

TOLERANCE AS RECOGNITION: PHENOMENOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract

In this paper I argue that tolerance is a form of recognition. In the first section I address Rainer Forst's respect-conception of tolerance. In the second section I highlight some problems with Forst's conception, primarily his distinction between ethics and morality. I argue that Forst's view presents two shortcomings: (1) an abstract characterization of the subject involved in acts of tolerance as split between an ethical and a moral self; (2) an unquestioned adherence to the idea that tolerance requires two components, a negative and a positive stance. In the third section I criticize the two-component view of tolerance and articulate a phenomenological alternative based on a broadly realistic conception of value. On this account, tolerance is based on an act of neutralized valuing in the context of empathy. In the last section I elaborate on this account and argue that tolerance amounts to the recognition of the other's capacity to achieve autonomous moral insight. We tolerate others because we want them to correct their wrong moral convictions by themselves, knowing that self-correction is superior to external imposition.

Keywords: Tolerance, Phenomenology, Recognition, Value, Respect.

In one of the most famous maxims on the subject, Goethe writes about tolerance: "Tolerance should be a temporary attitude only: it must lead to recognition. To tolerate means to insult." (Goethe 2017, p. 30; translation modified). Despite its brevity, Goethe's maxim encapsulates several issues that still inform the debate on tolerance in the present. As the second sentence of the maxim concisely puts the point, tolerance seems to involve an insulting asymmetry between a tolerator and a tolerated. Unlike, say, respect which is taken to be a fundamentally symmetrical moral attitude, where both ends of the relationship are on a par with each other, tolerance seems to involve a superior subject, who tolerates, and an inferior subject, who is tolerated. Not all asymmetrical relations, however, are automatically insulting. There are several such relations that we consider morally

sound and even commendable, such as the relation between an educator and a pupil. Moreover, to a closer look, recognition, too, is a relationship that involves at least an initial asymmetry, since the recognizer is necessarily conceived as having the kind of superior standing that can grant or refuse recognition to the recognized. In this paper I want to propose the idea that tolerance is itself a form of recognition, one that does not result from the conjunction of two opposite evaluations, one negative and one positive, but is a kind of straightforward suspension or neutralization of a negative evaluation. Tolerance recognizes in the other the ability to achieve autonomous moral insight and therefore suspends the negative evaluative judgment toward a particular action or practice, out of confidence that in due time the other will correct herself. The motivation for tolerance is thus the psychological insight that self-correction alone (as opposed to external intervention) creates the conditions for truly held, stable, and enduring convictions. I will articulate my view drawing liberally on phenomenological resources, in particular: Husserl, but I will also include some folk-psychological remarks about the presuppositions and benefits of tolerance. The goal of this paper is not to produce a full-scale defense of a theory of tolerance, but simply to outline the way a coherent phenomenological theory of tolerance might look like¹ and thereby defend the idea that, *pace* Goethe, tolerance is itself a form of recognition, rather than the mere initial stage of a proper moral relationship.

1. *Respect, recognition, and tolerance*

The potential affinity between tolerance and recognition due to their respective asymmetry leads us to the first sentence of Goethe's maxim. In what sense does tolerance need to be a temporary attitude only? Critics have often pointed out that tolerance may have been commendable at the dawn of modernity, in a society that involved huge disparities and autocratic monarchs, but in a modern liberal state it ought to be replaced by a different, more egalitarian attitude such as respect. As Rainer Forst points out in his monumental study of tolerance, it is plausible to assume that Goethe had precisely this "permission conception" of tolerance (Forst 2013, pp. 27-28) in mind when he wrote that to tolerate is to insult. What seems

1 For a more comprehensive and detailed defense of such a theory see Staiti forthcoming. Here I am interested in focusing on the idea of recognition, which I had not explored in the abovementioned publication.

insulting about the permission conception is that the alleged superiority of the monarch or majority group who tolerates is entirely contingent and therefore unjustified. Unlike the educator, whose “superiority” vis-à-vis the pupil is presumably founded on knowledge and pedagogical expertise, and therefore justified, the absolute monarch or the majority group just *happens* to wield unrestricted power over its subjects or the minority group. The unjustified nature of the power relations that underlie the permission conception cannot help but appear backward and unacceptable to an enlightened modern subject.

