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## Toleration, Respect and Recognition: Some tensions

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There is hardly any concept in modern political thought that is more complex and controversial than that of toleration. The complexity of the foundations, nature and the value of toleration and the controversiality of the status, the justification and the limits of toleration raise a number of questions concerning the basis of toleration in a diverse pluralist polity. As the existing literature on this topic clearly exemplifies (e.g. Dees, 2004; Deveaux, 2000; Galeotti, 2002; Gutmann, 1994; Heyd, 1994; Kukathas, 2003; McKinnon, 2006; McKinnon & Castiglione, 2003; Mendus, 1989; Newey, 1999; Parekh, 2000; Rawls, 1993; Scanlon, 2003; Taylor, 1992/1994; Walzer, 1997; Williams & Waldron, 2008), the persistence of the moral and conceptual objections against toleration confirm that several issues associated with the traditional doctrine of toleration and the possibility conditions of toleration remain contested.

This book brings together eight chapters that examine in detail a number of issues related to the status, the justification and the limits of toleration on the one hand and the intricate relationship between toleration, respect and recognition of diversity in education on another. In chapter 2 of the *Toleration, Respect and Recognition in Education* book Colin Macleod discusses in detail the normative complexity of the different interpretations of toleration as it applies to education in democratic communities. His examination of the different ways in which controversies around toleration in educational contexts arise, together with the analysis of the main factors that are relevant to interpreting the meaning of toleration in the context of education, highlight the basic elements a successful account of toleration applied to public education must negotiate. In his contribution to this book Sune Lægaard identifies different forms of interpretation of both toleration and recognition and then proceeds with a discussion of the compatibility between different conceptions of toleration and recognition of diversity characteristic of contemporary multicultural societies. He first differentiates between different understandings of toleration, respect and recognition and then proceeds with an examination of the relationship between these three forms of engagement with diversity in the educational context. In his chapter, Peter Jones explores various difficulties associated with the circumstances and the possibility conditions of toleration on the one hand and the challenges recognition of diversity poses to its advocates in a society which is plural in its cultures and traditions. His discussion of the limits we are confronted with, by juxtaposing toleration and recognition of diversity as mutually exclusive alternatives and a close examination of the different possibilities offered by the interpretation of the

complementary relationship between toleration and recognition, reveals a number of tensions between the orthodox understanding of both toleration and recognition. Andrew Shorten takes up the different objections against the fragmentary tendencies of multiculturalism. His examination of the multiculturalists' concern about the stifling effect of a coercive assimilation policy and the liberal egalitarian suspicion that cultural fragmentation may threaten social justice and political stability provides a useful perspective on the complexity of reconciling accommodation of diversity and the promotion of shared public values in our plurally diverse societies. The contribution by Lucas Swaine outlines an alternative version of liberalism that he calls the liberalism of conscience. By distinguishing autonomy from heteronomy he outlines a version of liberalism that does not rely excessively on autonomy. The educational requirements advocated under a liberalism of conscience, writes Swaine, would be considerably less comprehensive than those advocated by autonomy-based liberalism. In their contribution to this book Blain Neufeld and Gordon Davis advance a 'political liberal' conception of mutual respect—which they call 'civic respect'. Drawing on this conception of civic respect, they outline some of the key elements of a politically liberal civic education and go on to indicate what kind of civic education should be required of all future citizens in pluralist democratic societies. In his chapter Colin Bird focuses on two criticisms of the dominant contemporary conceptions of civic education. He distinguishes between the postmodern critique that attacks notions of mutual respect, reasonableness, fairness, neutrality, etc. and the other critique which claims that a civic education of mutual respect may sabotage other legitimate educational aims. In the final contribution to this book, Peter Balint argues that using education to encourage the respect and appreciation of difference can be deeply problematic, as it is a poor servant of those whose differences it is meant to protect; and crucially that it cannot be justified on the key liberal premise of protecting the freedom of individuals to live their (non-harming) lives as they see fit. He concludes his chapter by putting forward the educational alternative of respecting the basic rights of other citizens in the public sphere irrespective of one's view of their differences.

As the chapters collected in this book clearly exemplify, the complexity of the foundations, nature and the value of toleration and the controversiality of the status, the justification and the limits of toleration raise a set of challenges related to the accommodation of diversity and the recognition of difference in the institutional arrangement and curriculum design of public education. The purpose of this book is therefore to examine in detail the various controversies over the genuine problems of toleration in a plurally diverse polity as both historically and conceptually, toleration is one of the foundational characteristics that defines the very essence of a liberal polity and the basic virtue associated with a liberal conception of citizenship.

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