Even if autonomy and rights are not the best premise in principle, they remain the only second-best option available to everybody. On the contrary, politics of recognition can impede real integration of individuals and groups since they create and maintain boundaries between individuals and groups (for more on this, see Binderup, 2007).

This naturally takes us back to the question of what identity is. Well, I do think that identity might be described and conceptualized by someone as given unchangeable unity. But it is not given in real! It might be only *described* as given and stable one – but really any identity is constructed within and through social communication processes

[2] I am grateful to Lars Binderup for discussing this question at the conference hosted by the University of Southern Denmark in October 2019 as part of the research project "Religious Majority/Minority in Public Space in Russia and Northern Europe: Historical-Cultural Analysis".

and network of our relations in any culture – even we prefer to think about it differently. The idea of social reality as constructed reality, defended by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann more than fifty years ago (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), can hardly be challenged nowadays. Finally, in order to show that toleration may be combined with recognition in a non-contradictory way, I would like to quote Peter Jones (2015), who contends that realization of *negative toleration* also means recognition – its *thin* version, since each time one is tolerant towards another person, one recognizes them as a citizen with their own autonomy and rights. Therefore, it would be better in my view to focus not on the politics of recognition but on the development of the normatively charged idea of citizenship to facilitate negative toleration. The question about alternatives to autonomy as a value that should be shared by all citizens remains open for further discussion.

Conclusion

I was trying to show that negative toleration or old-fashioned toleration, as John Gray (1995) puts it, has certain advantages in comparison with politics of recognition in the complex world we live in. My main argument to support this point is that the "second-order arguments" in the case of liberal toleration – autonomy and human rights – stand more chances of being shared by all citizens. I sought to demonstrate by using religious toleration as an example that any other premise, even if it is applicable in a specific historical situation, cannot be extrapolated to the relationships between atheists and believers and to the relationships between adherents of different confessions and religious movements. I am well aware of the fact that the desire to find the best premise is normative in itself and it implies certain understanding of how people should benefit from philosophy and political theory. Nevertheless, the absence of any normative orientations – reasonable normativity – makes such choice problematic in the first place. Since justification and critique of toleration, as I was trying to show, depend on how we understand identity, I believe that Russia, like any other country, has to deal with pluralism of opinions about the best way of life and, therefore, faces the need to choose which identity model the state education policy will be oriented towards. Another question to be addressed is the following: should we support the inseparability of personal convictions and subjectivity or promote the idea that subjectivity is realized in the *right to choose*. Since autonomy is also a value as well as neutrality, that is, normativity cannot be completely eliminated from politics, I believe that we need to focus on the development and defense of the normatively charged idea of citizenship as a universally valid second-order argument in favour of toleration in people's interactions.

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