However, as Forst argues, the permission conception of tolerance does not need to be the *only* conception of tolerance available. Rather than replacing tolerance, respect can be the framework in which a different conception of tolerance becomes possible.² Therefore, Forst introduces what he calls a “respect conception” (Forst 2013, p. 29), that is, a conception of tolerance founded on mutual respect among peers. On Forst’s construal, such a conception of tolerance may be sustainable in modern societies, too, because it amounts to an affirmation of the other’s moral standing, while maintaining a reservation about practices and beliefs that are at odds with the tolerator’s conception of the good (‘the ethical’). Accordingly, “[t]he person of the other is respected; her convictions and actions are tolerated” (Forst 2013, p. 30). Later in his inquiry, Forst further fleshes out the respect conception as the art “of separating ethical from moral truth” (Forst 2013, p. 506). In very brief compass, his view is that respect for the other as a rational moral agent (person) can coexist with a negative judgment about her particular conception of the good, i.e. her ethical outlook (see Darwall 2018 for a helpful analysis of the ethics/morality distinction). For Forst, the tolerant person knows how to relativize her own ethical outlook and will not demand that her (or her group’s) particular beliefs and convictions be imposed on others, if these beliefs and convictions do not pass the test of justification, i.e., if they cannot be held universally and reciprocally by all subjects involved, regardless of their ethical affiliations. Forst writes:

This is the crucial insight of toleration. A tolerant person will continue to live in accordance with his or her convictions and if necessary canvass for them, but he or she will not impose them on others who can reject these convictions on reciprocal and general grounds. Such a person is willing and

2 For reasons of space I cannot dwell on the complexities of the concept of respect. See Mordacci 2012 for an informative discussion.

able to relativise his or her beliefs in the light of moral requirements because he or she recognises the difference between different contexts of justification” (Forst 2013, p. 455).

For instance, a tolerant Christian believer may continue to hold her beliefs about abortion, but will not want abortion to be outlawed because she sees that her belief cannot be justified universally and reciprocally in the public sphere. In so doing she respects the person of the non-Christian as a rational moral agent, whose freedom can only be limited on the basis of reasons that can be universally and reciprocally justified. At the same time, the Christian may continue to maintain a negative attitude toward the particular conception of the good (ethics) of her non-Christian peer.

Considering Forst’s presentation of the respect conception of tolerance, one might construe recognition and tolerance as two logically and psychologically opposite attitudes within the general moral framework of respect. If recognition requires that one does not only admit that a subject has a certain feature (conviction, belief, ethical outlook, etc.), but also that one embraces “a positive attitude towards her for having this feature” (Iser 2019), based on one and the same ideal of respect for others as rational moral agents, one can assume either a positive or a negative attitude towards the other’s particular ethical outlook. Respect-*cum*-positive attitude would then amount to recognition, while respect-*cum*-negative attitude would amount to tolerance. While both attitudes are informed by respect, and therefore morally sound, Goethe’s suggestion that tolerance should *lead* to recognition would still retain its plausibility even if we discard his notion that to tolerate is to insult. Recognition, i.e., respect-*cum*-positive attitude seems clearly more desirable than and hence as the ideal goal of tolerance, i.e., respect-*cum*-negative attitude.

While this configuration of the triad respect-recognition-tolerance resulting from Forst’s analysis may have its appeal and could be articulated in further detail, I believe it is fundamentally problematic on phenomenological and psychological grounds. By that I mean that (1) it fails to describe, and hence it implicitly mischaracterizes the intentionality at work in acts of tolerance and of tolerance as an attitude; (2) it rests on a highly abstract fragmentation of the concrete psychological subjects involved in acts of tolerance. Getting the phenomenology and psychology of tolerance right paves the way to understand tolerance as itself a kind of recognition, rather than its opposite within the general framework of respect.

