On Toleration

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to enhance understanding of ethical
issues facing individuals in our
complex modern
society.

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Preface

As an American Jew, I grew up thinking of myself as an object of toleration. It was only much later that I recognized myself as a subject too, an agent called upon to tolerate others, including fellow Jews whose idea of what Jewishness meant differed radically from my own. My dawning sense of the United States as a country where everyone had to tolerate everyone else (a formula I shall explain later on) was the starting point of this essay. It led me to reflect on the ways in which other countries were different, and only sometimes intolerably different. All the world is not America!

Tolerating and being tolerated is a little like Aristotle's ruling and being ruled: it is the work of democratic citizens. I don't think that it is easy or insignificant work. Toleration itself is often underestimated, as if it is the least we can do for our fellows, the most minimal of their entitlements. In fact, tolerance (the attitude) takes many different forms, and toleration (the practice) can be arranged in different ways. Even the most grudging forms and precarious arrangements are very good things, sufficiently rare in human history that they require not only practical but also theoretical apprecia-

CHAPTER FOUR

Practical Issues

Power

In ordinary speech, it is often said that toleration is always a relationship of inequality where the tolerated groups or individuals are cast in an inferior position. To tolerate someone else is an act of power; to be tolerated is an acceptance of weakness.[1] We should aim at something better than this combination, something beyond toleration, something like mutual respect. Once we have mapped out the five regimes, however, the story looks more complicated: mutual respect is one of the attitudes that makes for toleration—the most attractive attitude, perhaps, but not necessarily the most likely to develop or the most stable over time. Sometimes, indeed, toleration works best when relations of political superiority and inferiority are clearly marked and commonly recognized. This is most obviously the case in international society, where ambiguous power relations are one of the chief causes of war. The same proposition probably holds with regard to some domestic regimes, like the consociation, where uncertainty about

the relative power of different groups may lead to political turmoil and even to civil war. In immigrant societies, by contrast, the same uncertainty works in an opposite way: if people are unsure where they stand vis-à-vis others, toleration is obviously the most rational policy. Even here, however, questions about political power regularly arise—though perhaps not the single big question, who rules over whom? Instead a series of smaller questions regularly pose themselves: Who is stronger most of the time? Who is more visible in public life? Who gets the larger share of resources? These questions (the big one too) can hardly be understood without reference to the discussions still to come in this chapter about class, gender, religion, and so on; but they can also be asked independently.

In multinational empires, power rests with the central bureaucrats. All the incorporated groups are encouraged to regard themselves as equally powerless, and hence incapable of coercing or persecuting their neighbors. Any local attempt at coercion will produce an appeal to the center. So Greeks and Turks, for example, lived peacefully side by side under Ottoman rule. Were they mutually respectful? Some of them probably were; some were not. But the character of their relationship did not depend on their mutual respect; it depended on their mutual subjection. When subjection isn't an experience shared equally by all the incorporated groups, toleration among them is less likely. If one group feels a special affinity with the imperial center and is able to form an alliance with its local representatives, then it will often try to dominate the others—like the Greeks did in Roman Alexandria. In the imperial case, power is most effective in promoting toleration when it is distant, neutral, and overwhelming.

In this form, imperial power is clearly most helpful to

local minorities, who tend therefore to be the most loyal supporters of the empire. The leaders of national liberation movements commonly express (and exploit) resentment toward these same minorities, who are identified now as collaborators with the imperialists. The transition from imperial province to independent nation-state is a critical moment in the history of toleration. Often minorities are harassed, attacked, and forced to leave—as in the case of the Indian traders and artisans of Uganda, who were driven into exile soon after the withdrawal of the British (and who mostly followed the latter to Britain, bringing the empire home, as it were, and creating a new diversity in the imperial center). Groups of this sort sometimes manage to turn themselves into tolerated minorities, but the path is always hard, and the endpoint, even if it is successfully reached, probably represents a net loss of security and status for the minorities. This is one of the common costs of national liberation, though it can be avoided, or at least mitigated, if the new nation-state is liberal and democratic.

Consociation probably requires something like mutual respect at least among the leaders of the different groups—for the groups must not only coexist but also negotiate among themselves the terms of their coexistence. The negotiators, like diplomats in international society, have to accommodate each other's interests. When they can't or won't do that, as in Cyprus after the British departure, consociation will fail. But individual members of the different communities need not accommodate each other, except when they meet and bargain in the marketplace. In fact, consociation is probably easiest when the communities don't have much to do with one another, when each of them is relatively self-sufficient and inwardly turned. Then power is expressed—populations counted and wealth put into play—only at the

federal level, where communal leaders argue about budgetary allocations and the composition of the civil service.

