

The Idea of Tolerance – John Locke and Immanuel Kant

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Abstract

This study aims to present that the most visible and drastic changes in the life of modern humans are caused by the ability human to be a person that is equal to be tolerant. From a historical point of view, the manifestation of tolerance towards people has always been problematic – for some it is in short supply, and for others it has been in surplus. In the first case, it has caused conflicts and wars to win it, in the second, sanctions and repressions. The tolerance has been and is the subject of many analyzes, philosophical concepts, ethical schemes, and socio-political mechanisms that construct societies. This article is explored John Locke and Immanuel Kant’s position on the tolerance described in their scientific papers *A Letter Concerning Toleration* and *Perpetual Peace*. In the introduction is said that the tolerance has many dimensions. In its essence, it is always pluralistic, implied consent, freedom, continuity, understanding, equality, etc. It is a segment of achieving interpersonal, group, intergroup, inter-community and international relations. The first subtopic is about tolerance in historical contextual links. The second is about Locke and his Letter – Locke’s letter of the tolerance from 1689, which supports the idea of the need for religious tolerance, it is not only a recommendation, but also a condition for a peaceful and just cohabitation of citizens in a society – this is the century, when England sets up its own church, which strives to distinguish both from the Roman Catholic and the Protestant – creating a Protestant church – the Anglican church. Before Locke published a Letter of Tolerance, after his return to England in 1689, after his immigration to the Netherlands, he published two other fundamental works: *Two Tracts on Government* and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689). The third sub-topic is about Kant and his concept of the possible perpetual peace – the theory of “perpetual peace” was created by Kant at the end of the 18th century. According to him, as relations within a state can be regulated wisely in order to maintain internal peace, and relations between people from different countries could be wisely regulated in order to achieve external peace. Kant thinks that moral-practical reason obliges us to exclude wars, otherwise it would mean that we have to give up our mind and be equated with the animals. In the conclusion is noted the great contribution of ideas from the works of Locke and Kant is the basis of the American Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and how much tolerance we need today in a globalized world.

Keywords: John Locke, Immanuel Kant, peace, tolerance.

“Without man and his potential for moral progress, the whole of reality would be a mere wilderness, a thing in vain, and have no final purpose.”

Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*

1. Introduction

The tolerance has many dimensions. In its essence, it is always pluralistic, implied consent, freedom, continuity, understanding, equality, etc. It is a segment of achieving interpersonal, group, intergroup, inter-community and international relations. As well as a finding of the existence or non-existence of this pluralistic tone in the relations between people, groups, societies, even the person himself to himself. This means that tolerance is always an intent that is tasked with finding an adequate path to “Other” or “the Difference”, not to counter it, but to illustrate, translate and make it understandable and accessible, that is to say it adapts. Thus, the tolerance occurs and manifests itself in different forms: it can be ethnic, religious, national, cultural, etc., but at its core lies the main task of accepting the differences as natural and necessary for individuals. Through and in tolerance, these differences are assessed as peculiar qualities that enrich human appearance and knowledge.

2. The tolerance

In view of the historical and philosophical approach which we will use here, we will focus our attention on the tolerance, its culturally identical context as a factor in human relations in historical development.

The tolerance is essentially a priori enshrined in globalization as a process – the tolerance is the vehicle and way of cosmopolitanism. But it is also a great regret that in order to project something on the whole, it is sometimes inevitable that the resistance of individual localities, i.e. globalization by its own conceptual design, is tolerant, but as a projection into the real social spaces of different historical times is not always the case. Aristotle in *Nicomachean Ethics* treats the tolerance as “consistency” or “consent” (Aristotle, 1995: 23). To be classified as a virtue, the tolerance must be more than ordinary benevolence and friendship. It has to pervade the possible shortage or excess of quality. This is possible when tolerance is perceived as consistency. The coherence in itself implies the same way of assessing common interests. Thus, the tolerance as the main argument for agreement in interpersonal relationships both in conceptual and socio-cultural aspects has a lasting presence in the historical space. However, this tolerant coherence has its limits. Boundaries beyond which an individual ceases to be a person: if he is swallowed up by the whole (that is, if he fails to preserve his individuality) by becoming the background of the others, melting into them; as well as when the peace of mind is compromised by questioning the possibility of a pluralistic difference in personality.