2. *Problems with Forst's Conception of Tolerance and the Two-Component View*

The conception of tolerance just outlined is predicated upon a double split. Both the tolerator and the tolerated subject are split into their ethical self (the individual who is committed to a particular conception of the good) and their moral self (the person who owes or to whom we owe justification for the restriction of freedom). It seems that in acts of tolerance a subject ought to pull herself up from by her bootstraps and distance herself from what is supposed to be her deeply felt ethical outlook, in order to concede that it does not pass the test of universality and reciprocity; however, one thing is to acknowledge that there can be different conceptions of the good, but tolerance is at stake when the other's conception of the good *flies in the face of* my conception of the good, such that her conception of the good directly challenges or potentially poses a threat to mine. When that happens, the art of separating morality and ethics does not seem to help anymore. In our concrete experience, others are not given as two-layered entities split into a rational person and a culturally contingent individual. The other's conception of the good, as it is concretely expressed in her words and deeds, manifests who the other is as a moral person. The other's person shines through her commitment to a particular conception of the good. Her status as a rational moral agent is not experienced as some sort of residual dimension *behind* her identity as a concrete individual committed to a particular conception of the good. Rather, in and through this commitment her practical rationality comes to light and respecting the other as a moral agent is only possible by *taking seriously*, rather than relativizing, those commitments and beliefs in which such agency is concretely actualized. From the non-Christian's perspective, the problem with her Christian anti-abortion peer is precisely that she, a rational moral agent, fails to *see* the suffering that an unwanted pregnancy may cause to a woman. Continuing to uphold that belief amounts to a failure in the exercise of practical reason: it cannot be construed merely as a different conception of the good that one may continue to embrace in private. Conversely, from the Christian's perspective, the problem with her non-Christian pro-choice peer is precisely that she, a rational moral agent, fails to *see* the injustice caused by the annihilation of an innocent human life, no matter what other considerations may speak for that choice. The problem is, simply put, that that belief is *wrong* and that a person who upholds it is failing to exercise correctly her practical reason. Tolerance is called for when ethical beliefs are sincerely and deeply held, i.e., when they are recognized as actualizations of moral

reason, rather than confined to a parallel dimension where we can continue to believe whatever happens to work for us as long as we don't infringe upon the other's freedom. *That* would be insulting. When our ethical beliefs and practices are so loosely related to our identity as moral agents that we can neatly draw a line between the two dimensions and pick and choose between different contexts of justification, the resulting scenario is one of bland moral relativism, at best. In such a scenario, there is no room for tolerance, but only for a generalized moderate skepticism toward all ethical beliefs. Granted, this might turn out to be the *best possible* scenario for peaceful coexistence, but it is not a scenario where tolerance can be exercised. Tolerance is called for in a context characterized by *moral certainty*, or at least moral conviction beyond reasonable doubt. Tolerance is only conceivable in a scenario where the subjects involved hold *substantive moral beliefs which they claim are grounded in substantive moral experiences*. What remains to explore is the structure of tolerance in that scenario and the motivations to tolerate.

Before we do so, let us pause to consider the origin of the splits and dichotomies in Forst's account of the subjects involved in tolerance. They originate, I submit, in two shortcomings: (1) a phenomenologically insufficient analysis of what a conception of the good (ethics) amounts to; (2) the unquestioned idea that tolerance necessarily involves *two* components, one negative and one positive, which harks back to the seminal work on tolerance by Preston King (1976).

As for the first problem, let us ask, what is a conception of the good, be it a particular attitude toward a specific situation or a global *Weltanschauung*³ as found in religions, totalizing political views, etc.? From a phenomenological viewpoint, which subscribes to a broadly realist metaethics,⁴ a conception of the good is best characterized as a *response* to the values and disvalues that we encounter in our human lifeworld. Values aren't in the head. They are not projections of our mind onto a value-neutral world, like tags that we can attach to whatever happens to stir our desires. Rather, things stir our desires because they (either actually or purportedly) possess value. Values are first and foremost *axiological properties* of things,

3 See Staiti 2017 and Berner 2006 for some further details on the concept of *Weltanschauung*.

4 I cannot expand on this point here, but interested readers can find a more extensive account in Staiti 2020. For a concise presentation of different versions of phenomenological metaethics see Drummond 2021.

such as the beauty of a landscape, the generosity of an action, etc. (Husserl 2004, pp. 68-72; Husserl 2020, pp. 1-3). For this reason, our valuations can be successful or unsuccessful at capturing the values of things around us, and they can be rationally scrutinized in terms of their legitimacy or lack thereof. In Husserl's language, valuations are positing acts (Husserl 2014, p. 229; Husserl 2019, p. 308), i.e., acts that posit an object as having certain properties, in particular, axiological properties. For sure, values are not just out there in the world (Husserl 2013, p. 303): they are correlates of the evaluative acts of subjects who live and feel, and whose ability to grasp certain values is influenced by their culture and upbringing. Nonetheless, values are never projections or psychological states: their being constituted in acts of valuation grants them no less objectivity than being constituted in acts of perception grants to physical things. As Husserl writes, in a passage worth quoting in full:

Just as things are units of sensory experiences and not themselves sensory experiences, and just as things are what they are whether they are experienced or not, so a value is a unit constituting itself in valuating experience and not itself valuating. And a value is what it is whether it is grasped in a valuating manner or not. Being a value, being good or beautiful, does not mean that anybody considers a thing to be of value, or that there is a widespread tendency in a community to value something, to love it, to be fond of it, or accordingly to desire it (Husserl 2019, p. 307).