In nation-states, power rests with the majority nation, which uses the state, as we have seen, for its own purposes. This is no necessary bar to mutuality among individuals; in fact, mutuality is likely to flourish in liberal democratic states. But minority groups are unequal by virtue of their numbers and will be democratically overruled on most matters of public culture. The majority tolerates cultural difference in the same way that the government tolerates political opposition—by establishing a regime of civil rights and civil liberties and an independent judiciary to guarantee its effectiveness. Minority groups then organize, assemble, raise money, provide services for their members, and publish magazines and books; they sustain whatever institutions they can afford and think they need. The stronger their internal life and the more differentiated their culture is from that of the majority, the less they are likely to resent the absence from the public sphere of any representations of their own beliefs and practices. If minority groups are weak, by contrast, their individual members will come increasingly to adopt the beliefs and practices of the majority, at least in public, and often privately as well. It is the intermediate positions that generate tension and lead to constant skirmishing over the symbolism of public life. The contemporary French case, as I described it in Chapter 3, provides ample evidence for the last of these possibilities.

The case is similar early on in the history of immigrant societies, when the first immigrants aspire to nation-statehood. Successive waves of immigration produce what is, in principle, a neutral state, the democratic version of imperial bureaucracy. This state takes over and sustains—for how long no one can know—some of the practical arrange-

ments and some of the symbolism of its immediate predecessor. So each new immigrant group has to adjust to, even if it also transforms, the language and culture of the first group. But the state claims to be above the fray, with no interest in directing the course of these transformations. It addresses itself only to individuals and so creates, or tends over time to create, an open society in which everyone, as I have argued, is engaged in the practice of toleration. The much heralded move "beyond toleration" is presumably now possible. It remains unclear, however, whether significant group differences will remain to be respected once this move is made.

Class

Intolerance is commonly most virulent when differences of culture, ethnicity, or race coincide with class differences—when the members of minority groups are also economically subordinated. This subordination is least likely to occur in multinational empires, where each nation has its own full complement of social classes. Multinationalism commonly produces parallel hierarchies, even if the different nations do not share equally in the wealth of the empire. International society is marked by the same parallelism, and so the inequality of nations produces no toleration problems (whatever its other problems). State elites interact in ways determined entirely by differences of power, not of culture; and the elites of dominant states learn very quickly to respect previously "inferior" cultures when their political leaders suddenly appear in the council of nations with new wealth, say, or new weapons.

Ideally, consociations take the same form—the different communities, unequal within, are roughly equal partners in the country as a whole. But it often happens that one

community that is culturally different is also economically subordinate. The Lebanese Shi'a provide a useful example—of not only this double differentiation but also the political disenfranchisement that is its common consequence. The process works the other way too: when government officials discriminate against the members of such a group, the hostility these members encounter in every other area of social life is legitimized and intensified. The worst jobs, the worst housing, the worst schools: this is their common lot. They constitute an ethnically or religiously marked lower class. They are tolerated in some minimal sense—allowed their own houses of worship, for example—but they are strictly on the receiving end of this toleration. Consociational equality, and the mutual recognition it is supposed to generate, are both undercut by class inequality.

National minorities in nation-states sometimes find themselves in a similar position, and sometimes for the same reasons. Whether the causal sequence starts from cultural stigma or economic or political weakness, it regularly encompasses all three of these. But it can also happen that relatively powerless national minorities, the Chinese in Java, say, are well-off economically (though never as well-off as demagogues rallying the majority against them suggest). Retreating empires often leave successful minorities dangerously exposed to the intolerance of the new rulers of the nation-state. This intolerance can take extreme forms—as we have seen in the example of the Indian settlers in Uganda. Visible prosperity is certain to put a national minority, especially a new national minority, at risk. Invisible poverty, by contrast, brings less danger but greater misery, making for radical non-recognition and a kind of automatic, unreflective discrimination. Consider the "invisible" men and women of minority groups (or lower castes) who provide society's streetcleaners,

garbage collectors, dishwashers, hospital orderlies, and so on—whose presence is simply taken for granted and who are rarely looked in the eye or engaged in conversation by members of the majority.

Immigrant societies regularly include groups of this sort—the newest immigrants from poorer countries, for example, who bring their poverty with them. But long-lasting poverty and cultural stigma are less often the lot of immigrants (who are, after all, the paradigmatic members of an immigrant society) than of conquered indigenous peoples and coercively imported groups like the black slaves and their descendants in the Americas. Here the most radical kind of political subordination goes along with the most radical kind of economic subordination, with racial intolerance playing an important role in both cases. The combination of political weakness, poverty, and racial stigma poses enormously difficult problems for the regime of toleration that the immigrant society is supposed to be. Stigmatized groups usually do not have the resources to sustain a strong internal life, so they cannot function like a corporately organized religious community in an imperial setting (though conquered natives are sometimes allowed the legal forms of such a community) or like a territorially based national minority. Nor are their individual members allowed to make their own way, following in the upward bound footsteps of the immigrants. They form an anomalous caste at the very bottom of the class system.