The history of interpersonal relations in the era of the European Enlightenment of the 17th/18th century is an interesting move. During this period, the need for reconciliation and the requirement of tolerance is in direct connection and is a direct consequence of the tragic experience of religious wars that began immediately following the Reformation processes: The Huguenots’ persecution in France; the Civil War in the Netherlands, and the Thirty Years’ War in England, followed by the Puritan Revolution and the subsequent Cromwell dictatorship. This is also the time when the tolerance and the leniency among individual people are rising to the desired moral social norm.

3. John Locke – “A Letter Concerning Toleration”

In this context, the basis of the modern concept of tolerance is shaped. Its creator is John Locke. As noted Boris Manov, Locke is “the first author in the history of European thought, who specifically addresses the issue of the tolerance in human relations, and because the ideas he develops lie at the basis of all further theoretical interpretations and political documents related to the justification and practical implementation of the principles of tolerance in the life of society

– between individuals and social groups, between different religious, political, cultural, ethnic and other organizations and institutions within countries and in relations between countries internationally, including to this day” (Manov, 2010: 58).

Locke’s *Letter of Tolerance* from 1689, which supports the idea of the need for religious tolerance, is not only a recommendation, but also a condition for a peaceful and just cohabitation of citizens in a society – this is the century, when England sets up its own church, which strives to distinguish both from the Roman Catholic and the Protestant – creating a Protestant church – the Anglican church. Before Locke published the Letter, Locke after his return to England in 1689, after his immigration to the Netherlands, published two other fundamental works: *Two Tracts on Government* (Locke, 1967: 1) and *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) (Locke, 1948: 1). In the second treatise, he sets forth his theory of the political structuring of the social space and of the functions and form of civil society. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he attaches great importance to experimental knowledge through sensuousness as the only adequate cognitive approach. Another moment in his theory, which is criticized and unacceptable, is the characteristic of Locke’s psychological treatment of experience, when it too far away from the objective nature and essence of external reality (Locke, 1948: 29).

The Letter by Locke appeared on the occasion of a rather complicated time for England. It was published almost immediately after Locke return to England in 1689, which he left in 1683 as he left for the Netherlands after the defeat of the wizards. The Letter was written during his immigration to the Netherlands between 1685 and 1686. Initially it was published in Latin language as an anonymous text in May 1689 in the Netherlands, but its translations into Dutch and French language quickly appeared, yet another proof of the problems and the need for tolerance that have occupied the minds of an English immigrant – problems and necessities related to tolerant socialization of societies, which is characteristic of the whole of Europe.

Itself the Letter is an attempt to reflect on the complex social relationships in English society. Right from the beginning of the Letter, Locke summons for a clear distinction between the tasks of civilian governance and those of religion, as well as a clear boundary between them. The main reason for this division is the different goals and tasks that the State should be able to achieve and resolve on the one hand – in particular, the civilian ruler as representative of secular power, and on the other hand, the Church as an institution.

Here’s what the State is, according to Locke: “The commonwealth seems to me to be a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving, and advancing their own civil interests. Civil interests I call life, liberty, health, and indolence of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like” (Locke, 1983: 6); and what the Church should be: “A church, then, I take to be a voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord in order to the public worshipping of God in such manner as they judge acceptable to Him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls” (Locke, 1983: 9). These definitions are clearly restrictive as they unequivocally fix the scope of the jurisdiction of the two institutions, as well as the clear distinction and differences between them. The role of the civilian ruler as an emanation and expression of a civic interests and not of the religious preferences of the people is extremely important. It is also necessary to tolerate individual personal religious preferences because we cannot speak of religious orthodoxy referring to the personal preferential preferences of the ruling rulers that predetermine the beliefs and destiny of each individual citizen. Locke writes: “First, because the care of souls is not committed to the civil magistrate, any more than to other men. It is not committed unto him, I say, by God; because it appears not that God has ever given any such authority to one man over another as to compel anyone to his religion” (Locke, 1983: 7); “Second (...) true and saving religion consists in the inward persuasion of the mind, without which nothing can be acceptable to God. And such is the nature of the understanding, that it cannot be compelled to the belief of anything by outward force. Confiscation

of estate, imprisonment, torments, nothing of that nature can have any such efficacy as to make men change the inward judgment that they have framed of things” (Locke, 1983: 7-8), and “Third (...) No man by nature is bound unto any particular church or sect, but everyone joins himself voluntarily to that society in which he believes he has found that profession and worship which is truly acceptable to God” (Locke, 1983: 9).