On this view, a conception of the good arises and is handed down in history as a habitual set of responses to values, and such responses can be scrutinized in terms of their success or failure at grasping and articulating the values that they claim to capture or realize. Having a conception of the good, in a particular situation or as a global worldview, amounts to entertaining a claim about values and such claims can be no less valid or invalid than claims about perceptual things and states of affairs (Husserl 2019, p. 308). If my conception of the good entails that giving alms to the homeless realizes a value and is therefore good, while your conception of the good entails that the same action realizes a disvalue (for instance, because it discourages the homeless from getting a job) and is therefore bad, there is a clear contradiction in our respective value-positings and only one of us can be right. Respecting you as a rational moral agent means taking your value-positing seriously, not merely as a different conception of the good that you happen to endorse, but as a *claim* about what is axiologically the case. Accordingly, there must be paths within our concrete experience of homeless people, our responses to their demands, etc. to *decide* about the

matter at hand. In a Husserlian framework, the decisive legitimation of any positing intention, be it simple sensory perception or value-ception (*Wertnehmung*), occurs when that intention is intuitively fulfilled. There is, for instance, a difference between (1) vaguely entertaining the thought “human trafficking is wrong” and (2) experiencing the wrongness of human trafficking first-hand. The transition between (1) and (2) is the transition from empty axiological intending to fulfilled, and hence radically justified, axiological intending. In the axiological case, too, it is the occurrence of intuitive fulfilment and its continuing confirmation in ongoing, coherent lived-experience that provides the rational ground to *decide* axiological controversies

No matter how hard this can be, how long it may take, and how often such decisions may empirically occur, based on the premise that valuations are positing acts that grasp (or fail to grasp) values, the *decidability* of controversies on values is a necessary *a priori* consequence, regardless of the factual ability of human beings to come to such decisions. On a phenomenological account, the subjects involved in tolerance are not those who have learned to relativize their ethical conceptions of the good for the sake of morality. Rather, they are concrete individuals who are *wholly invested* in their valuations and are therefore convinced that their value-positings are legitimate, i.e., intuitively and coherently fulfilled, which necessarily *excludes* the validity of opposite value-positings. The pressing question for such an account is, then: *can* such subjects exercise tolerance? How does that look like at the level of their conscious experiences? Why would they be motivated to be tolerant and when would tolerance be the right attitude?⁵

5 Note that all these questions can be addressed without any reference to the political dimension of laws and restrictions of freedom. If I am firmly convinced that giving alms to the poor is wrong, I don't necessarily need to want laws that punish the generous. Certainly, legislation will be informed by the claims about value and disvalue of legislators and the voters who put them in charge. The basic experience of tolerance, however, plays out at the level of direct engagement of people and groups in everyday contexts. As John Locke reported about the multi-confessional German village he visited on a diplomatic trip, even if the laws of a state are discriminatory on paper, if the concrete interactions and exchanges among the people are informed by tolerance, there will be an atmosphere of peace and flourishing. The reverse doesn't hold: as we know all too well in our present, written constitutions can overflow with principles of tolerance and mutual respect while the concrete individuals living under those constitutions are constantly at war and torn by irresolvable divides. Tolerance is not primarily an issue in political philosophy, but in moral psychology and phenomenology.