Toleration is obviously compatible with inequality whenever the class system is reiterated, more or less similarly, in each of the different groups. But this compatibility disappears when the groups are also classes. An ethnic or religious group that constitutes society's lumpen proletariat or underclass is virtually certain to be the focus of extreme

intolerance—not, indeed, of massacre or expulsion (for the members of such groups often play an economically useful role that no one else wants to take on), but of daily discrimination, rejection, and debasement. Other people are, no doubt, resigned to their presence, but this is not the kind of resignation that counts as tolerance because it goes along with a wish for their invisibility.[2] In principle, one could teach respect for people of the underclass and their roles—as well as a wider toleration for all sorts of people doing all kinds of work, including hard and dirty work. In practice, neither specific respect nor wider toleration is likely unless the connection between class and group is broken.

The purpose of affirmative action or reverse discrimination in the admission of students to universities, the selection of civil servants, and the allocation of government funds is to break this link between class and group. None of these efforts are egalitarian so far as individuals are concerned; individuals are merely moved up or down the hierarchy. Affirmative action is egalitarian only at the group level, where it aims to produce similar hierarchies by supplying the missing upper, professional, or middle class to the most subordinate groups. If the social profile of all the groups is more or less the same, cultural difference is more likely to be accepted. This proposition doesn't hold in cases of severe national conflict, but where pluralism already exists, as in consociations and immigrant societies, it seems plausible. At the same time, the experience of the United States suggests that privileging the members of subordinate groups, whatever its useful long-term consequences, reinforces intolerance in the short term. It causes real injustice to particular individuals (usually members of the next-most-subordinate groups), and it breeds politically dangerous resentments. It may well be the case, then, that wider tolerance in pluralist societies requires a

wider egalitarianism. The key to success in these regimes of toleration may not be—or may not only be—the reiteration of hierarchy in each group, but also the reduction of hierarchy across the society as a whole.[3]

Gender

Questions about family arrangements, gender roles, and sexual behavior are among the most divisive in all contemporary societies. It is a mistake to think that the divisiveness is entirely new: polygamy, concubinage, ritual prostitution, the seclusion of women, circumcision, and homosexuality have been argued about for millennia. Cultures and religions have marked themselves off by their distinctive practices in these matters—and then have criticized the practices of the "others." But a virtually universal male domination set limits to what could be argued about (and who could join the argument). Today, widely accepted ideas about equality and human rights call those limits into question. Everything now is open to debate, and every culture and religion is subject to a new critical scrutiny. This sometimes makes for toleration but sometimes, obviously, for its opposite. The theoretical and practical line between the tolerable and the intolerable is most likely to be fought over and eventually drawn here, with reference to what I will call, summarily, questions of gender.

The great multinational empires commonly left these questions to their constituent communities. Gender was taken to be an inherently internal affair; it didn't, or it was not supposed to, involve any kind of communal interaction. Strange commercial customs were not tolerated in the common markets, but family law ("private" law) was left entirely to the traditional religious authorities or the (male) elders.

Customary practice was also in their hands; imperial officials were unlikely to intervene.

Consider the extraordinary reluctance with which the British finally, in 1829, banned the suttee (the self-immolation of a Hindu widow on her husband's funeral pyre) in their Indian states. For many years, the East India Company and then the British government tolerated the practice because of what a twentieth-century historian calls their "declared intention of respecting both Hindu and Muslim beliefs and allowing the free exercise of religious rights." Even Muslim rulers, who had, according to this same historian, no respect whatsoever for Hindu beliefs, made only sporadic and half-hearted efforts to suppress the practice.[4] Imperial toleration extends, then, as far as the suttee, which—given British accounts of what the practice actually involved—is pretty far.

It is at least conceivable that consociational arrangements might produce a similar toleration, if the power of the joined communities was in near balance and the leaders of one of them were strongly committed to this or that customary practice. A nation-state, however, where power is by definition unbalanced, would not tolerate customs like the suttee among a national or religious minority. Nor is toleration at that reach likely in an immigrant society, where each of the groups is a minority relative to all the others. The case of the Mormons in the United States suggests that deviant practices like polygamy won't be tolerated even when they are wholly internal, when they involve "only" domestic life. In these last two cases, the state grants equal citizenship to all its members—including Hindu widows and Mormon wives—and enforces a single law. There are no communal courts; the whole country is one jurisdiction within which state officials are bound to stop a suttee in progress in exactly

the same way that they are bound to stop a suicide attempt if they possibly can. And if the suttee is coercively "assisted," as in fact it often was, the officials have to treat the coercion as murder; there are no religious or cultural excuses.

That, at least, is what follows from the nation-state and immigrant society models as I have described them. But reality sometimes lags behind—as with another ritual practice involving women's bodies: genital mutilation or, more neutrally, clitoridectomy and infibulation. These two operations are commonly performed on infant girls or young women in a large number of African countries, and because no one has suggested humanitarian intervention to stop them, we can say that they are tolerated in international society (tolerated at the state level, but actively opposed by a number of organizations working in international civil society). The operations are also performed in African immigrant communities in Europe and North America. They have been specifically outlawed in Sweden, Switzerland, and Great Britain, though without any serious effort to enforce the ban. In France, the classic nation-state (which is now also, as we have seen, an immigrant society), some 23,000 girls were said to be "at risk" in the mid-1980s. How many of these were actually operated on is unclear. But there have been a number of highly publicized trials (under a general law against mutilation) of the women who perform the operations and of the mothers of the girls. The women have been convicted, and their sentences then suspended. In effect, the practice (as of the mid-1990s) is condemned publicly but tolerated in fact.[5]