In these three arguments Locke attempts to give a political explanation of the need to distinguish the various functions and prerogatives of the exercise of power, of the cardinal differentiation of the prerogatives of governing society, in the world between the secular and the spiritual or, more clearly, the separation of the Church from the State. As a representative of the political power, the city governor would have to deal with political issues, not the theological-gnoseological speeches and problems of religion and the Church. Thus, Locke lists the cases in which the civilian governor should not tolerate, but to alert the government and society to the relationship in attempting to exert a superiority between the Church and the State, to observe the limits of the possible interactions between the two institutions, as well as their individual representatives – whether politicians or church officials: “I say, first, no opinions contrary to human society, or to those moral rules which are necessary to the preservation of civil society, are to be tolerated by the magistrate” (Locke, 1983: 34); “That Church can have no right to be tolerated by the magistrate which is constituted upon such a bottom that all those who enter into it do thereby ipso facto deliver themselves up to the protection and service of another prince” (Locke, 1983: 35); “A church whose members enter into it under the protection and service of another ruler” (Lock, 2008: 74); “Lastly, those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the being of a God. Promises, covenants, and oaths, which are the bonds of human society, can have no hold upon an atheist. The taking away of God, though but even in thought, dissolves all; besides also, those that by their atheism undermine and destroy all religion, can have no pretence of religion whereupon to challenge the privilege of a toleration” (Locke, 1983: 36). What is said by Locke with these four arguments is that if tolerance is manifested, in such cases it would lead to the breakdown of the civil society, which is actually the basis of the State. While these arguments are a kind of invocation to and intolerance of everything that would endanger people’s civic interests, the actions of their removal as a behavior are an indispensable duty of the civilian governor.

We could summarize, considering the theory of Locke for the Civil Society, which he put forward in *The Two Tracts on Government* and in the Letter that he continues to uphold and defend his political argumentation that freedom is good only in a society in which there are laws and reasonable constraints, therefore, the right of an individual to freely follow his religious beliefs is not a natural but a political right. But this can only happen in: well-settled societies that are well regulated by the secular authority, and any action by the civil governor should be directed at the peace and in the interest of society as a whole. It is important to note the following. From the point of view of our day, the Letter does not sound particularly tolerant. It could even be argued that, from the point of view of contemporary theoretical developments and legislation, Locke’s views not only look archaic, but also at times defend the cause of intolerance – for example: his thesis that: following the religious beliefs of the individual are not a natural right, but only a political one or the lack of desire for religiosity by the individual, atheism – to be a problem. But, from the point of view of his time (in the 17th century), his ideas are progressive, because even today, in terms of the philosophy of law, they are extremely relevant. For example:

- The definition on the State is in the spirit of political liberal teleology, that is, as he writes, the task of the State is only to protect the civil interests of its members as it does not have to comply with the theological purposes of the Church;
- The pluralism of people’s views on diversity, which can be seen as new choices, increasing freedom or enriching culture.

In 1695, Locke published a text under the name *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (Locke: 1958: 1), which details some of those contained in the Letter. Although the philosophical concepts of Locke are strongly influenced by theology, in his texts we are seeing the future of the European political-philosophical tradition.

4. Immanuel Kant and ideas for “perpetual peace”

“The rights of men, as citizens of the world, shall be limited to the conditions of universal hospitality.”

We are speaking here, as in the previous articles, not of philanthropy, but of right; and in this sphere hospitality signifies the claim of a stranger entering foreign territory to be treated by its owner without hostility. The latter may send him away again if this can be done without causing his death; but, so long as he conducts himself peaceably, he must not be treated as an enemy. It is not a right to be treated as a guest to which the stranger can lay claim—a special friendly compact on his behalf would be required to make him for a given time an actual inmate—but he has a right of visitation. This right to present themselves to society belongs to all mankind in virtue of our common right of possession of the surface of the earth on which, as it is a globe, we cannot be infinitely scattered, and must in the end reconcile ourselves to existence side by side: at the same time, originally no one individual had more right than another to live in any one particular spot.”

Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace*

The problem of perpetual peace as an aspect of cosmopolitanism, as it has already become clear, it has its pre-history. But publishing in 1795 his treatise *Perpetual Peace Project and the Project of the European Union* (Kant, 1958: 24), Kant for the first time considered the idea of perpetual peace as a major philosophical problem. So he provokes the interest again on this subject. Kant views the idea of perpetual peace as a priori in its essence, governing the relations of citizens in the state, of their countries, as well as the relations of citizens in a global world.

The idea of perpetual peace has its pre-history in Kant. Along with the article *The Idea of a Global History from a World-Civic Perspective*, in another work in 1784, Kant has perceptions of peace, of a peace as alliance between countries to which states will reach the pure natural necessity in order to preserve their own existence. According to Kant, the natural course of natural laws is that people will have to stop fighting among themselves and will be forced to finally unite in a great alliance of peoples.

In his article *Three Allegations of the Beginning of Human History* from 1786 (Vorländer, 1924: 59), Kant writes that, in fact, in the past there was a lot of meaning in the wars, even though they led to destruction and human sacrifice. They are the ones that awaken respect for their own people in their heads of state. This respect will be the impulse to seek ways to build a unified state in which everlasting peace exists.

In the same cosmopolitan and globalist spirit are ideas in another Kant’s work from 1793. In *Society* Kant says: “This may be true in theory, but not in practice” (Kant, 1974: 46). Kant writes that the agony of persistent wars in which states are constantly trying to separate a piece of land from one another in an attempt to obey will eventually lead to their attempt to unite in a cosmopolitan arrangement that is subordinate to general legislation or by international law. Kant brings these ideas into “Perpetual Peace” (Kant, 1983: 3), with the book itself structured as a project for a peace treaty. The other urge that Kant to write this work is his closely monitored events on the end of the war and the peace talks between Prussia and France.

Only assumptions can be made of a connection between this peace and the writing of the book, even more so that Kant himself does not tell anywhere how he came to think of it, what made him develop the idea of perpetual peace and a particular essay.

The problem of perpetual peace was examined before Kant by Abbe Charles Irene de St Pierre (1658-1743) in his book *Projet de paix perpetuelle entre les potentats de L` Europe*. Published in 1713, book was greeted with great interest by the scholars of its time and was translated for a short time in almost all European languages. Then Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and philanthropists dealt with this problem. Particular attention is paid to Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), who has caused great interest in his thoughts on perpetual peace. For that the idea of perpetual peace has become very popular and it is testified by many peace-keeping societies and congresses in which scientists, statesmen and politicians have been most actively involved. Many articles have been published in journals and separate books in which questions were discussed in connection with the clarification and implementation of the idea of perpetual peace.

In such an environment in Europe appears the work of Kant “Perpetual Peace”, which very quickly conquers the minds of all who have been interested in the already popular idea of perpetual peace, because with the philosophical development of the basic issues of war and peace, it was totally different from everything that was said and written so far.

The first edition of “Perpetual Peace” came out in 1795 and was completely exhausted in just a few weeks. As the book continues to be searched, this edition has been reprinted and released for the second time that same year. Due to the great interest in 1796 a new supplemented edition appeared. The supplement consisted of a second addition to the already existing supplement in the first edition: “A secret member to perpetual peace”. In addition to these editions, in 1796 a French edition appeared in the same publishing house, which also took care of the first and second editions. There were two more editions in Kant’s life, in 1796 and 1797, which were copies of the first edition from 1795. Also, a copy of the manuscript of “Perpetual Peace” appeared, reviewed and supplemented by Kant himself with several remarks and supplements on the page field. The particularities of Kant’s language and style are preserved in “Perpetual Peace,” though not so high as in the three Critics.