As I anticipated above, there is a second, more technical reason for the splits in Forst's theory. Forst accepts the idea, initially set forth by Preston King, that tolerance necessarily involves two components, an objection component and an acceptance component (Forst 2013, p. 18-20; King 1976, pp. 44-54). In King's construal, tolerance is interpreted as the "conjunction" (King 1976, p. 44) of a negative and a positive attitude toward a certain item, such that only the positive attitude (the acceptance component) determines behavior, while the negative attitude (the objection component) is exclusively confined to our mindset: "When we speak of an objection what we are basically concerned with is a disposition or assessment. When we speak of acceptance, what we are basically concerned with, by contrast, are those consequential acts that are assumed to flow from the disposition or assessment" (King 1976, p. 52). In very brief compass, for King what happens when we tolerate is that we refrain from acting out our objection to a certain item (belief, practice, group, etc.) because we object even more to what acting out that objection would necessarily imply: for instance (King's example), I may object to Catholics but I object even more to hangings, hence my decision to tolerate Catholics (and not act out my initial objection to them).

King's construal of tolerance has shaped the philosophical debate up to our present. Virtually all theories of tolerance on the philosophical market subscribe to the idea that tolerance needs to involve two components.⁶ This creates an inevitable paradox: how can a negative and a positive evaluation be directed at *the same item*, without thereby causing a sheer contradiction, and therefore a logical and psychological impossibility? (see Lohmar 2012, p. 20 for a discussion of this problem and a convincing critique of Forst). In order to escape this difficulty, theorists of tolerance, including King, Forst and Lohmar, have argued that the *two* components of tolerance have to be directed toward *two* different items. For Forst, as we saw, the negative component is directed toward the other's conception of the good (ethics), while the positive component targets the other's standing as a moral subject; for King the initial objection (negative component) is superseded by an even stronger objection, such that we end up accepting (positive component) what we initially objected to; for Lohmar (2012, p. 28), we have tolerance when our moral aversion toward a certain action (negative component) is combined with

6 See Staiti forthcoming for an overview of four such theories.

a second-order judgment about the personal circumstances in which that action was carried out and on that basis we decided that we do not want to see the other sanctioned (positive component).

Even if going into the strengths and weaknesses of these accounts would lead us too far afield, it seems that they all stand or fall with the Two-Component View of tolerance that underlies them. In the next section I argue that Two-Component Views don't get the intentionality of tolerance right. In sum, it doesn't seem phenomenologically plausible that to tolerate X means to *look away* from X and redirect our regard to our list of moral priorities (King), the other's status as a moral subject regardless of her conception of the good (Forst) or the circumstances in which X occurred (Lohmar). *Tolerating does not mean looking away.*

3. Phenomenology and the One-Component View of Tolerance

Suppose that while shopping at the grocery store you notice that a person in your neighborhood, who is known for having serious financial problems, is stealing food. Or suppose, again, that your friend drops a negative remark about giving alms to homeless people. Or, finally, suppose you find out that your child has developed the habit of writing aggressive posts on social media. We can imagine at least three scenarios:

1. In the first scenario, you simply don't care enough to act. As for the grocery store, it's none of your business if someone is stealing. Moreover, your friend may think whatever he wishes about homeless people and as long as he doesn't bother you, it's not your job to moralize him. Same goes for your child. After all, there is a widely spread culture of aggressiveness on the web and it won't be a single post that will make a difference. You are just too busy trying to make ends meet and meeting deadlines at work to be willing to stomach another argument with your child over the use of Internet. In all these cases, it would be out of place to say that you are tolerant. You are simply staying away from value-conflicts because you don't feel like these three clearly problematic actions demand anything of you. This first scenario, then, is not one in which tolerance may occur. Indifference may look like tolerance from an external perspective, but the attitude of the indifferent is completely different from the tolerator's.

2. In the second scenario, you are moderately skeptical about values and ethical claims in general...after all, who knows? What you call stealing,

an anarchist, who doesn't believe in property rights, would call something else, perhaps heroic display of defiance vis-à-vis the capitalist order. Same goes for your friend. What if he is right? Staunch conservatives have often argued against welfare along similar lines: it prevents people from trying to get jobs and sustain themselves without the crutches of government programs. And what if your child's posts on social media are rather a display of character and assertiveness? After all, it seems that a certain measure of aggression on social media pays remarkable political dividends these days, so what if reproaching your child ended up destroying what could be the beginning of a brilliant political career? In this scenario, too, there is no room for tolerance, because there is no clear value-judgment to begin with.