The argument for toleration has to do with "respecting cultural diversity"—a diversity conceived, as in the standard nation-state model, to follow from the choices of stereotypical members of a cultural community. Thus a 1989 petition against criminalizing what the French call "excision": "Demanding a penal sentence for a custom that does not threaten the republican order and that there is no reason not to assign to the sphere of private choice, like circumcision, would demonstrate an intolerance that can only create more human drama than it claims to avoid, and that manifests a singularly narrow conception of democracy."[6] As with the suttee, it is important to get the description right: clitoridectomy and infibulation "are comparable . . . not to the removal of the foreskin but to the removal of the penis,"[7] and it is hard to imagine circumcision in that form being treated as a matter of private choice. In any case, the infant girls are not volunteers. And the French state, one would think, owes them the protection of its laws: some of them are citizens, and most of them will be the mothers of citizens. They are in any case residents of France and future participants in the social and economic life of the country; and although they may remain wholly confined within the immigrant community, they also (this is the advantage of living in France) may not. With regard to individuals like that, toleration surely should not extend to ritual mutilation, any more than it does to ritual suicide. Cultural diversity at that extreme is only protected against interference when boundaries are much more firmly drawn than they are or can be drawn in nation states or immigrant societies.[8]

In other sorts of cases, where the moral values of the larger community—the national majority or the coalition of minorities—are not so directly challenged, the excuse of religious or cultural difference (and "private choice") may be accepted, diversity respected, and nonstandard gender practices tolerated. Thus the case of narrowly constituted or sectarian minorities like the American Amish or the Hasidim, to whom state authorities are sometimes ready to offer (or

the courts to mediate) one or another compromise arrangement—the separation of the sexes in school buses and even in classrooms, for example.

But similar concessions won't so readily be offered to larger, more powerful (and more threatening) groups even in relatively minor cases—and the standing compromises can always be challenged by any sect or group member who claims her citizen rights. Imagine that an arrangement is worked out (as it surely should be) allowing Muslim girls in French public schools to wear their customary headdress.[9] This would be a compromise with the nation-state norm, one that would recognize the right of immigrant communities to a (modestly) multicultural public sphere. The laicist traditions of French education would continue to govern the school calendar and curriculum. Imagine now that a number of Muslim girls claim that they are being coerced by their families to wear the headdress and that the compromise arrangement facilitates this coercion. Then the compromise would have to be renegotiated. In the nation-state and the immigrant society, though not in the multinational empire, the right to be protected against coercion of this kind (as, more obviously, one would be protected against the far more severe coercion of clitoridectomy) would take precedence over the "family values" of the minority religion or culture.

These are matters of extraordinary sensitivity. The subordination of women—manifest in seclusion, bodily concealment, or actual mutilation—is not aimed solely at the enforcement of patriarchal property rights. It also has to do with cultural or religious reproduction, of which women are taken to be the most reliable agents. Historically, men have entered into the larger public life of armies, courts, assemblies, and markets; they are always potential agents of novelty and assimilation. Just as national culture is better

preserved in rural than in urban settings, so it is better preserved in private or domestic than in public settings—which is to say, in the standard cases, among women rather than among men. Tradition is transmitted in the lullabies that mothers sing, the prayers they whisper, the clothing they make, the food they cook, and the domestic rites and customs that they teach. Once women enter the public sphere, how will this transmission be effected? It is because education is the first point of entry that questions like the wearing of traditional headdress in public schools are so fiercely contested.

This is the form the argument takes when a traditional culture or religion encounters the nation-state or the immigrant society. "You are committed to tolerating our community and its practices," the traditionalists say. "Given that commitment, you cannot deny us control over our children (and particularly our female children)—else you are not in fact tolerating us." Toleration implies a right to communal reproduction. But this right, if it exists, comes into conflict with the rights of individual citizens—which were once confined to men and were therefore not so dangerous, but are now extended to women. It seems inevitable that individual rights will win out in the long run, for equal citizenship is the basic norm of both the nation-state and the immigrant society. Communal reproduction will then be less certain or, at least, it will be realized through processes that yield less uniform results. Traditionalists will have to learn a toleration of their own—for different versions of their own culture or religion. But before that lesson is learned, we can expect a long series of "fundamentalist" reactions that are focused most often on questions of gender.

The abortion wars in the United States today suggest the character of this reactionary politics. From the funda-

mentalist side, the moral issue is whether society will tolerate the murder of infants in the womb. But the political issue, for both sides, has a different focus: who will control the sites of reproduction? The womb is only the first of these; home and school come next and are already, as we have seen, in dispute. What cultural differences will remain to be tolerated once these disputes have been resolved, as they eventually will be, in favor of female autonomy and gender equality? If the traditionalists are right, nothing will remain. But they are unlikely to be right. Gender equality will take different forms in different times and places, and even in the same time and place among different groups of people, and some of these forms will turn out to be consistent with cultural difference. It may even happen that men will play a larger role in sustaining and reproducing the cultures they claim to value.