As a layout the book, “Perpetual Peace” is divided by Kant into two applications, two sections and two additions. The main part is developed in the form of a peace treaty, which gives some international law character to the thoughts set out. In the six preliminary members of the eternal peace between the countries with which the exhibition begins, Kant deals only with practical issues that basically do not differ much from the issues that determine the spirit and a number of modern peace treaties. He does not neglect the in-depth theoretical analysis to satisfy some current or imaginary application requirements, and does not underestimate the requirements of practice to stay in the higher spheres of pure philosophy. The same applies to the next three definitive members of eternal peace, in which Kant deals more closely with the right of the citizens of the state, with federalism as the basis of international law and with the right of the citizens of the world state. After the nine members of the eternal peace, two follow-ups and one application follow. Supplements, especially the first, mostly reflect Kant’s teachings of eternal peace as an integral part of his philosophy of history. The first supplement deals with the question of the boundaries of perpetual peace by developing the concept of a universal history from a philosophical-historical point of view. The second supplement contains criticism of the secret members of perpetual peace in general, emphasizing the importance of philosophers’ opinion on warfare and peace. The essay ends with an appendix that examines and clarifies the relationship between morality and politics in view of perpetual peace. The first part takes into account the reasons that prevent consistency between them, thus determining the irreconcilable controversy between morality and politics. The second part sets out the way in which this dispute can be

overcome and thus bring about consistency between them. This way, Kant defines the transcendental concept of public law.

As can be understood, in this work Kant develops the idea of perpetual peace in a doctrine of perpetual peace. The fact that he wrote and published his book in 1795 when the Basel Peace was concluded cannot define it as a random study, such as philosophical reflections on war and peace, which only intertwined him without any serious connection with the fundamental and other philosophical works. For Kant, the eternal peace that was supposed to follow the so-called peace treaties is not an empty idea, but a duty, and therefore a moral, task that can only be solved on the basis of universal legislation, a common and binding public law, which will govern the relations of the citizens in the state, the relations of the states between them and the relations of the citizens in a world state.

Kant's theory requires reconciliation between politics and morality. There are two possibilities for this aim. To this end, there are two possibilities: either politics to obey morality; or morals to rest on politics. Kant, however, is well aware that both are almost completely unreadable and speaks of "perpetual peace" as something utopian. Still, this theory remains forever in the history of philosophy and becomes an ideal to which humanity seeks, even after a clear realization of its unattainability. The doctrine of perpetual peace by Kant is an integral part of his entire theoretical and practical philosophy and, in particular, his philosophy of history. In "Perpetual Peace," the great philosopher, for the first time in the history of human thought, views the idea of perpetual peace as a philosophical problem. In connection with this idea are his thoughts about the right of the citizens of the state, about the international law and about the right of the citizens of the world, which he thinks constitutes the content of his philosophical policy. Kant's "Perpetual Peace", which was supposed to follow the so-called peace treaties, is not an empty idea, but a duty and therefore a moral task for politicians and statesmen, which can only be solved on the basis of a universal law governing the relations of citizens in the state, the relations of the states between them and the relations of the citizens in a world state as a union of the states.

5. Conclusion

The works of Locke and Kant are the basis of the American Constitution and the Declaration of Independence (Skousen, 2016: 5), as well as the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (Peterson, 2015: 3), written by Thomas Jefferson and underpinned by the American Constitution. Many of their ideas are contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration of the Principles of Tolerance, etc. And in turn, the works of Locke and Kant guarantee the peaceful coexistence and the dignity of man, guarantee certain principles without which it would be inconceivable to "soften" some of the negatives of modern globalization.

6. General conclusions

How to live with the *Other* without any problems or contradictions? How does someone accept the Other – its religion, customs, culture without problems, and conflicts? Of course, the most tolerant is living on either side of a clearly marked line, but ...

The idea of tolerance in both John Locke and Immanuel Kant is – to be able to accept the Other as it is. Against the backdrop of the globalizing world and all the challenges that arise from this process that lead to the demolition of many of the boundaries typical of traditional societies, but also lead to the destruction of borders to the dangers of compelling modern human, placing him in a situation, living in a society labeled with a global risk. The idea that people living in Europe (and/or the greater part of the world), today after two world wars and a gradual global liberal democracy, are reasonable enough and is often refuted.

Today we do not stop talking about pluralistic social spaces, civil society, modern democracies, but we often forget that in 1933 Adolf Hitler came to power, precisely through democratic elections. Today, with extreme we see factors, ideological waves and political factions, pushing for sharp manifestations of antisemitism, xenophobia, chauvinism, racism, sociopathism, etc. Tolerance – it is today one of the most problematic themes.

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