3. In the third scenario, you are *absolutely certain that what these people are doing is wrong*. There is no question that stealing is wrong, that cold-hearted contempt is not the right attitude toward the poor, and that aggressive posting on social media is rebarbative. The three people who engage in such activities have it all wrong: their actions *embody* axiologically invalid value-judgments. Perhaps none of them actively told herself: "stealing is right", "despising the homeless is good" or "writing aggressive posts maximizes value on the Internet", but what they *do* exhibits such (probably implicit) valuations. Normally, if you are certain of your valuations and it is in your power to do so, you will want to *intervene*. By intervention I mean whatever action is appropriate to act out your valid axiological conviction and correct the other's invalid valuation. An intervention can range from something very simple, such as reproaching or punishing your child, to something very ambitious, such as running for office in order to pass a law against hate speech on the Internet. Unlike Forst, I don't think that the problem of tolerance is primarily about trying to restrict other people's liberty with the force of law. That can be the extreme and most effective way to *intervene* in order to put an end to a morally wrong practice and correct those who engage in such a practice. But tolerance is already at play in much simpler everyday contexts, when despite your certainty about the rightness of your evaluation *you choose not to intervene*.

It is, then, the third scenario that creates the conditions for tolerance. Phenomenologically speaking, if you choose *not to intervene*, then some *modification* of your straightforward value-consciousness must be in play. Husserl has offered a conceptually and descriptively powerful account of the modification at play here with the concept of "neutralization" or "neutrality modification" (Husserl 2014, p. 213). In order to spell out what that means, let us reconsider the idea of a positing act. In simple perception,

for instance, I posit something as being: there is a tree in front of me. If the corresponding intention is intuitively and coherently fulfilled, then my positing is legitimate, or valid. At any time, however, the validity of my positing can become questionable if the data coming from my sensory experience no longer harmonize with the sense of what I was positing so far. The original positing can become modified and turn from “positing of being” to “doubt”: I now posit something that looks like a tree, but could be something else, e.g., a pole or a human being. In some cases, I can even come to a *negative* positing: I thought I was seeing a tree in the hazy light of dusk, but on closer inspection there is nothing there. All these modalities fall on the spectrum of *being*, even the final, negative positing. It is telling that the English language formulates the situation saying that *there is* nothing there. Husserl, however, points out that there is another option, which falls outside the spectrum of being, that is, *neutralizing* the positing act. In this attitude, I stop engaging in positing; I suspend my positing and abandon any commitment about how things are or are not. Husserl gives the examples of image consciousness and fantasy as neutralized perception, and recollection, respectively. My comportment toward the painted landscape on canvas is neutralized, since I do not posit a landscape as being actually on the wall. The same goes for my brother’s picture on my desk: I see my brother, but I don’t posit him as being on my desk, nor do I posit him as *not* being on my desk. When I daydream about a tropical beach, I do not posit a beach, not in the sense of engaging in negative positing, as it was the case with the tree at dusk, but precisely in the sense of having neutralized and put out of play *any kind* of positing.

What does this have to do with tolerance? We can describe something like a neutrality modification in the axiological domain, too. When I posit something as being of value, or when I posit a value as being actually valuable, I engage in a kind of comportment that is thoroughly analogous to its perceptual counterpart. Similarly, I can come to doubt the authenticity of a value in light of discordant experiences, and eventually I can even come to revoke the status of value to something that I previously took to possess it. I can also engage in straightforwardly negative valuations, such as positing that stealing is wrong, i.e., the corresponding actions realize a *disvalue* in the world. If the analogy with simple perception holds, then it is only plausible to assume that the neutrality modification can intervene in the sphere of valuing, too. In this case, I suspend my positive or negative valuation and comport myself neutrally toward the corresponding value or disvalue in a completely uncommitted manner. I do not let my positive or

negative valuation exert its motivational force on me, as much as I do not let the sensory material coming from the picture on my desk motivate me to posit my brother as being actually on my desk.

Tolerance, I submit, is entirely grounded on such neutralized valuing. The Two-Component Views of tolerance outlined above are tangled up in paradoxes because they are oblivious to the possibility of neutrality beside positive and negative valuations. The subject of tolerance, thus, does not need to be Janus-faced or split between a negative and a positive component: the attitude that underlies tolerance is a *straightforward, simple* valuation directed toward an action, belief, practice, etc. To be more precise, it is a *neutralized valuation that replaces or supersedes a foregoing negative valuation*. In this way, there is no paradox of tolerance to begin with. When we tolerate we hold the disvalue that the other wrongly posits as valuable firmly in grasp, only, we neutralize our negative act of valuation.