Religion

Most people in the United States, in the West generally, believe that religious toleration is easy. They read about religious wars near to home (in Ireland and Bosnia) or far away (in the Middle East or Southeast Asia) with incomprehension. Religion in those places must be contaminated by ethnicity or nationalism, or it must take some extreme, fanatical, and therefore (as we understand things) unusual form. For haven't we proved that freedom of worship, voluntary association, and political neutrality work together to reduce the stakes of religious difference? Don't these tenets of American pluralism encourage mutual forbearance and make for a happy coexistence? We allow individuals to believe what they want to believe, to join freely with fellow believers, to attend the church of their choice—or to disbelieve what they want to disbelieve, to stay away from the

church of their choice, and so on. What more could anyone want? Isn't this the model of a toleration regime?

In fact, of course, there are other actual or possible regimes: the millet system was specifically designed for religious communities, and consociations commonly bring together different religious or ethnic groups. But the toleration of individual believers, as this was first worked out in England in the seventeenth century and then carried across the Atlantic, is the dominant model today. And so it is necessary to look closely at some of its complications. I want to consider two issues of historical and contemporary importance: first, the persistence at the margins of modern nation-states and immigrant societies of religious groups that demand recognition for the group itself rather than for its individual members, and second, the persistence of demands for "religious" tolerance and intolerance that extend beyond association and worship to a great variety of other social practices.

One reason that toleration works so easily in countries like the United States is that the churches and congregations that individuals form, whatever their theological disagreements, are, mostly, very much like one another. Seventeenth-century toleration was first of all a mutual accommodation of Protestants. And in the United States, after an early effort to establish a "holy commonwealth" in Massachusetts, the expanding toleration regime tended to protestantize the groups that it included. American Catholics and Jews gradually came to look less and less like Catholics and Jews in other countries: communal control weakened; clerics spoke with less authority; individuals asserted their religious independence, drifted away from the community, and intermarried; fissiparous tendencies well known from the first days of the Reformation became a general feature of American reli-

gious life. Toleration accommodated difference, but it also produced among the different groups a pattern of accommodation to the Protestant model that made coexistence easier than it might have been.

Some groups, however, resisted—Protestant sects determined to escape the "dissidence of dissent" (the ground, so to speak, in which they had originally taken root) and orthodox factions within the traditional religious communities. I will continue to refer to the examples of each mentioned earlier: the American Amish and the Hasidim. The toleration regime accommodated these groups too, though only at the margins. It permitted them their isolation, and it compromised with them on critical questions like public schooling. The Amish, for example, were for a long time permitted to educate their children at home; when they were finally required, first by the state of Pennsylvania and then by the Supreme Court (with reference to a Wisconsin case), to send the children to public schools, they were allowed to withdraw them at an earlier age than that stipulated in the law.[10] In principle, what was tolerated was a series of individual choices, made in successive generations, to join the Amish congregations and to worship in the Amish manner. In practice, it was the Amish community as a whole and its coercive control of its own children (which was only partly mitigated by public schooling) that was, and is, the real object of toleration. For the sake of (this kind of) toleration, we allow Amish children to receive less of an education in citizenship than we require of American children generally. The arrangement is justified in part by the marginality of the Amish, and in part by their embrace of marginality: their deep commitment not to live anywhere except on the margins of American society and not to seek any influence beyond them. Other similarly

marginal religious sects have maintained a similar control over their children largely unchallenged by the liberal state.

The most interesting feature of early American toleration was the exemption from military service of the members of certain Protestant sects well known for their pacifist convictions.[11] Today, conscientious objection is an individual right, though the sign of conscientiousness that the political authorities are most ready to recognize is membership in those same sects. In its origins, however, objection was effectively a group right. Indeed, claims of conscience over a wide range of social issues—the refusal of oaths, of jury service, of public schooling, of taxes; the demand for polygamous marriage, animal sacrifice, ritual drug use, and so on—gain whatever legitimacy they have, even today, because they are religious practices, features of a collective way of life. These practices would have no legitimacy at all if they were put forward on a purely individual basis, even if the individuals insisted that their understanding of what they ought to do, or not to do, was a co-knowledge (con-science) shared between each of them and his or her God.

Minority religious practices and prohibitions, beyond association and worship, are tolerated or not depending on their visibility or notoriety and the degree of outrage they arouse in the majority. A great variety of practical accommodations are available in both nation-states and immigrant societies. Men and women who tell the authorities that their religion requires them to do this or that may well be permitted to do it, even if no one else is, especially if they do it quietly. And communal leaders who tell the authorities that their coercive power is necessary to the survival of the community may well be permitted to exercise that power, subject to certain liberal constraints. But pressure is steady, if

only intermittently forceful, toward the individualist model: the community conceived as a free assembly—entrances and exits open, with little claim and little capacity to shape the everyday life of the participants.

At the same time, this regime of toleration is under pressure in the contemporary United States from groups within the (Christian) majority who have no quarrel with the freedom of assembly or worship but fear the loss of social control. They are prepared to tolerate minority religions (they are advocates, therefore, of religious liberty), but they have no tolerance for personal liberty outside the house of worship. If sectarian communities aim to control the behavior of their own people, the more extreme members of religious majorities aim to control everyone's behavior—in the name of a supposedly common (Judeo-Christian, say) tradition, of "family values," or of their own certainties about what is right and wrong. This is surely an example of religious intolerance. It is a sign of the partial success of the regime of toleration, however, that antagonism is not directed against particular minority religions but rather against the ambience of freedom that the regime as a whole creates.

No doubt toleration flourishes in this ambience—and even reaches what I have described as its most intensive form—but religious toleration, at least, doesn't depend upon it. Extensive restrictions on personal freedom such as a ban on abortion, the censorship of books and magazines (or of texts in cyberspace), discrimination against homosexuals, the exclusion of women from certain occupations, and so on, even if they are the products of religious intolerance, are entirely compatible with religious toleration—that is, with the existence of many different churches and congregations whose members worship freely in many different ways. The contradiction is not between toleration and restriction; it lies

deep within the idea of religious toleration itself, because virtually all the tolerated religions aim to restrict individual freedom, which is, for liberals at least, the foundation of the idea. Most religions are organized to control behavior. When we require them to give up this aim, or to give up the means necessary to its achievement, we are requiring a transformation whose end product we cannot yet describe.

Entirely free religious communities already exist, of course, but they don't seem satisfying to all, perhaps not even to most, believers. Hence the recurrence of sectarian and cultic religiosity and of fundamentalist theologies, which challenge the prevailing regime of toleration. Assuming that the challenges are overcome (the same assumption that I have made in previous sections), what then? What will be the staying power and organizational strength of a purely voluntary faith?

Education

Schools have already figured significantly in this essay—most particularly in the discussion of gender and cultural reproduction. But there is an important issue that I must address here (and again in the section on civil religion), which has to do with the reproduction of the regime of toleration itself. Doesn't the regime have to teach all of its children, whatever their group memberships, the value of its own constitutional arrangements and the virtues of its founders, heroes, and current leaders? And won't that teaching, which is more or less unitary in character, interfere with or at least compete with the socialization of children into the various cultural communities? The answer, of course, is affirmative in both cases. All domestic regimes have to teach their own values and virtues, and this teaching is certainly competitive

with whatever else children are taught by their parents or in their communities. But the competition is or can be a useful lesson in (the difficulties of) mutual toleration. State teachers must tolerate, say, religious instruction outside of their schools, and the teachers of religion must tolerate state organized instruction in civics, political history, the natural sciences, and other secular subjects. The children presumably learn something about how toleration works in practice and —when creationists, for example, challenge state instruction in biology—something also about its inevitable strains.

Multinational empires make the most minimal demands on the educational process. Their political history, which consists mostly of wars of conquest, is unlikely to inspire feelings of loyalty in the conquered peoples, and so it is best left out of the official curriculum (it is more likely to figure in communal stories of heroism in defeat). Loyalty to the emperor, portrayed as emperor of all his peoples, is more often taught. The emperor, rather than the empire, is the focus of official education, for the latter often has a clear national character whereas the individual leaders can at least pretend to rise above their national origin. Sometimes, indeed, they aim at radical transcendence, deification, which frees them from any particularist identity. But it is nonetheless an example of religious intolerance when the deified emperor demands to be worshipped by his subjects—like those Roman rulers who tried to bring statues of themselves into the temple in Jerusalem. The school is a better venue for the imperial image, which can look benignly down upon children studying anything at all, in any language, under any local or communal auspices.

Consociations can also teach a minimalist curriculum, one that is focused on an often sanitized history of communal coexistence and cooperation and on the institutions

through which these are realized. The longer the coexistence has lasted, the more likely it is that the common political identity will have taken on cultural content of its own—as Swiss identity clearly has done—and will have become fully competitive with the identities of the different communities. Still, what is taught, in principle at least, is a political history in which these communities have a recognized and equal place.

The case is very different, obviously, in nation-states with national minorities, where one community is privileged over all others. This kind of regime is far more centralized than are empires and consociations, and so it has a greater need (particularly if it is democratically organized) for citizens—men and women who are loyal, engaged, competent, and familiar with the style, as it were, of the dominant nation. State schools will aim to produce citizens of this kind. Thus Arabs in France, for example, will be taught to be loyal to the French state, engaged in French politics, competent in the practices and expressive modes of French political culture, and knowledgeable about French political history and institutional structures. By and large, Arab parents and children seem to accept these educational aims; they have sought, as we have seen, to assert their Arab or Muslim commitment only through the symbolism of dress, not to alter the curriculum. They are, or they seem to be, content to sustain their own culture in nonstate schools, in religious settings, and at home. But French citizenship is a weighty matter, with resonance far beyond the narrowly political sphere. Its integrative and assimilative power has been demonstrated over many years and must appear to many parents, if not to their children, as a cultural threat. The more countries like France become (like) immigrant societies, the more this threat will be resisted.