In order to understand *why* we would engage in such neutralization if we are certain of the validity of our negative valuation, we need to add one last element to our description. The kinds of negative valuations that are at play and become neutralized when we tolerate are carried out *in the context of empathy*.

Empathy in Husserlian phenomenology is both a class of experience in its own right and a further *modality*, in the framework of which other experiences can happen. At the basic level empathy is the perceptual experience of another subject based on the experience of the other's agency in her living body.⁷ Once that experience occurs, however, a new dimension of my own experiencing opens up. The other's experiences become part of the horizon of my own experiences, even if I can't live them first hand as the other does. For instance, if I see you seeing a tree, empathy opens up the possibility that I see the tree "through you", as it were: I

7 In the only study I am aware of on this matter, James Jardine (2017) has argued persuasively that Husserl's descriptions of empathy provide an analysis of what Axel Honneth calls elementary recognition. Even though I agree with Jardine that there is an affinity between Husserl's empathy and Honneth's elementary recognition, I am not persuaded that it is phenomenologically sound to place empathy on the "recognition" spectrum, as Honneth does. The reason is that recognition is an axiologically laden experience, whereas at the basic level described by Husserl, empathy is just the experience of another subject, prior to all valuations and position-takings about the other's standing as a person.

co-effectuate your perceptual positing of a tree via your own experiencing the tree. There is a difference between a situation where I see a tree, you see a tree and we are both aware of our respective experiences, and a situation where I see you seeing a tree and this kind of mediated seeing occurs in the medium of empathy, so to speak. Empathy as a modification of experience makes it possible for the lives of different subjects to interlace while remaining distinct. It is also responsible for the possibility of genuinely shared emotions, where one and the same experience is lived by two subjects who are united as one plural subject, or “we-subject” (Vincini/Staiti forthcoming).

Valuations, too, can occur in the context of empathy. I don’t do my valuing and see you do yours, but through you, I am turned toward the state of affairs that you value, such that part of my awareness of that state of affairs is constituted by your valuation. In these cases, by analogy with simple sensory perception, I can either go along with your valuation and co-effectuate your value-positing, or I can refuse to do so, because I see that your valuation is invalid. Similarly, if I see you talk to a tree, I can refer to the tree perceptually through your experience, but refuse to co-effectuate the positing of being in what I recognize as your hallucinatory experience of a tree-shaped human. In the axiological case, I can see that your behavior embodies a certain valuation and either go along and posit myself what you posit as valuable, or else judge your value-positing as invalid and posit a disvalue where you posit a value, instead. I can also decide to discontinue all positing of values and disvalues and neutralize my conscious act directed to the state of affairs you are intending and positing axiologically. If I do so, I am tolerating your valuation and the ensuing action or practice.

4. *Tolerance as Recognition*

What remains to clarify is *why* I would neutralize a value-positing that I know to be valid and when it is reasonable to do so. In other words, we need to clarify the motivation for tolerance and the conditions upon which it is *right* to tolerate, i.e., to neutralize my (valid) negative value-positing in order not to let it conflict with your (invalid) positive value-positing.

Husserl aptly distinguishes between a general axiological attitude and a specifically moral attitude (Husserl 2004, pp. 244-247). In a general axiological attitude we are exclusively concerned with value and the attain-

ment of the maximum possible amount of value in what we do. In a moral attitude, by contrast, we are turned toward the *ego*, our own or the other's, whose actions and convictions will shape her moral personality. We do not look at actions, practices, etc. merely by reference to their general value (or lack thereof), but we consider them insofar as they contribute to determine the *person* who engages in them. In a moral attitude we care primarily about who we and the others will become as persons, rather than the amount of value that our actions, singly considered, realize in the world.

When we tolerate, we are engaging in a moral, rather than an axiological attitude, and what motivates us is the psychological insight that *changing one's wrong valuations takes time, but a self-correction is invariably more effective and enduring than a correction imposed from outside*. Tolerance is about letting the other, who is axiologically wrong, take her time and realize for herself, over the course of further experience, that her value-positings are invalid. People who have their valuations all wrong will likely dig in their heels and harden their hearts if they get a reproach or are directly confronted about their invalid valuations. The tolerant person knows from her own experience that the maturation of moral insights may take time, but that whenever it is possible, it is better to take that time, because a moral insight that has grown autonomously will last longer and have a more encompassing influence on one's life than a moral imposition.