What form that resistance is likely to take can be seen in the curricular wars of an immigrant society like the United States. Here children are taught that they are individual citizens of a pluralist and tolerant society—where what is tolerated is their own choice of cultural membership and identity. Most of them, of course, are already identified, because of the "choices" of their parents or, as in the case of racial identities, because of their location in a social system of differentiation. But they are, as Americans, entitled to make further choices and required to tolerate the existing identities and the further choices of their fellows. This freedom and this toleration constitute what we can call American liberalism.

The schools teach children from all of America's ethnic, religious, and racial groups to be liberal in this sense, and so to be Americans—much as children in French schools are taught to be republican and therefore French. But American liberalism is culturally neutral in a way that French republicanism cannot be. This difference seems to fit the two political doctrines: republicanism, as Rousseau taught, requires a strong cultural base to sustain high levels of participation among the citizens; liberalism, which is less demanding, can allow more room for private life and cultural diversity. But such differences can easily be exaggerated.[12] Liberalism is also a substantive political culture that has its origins, at least, in Protestant and English history. The recognition that American schools in fact reflect this history, and can hardly be neutral with regard to it, has led some non-Protestant and non-English groups to call for a multicultural education—which presumably requires not the subtraction of the liberal story from the curriculum but the addition of other stories.

It is commonly and rightly said that the point of multiculturalism is to teach children about each other's culture, to bring the pluralism of the immigrant society into its classrooms. Whereas the earlier version of neutrality, which was conceived or misconceived as cultural avoidance, aimed to make all the children into Americans simply (which is to say as much like English Protestants as possible), multiculturalism aims to recognize them as the hyphenated Americans they are and to lead them to understand and admire their own diversity. There is no reason to think that this understanding or admiration stands in any tension with the requirements of liberal citizenship—though it is important to stress again that liberal citizenship is more relaxed than that of a republican nation-state.

But multiculturalism is also, sometimes, a program of a different sort, one aimed at using the state schools to strengthen threatened or devalued identities. The point isn't to teach other children what it means to be different in a certain way, but to teach children who are supposed to be different how to be different in the right way. Hence the program is illiberal, at least in the sense that it reinforces established or presumed identities and has nothing to do with mutuality or individual choice. It probably also entails some form of educational separation, as in the theory and practice of Afrocentrism, which is a way of providing for black children in the state schools what the Church provides for Catholic children in private schools. Now pluralism exists only in the system as a whole, not in the experience of each child, and the state must step in to compel the various schools to teach, whatever else they teach, the values of American liberalism. The Catholic example suggests that an immigrant society can make do with this arrangement, at least as long as the bulk of its schoolchildren are in mixed classrooms. Whether liberal politics could be sustained if all children received some version (their "own" version) of a Catholic parochial or Afrocentric education is more doubt-

ful. Success would then depend on the effects of education outside the school: the everyday experience of mass communication, work, and political activity.

Civil Religion

Think of what is taught in state schools about the values and virtues of the state itself as the secular revelation of a "civil religion" (the term is Rousseau's).[13] Except in the case of the deified emperor, this revelation is religious mostly by analogy, but the analogy is worth pursuing. For here, as the school example makes clear, is a "religion" that can't be separated from the state: it is the very creed of the state, crucial to its reproduction and stability over time. Civil religion consists of the full set of political doctrines, historical narratives, exemplary figures, celebratory occasions, and memorial rituals through which the state impresses itself on the minds of its members, especially its youngest or newest members. How can there be more than one such set for each state? Surely civil religions can tolerate each other only in international society, not within a single domestic regime.

In fact, however, civil religion often makes for intolerance in international society by encouraging parochial pride about life on this side of the border and suspicion or anxiety about life on the other side. Its domestic effects, by contrast, can be benign, because it provides everyone (on this side of the border) with a common basic identity and so makes subsequent differentiation less threatening. Certainly civil religion, like state education, is sometimes competitive with group membership: thus the case of French republicans and French Catholics in the nineteenth century—or of republicans and Muslims today. But because civil religions commonly have no theology, they can also be accommodating of difference, even or especially of religious difference. Despite the specific historical conflict of the revolutionary years, then, there is no reason why a believing Catholic cannot also be a committed republican.

Toleration is most likely to work well when the civil religion is least like a . . . religion. Had Robespierre, for example, succeeded in binding republican politics to a fully elaborated deism, he might well have created a permanent barrier between republicans and Catholics (and Muslims, and Jews). But his failure is emblematic: political creeds take on the baggage of genuine religious belief at their peril. One might say the same thing about the baggage of genuine antireligious belief. Militant atheism made the communist regimes of Eastern Europe as intolerant as any other orthodoxy would have done—and politically weak as a result: they were unable to incorporate large numbers of their own citizens. Most civil religions wisely make do with a vague, unelaborated, latitudinarian religiosity, one that is more a matter of stories and holidays than of clear or firm beliefs.