If this description is correct, then *tolerance is itself a form of recognition*. The tolerant person recognizes the other's capacity for moral insight and holds her in such high esteem as to consider her fully capable to correct her wrong valuations by herself, in due time and with the necessary amount of experience. The tolerant person's characteristic refusal to intervene and the neutralized value-consciousness that phenomenologically grounds such non-interventionism are not motivated by indifference or moderate moral skepticism. Nor are they due to comparative considerations, as King and other proponents of the Two-Component view would have it. Rather, the tolerant person won't intervene because she cares about the other's autonomous moral maturation more than she cares about affirming the validity of her own value-positings. In this scenario, tolerance is far from being insulting. The other who realizes the tolerator's refusal to intervene despite her diverging valuation won't feel insulted or degraded to an inferior standing. Rather, they will gratefully acknowledge the tolerator's psychological wisdom and the willingness to let everyone mature their moral insights taking all the time that's needed.

Note that such an account of tolerance is not predicated upon a split between the moral and the ethical self. Recognizing the other's capacity for moral insight amounts to recognize that such capacity is actualized from time to time in the other's concrete commitments to a conception of the good. But conceptions of the good are always works-in-progress and they can go through significant adjustments and even upheavals in light of concrete experiences.

Given these premises it is relatively unproblematic to specify when tolerance is the right attitude. First, it is right to tolerate when one's valuations actually *are* valid. Suppose that someone has come to believe wild conspiracy theories absorbed from the Internet. That person will likely have very strong axiological convictions, which her or she believes are intuitively and coherently fulfilled; however, that fulfillment will be at best a *surrogate* (Staiti 2018, pp. 102-104) and not actual fulfilment. We can certainly imagine something like a tolerant conspiracy theorist, who firmly believes that in due time and with the right kind of information others will come to see the truth by themselves. Such a profile would certainly be more preferable than an *intolerant* conspiracy theorist, but the core problem remains: the tolerant conspiracy theorist has her axiology wrong, no matter how strongly she feels about it. The right attitude in her case would not be tolerance vis-à-vis others, but a critical scrutiny of her own valuation seeking to provide them with actual, as opposed to surrogate, intuitive fulfilment. Second, it is right to tolerate when it is *true* that the other will be able to correct herself and achieve autonomous moral insight in due time. A person struggling with substance abuse and addiction, for instance, may be severely impaired and unable to see the wrongness of her actions, no matter how much time we give her. In this case, intervening might be right thing to do. Finally, it is right to tolerate if we can *afford* letting the other take her time and develop her own moral insight. In some cases, even if we know that the best-case scenario would be letting the other mature by herself, we have to intervene before the axiologically wrong person does harm to herself and others.

In the examples above, I may refrain from intervening when I see the destitute person stealing from the grocery store because I know that in due time she will see for herself that stealing is wrong, but, for instance, if I knew that this person is on parole and even a minor offense could send her to prison for a long time, harming herself and others, I may opt for the second best scenario and choose to intervene. Similarly, I may not have the

time to let my child realize for himself that aggressive posting is wrong, because he could get into very serious trouble with the law very soon if he continues. In morally sensitive matters, time is sometimes a luxury we cannot afford, even when we know that for the other's moral character it would be much better to wait and let her correct her valuations when the time is ripe.

Conclusion

To conclude, let us return briefly to Goethe's maxim. If the above is correct, tolerance does not need to be insulting and it also does not need to *lead* to recognition. It is itself a form of recognition, one that already gives the other what we owe to her. Tolerance, as we saw, recognizes in the other the capacity for moral insight and it is motivated by psychological evidence, namely, that *autonomous* moral insight makes for a stronger and more enduring moral personality. Nonetheless, there is a grain of truth to Goethe's intuition that tolerance cannot be a definitive attitude. On the account I provided, the exercise of tolerance is ideally ordered toward a situation where the other *finally* reaches the desired moral insight and, accordingly, no longer engages in invalid value-positing. The tolerator does hope for a future situation where tolerance will no longer be required because the other will have corrected herself. This fact, however, does not detract from tolerance being a form of recognition. Rather, tolerance is the most extreme form of recognition, in fact, the *only* form of recognition we can exercise in good conscience even with people whose valuations we know are wrong.

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