Of course, it may be just this latitudinarianism that orthodox religious groups object to, fearing that it will make their children tolerant of religious error or secular disbelief. It is hard to know how to respond to anxieties of that sort; one hopes that they are justified and that the public schools and the stories and holidays of the civil religion will have exactly the effects that orthodox parents fear. Parents are free to pull their children out of the public schools and to escape the civil religion through one or another form of sectarian isolation. But it makes no sense to argue that respect for diversity bars an immigrant society like the United States from teaching respect for diversity. And it is certainly a legitimate form of such a liberal education to tell stories about the history of diversity and to celebrate its great occasions.[14]

In nation-states, the stories and celebrations will be of a different sort: they will come out of, and teach the value of, the historical experience of the majority nation. So the civil religion makes further differentiation possible within the majority—along religious, regional, and class lines—but provides no bridge to minority groups. Instead, it sets the standard for individual assimilation: it suggests, for example, that to become French you have to be able to imagine that your ancestors stormed the Bastille or, at least, that they would have done so had they been in Paris at the right time. But a national minority with a civil religion of its own can still be tolerated, so long as the rites are celebrated privately. And its members can become citizens, can learn the ways of, say, French political culture, without any imaginative investment in Frenchness.

The common identity fostered by a civil religion is especially important in immigrant societies where identities are otherwise so diverse. In multinational empires, obviously, identities are even more diverse, but there, beyond the unifying figure of the emperor and the common allegiance he claims, commonality is less important. Contemporary immigrant societies are also democratic states, and they are dependent for their political health on some degree, at least, of commitment and activism among their citizens. But if the local civil religion is to enhance and celebrate these qualities, it must accommodate not only other religions but also other civil religions. Its most enthusiastic protagonists, of course, will want to replace the others: that was the point, for example, of the Americanization campaigns of the early twentieth century. And perhaps, indeed, that will be the long-term effect of the American experience. Perhaps every immigrant society is a nation-state in the making, and civil religion is one of the instruments of this transformation.

Nonetheless, a campaign on its behalf is an act of intolerance, an act likely to provoke resistance and to multiply divisions among (and also within) the different groups.

It turns out, in any case, that a civil religion like Americanism can live fairly comfortably with what might be called alternative civil religious practices among its own participants. The stories and celebrations that go along with, for example, Thanksgiving, Memorial Day, or the Fourth of July can coexist in the common life of Irish-Americans, African-Americans, or Jewish-Americans with very different stories and celebrations. Difference here is not contradiction. Beliefs come into opposition far more readily than stories do, and one celebration doesn't deny, cancel, or refute another. Indeed, it is easier to watch the private communal or familial celebrations of our fellow citizens if we know that they will also be celebrating publicly with us on some other occasion. So civil religion facilitates the toleration of partial differences—or it encourages us to think of difference as only partial. We are Americans but also something else, and safe as something else insofar as we are Americans.

No doubt there are, or there might be, minority civil religions, ideologically or theologically elaborated, that contradict American values, but these have not been much in evidence in American public life. Similarly, it isn't difficult to imagine a more intolerant Americanism, one, for example, defined in Christian terms; connected exclusively, even racially, to its European origins; or given some narrow political content. Americanisms of this sort have existed in the past (hence the notion of "un-American activities" developed by the anticommunist right in the 1930s) and continue to exist, but none constitutes the dominant version right now. It isn't only in principle but also in reality that American society is a collection of individuals with multiple,

partial identities. Of course, religions have often involved denials of such realities, and civil religions can attempt a similar denial. It may even be true that the pattern of difference in the United States and in other immigrant societies is unstable and impermanent. Even so, a Kulturkampf against difference is not the best response to this condition. Civil religion is more likely to succeed by accommodating than by opposing the multiple identities of the men and women it aims to engage. Its object, after all, is not full-scale conversion but only political socialization.

Tolerating the Intolerant

Should we tolerate the intolerant? This question is often described as the central and most difficult issue in the theory of toleration. But that can't be right, because most of the groups that are tolerated in all four domestic regimes are in fact intolerant. There are significant "others" about whom they are neither enthusiastic nor curious, whose rights they don't recognize—to whose existence, indeed, they are neither indifferent nor resigned. In multinational empires, the different "nations" are perhaps temporarily resigned; they accommodate themselves to coexistence under imperial rule. But were they to rule themselves, they would have no reason for resignation, and some of them certainly would aim at ending the old coexistence in one way or another. That might be a good reason for denying them political power, but it is no reason at all for refusing to tolerate them in the empire. The case is the same in consociations, where the whole point of the constitutional arrangement is to restrain the likely intolerance of the associated communities.

Similarly, minorities in nation-states and immigrant societies are and ought to be tolerated even if it is known that

their compatriots or fellow believers in power in other countries are brutally intolerant. These same minorities cannot practice intolerance here (in France, say, or in America), that is, they cannot harass their neighbors or persecute or repress deviant or heretical individuals in their midst. But they are free to excommunicate or ostracize deviants and heretics, and they are equally free to believe and say that such people will be damned forever or denied a place in the world to come—or that any other group of their fellow citizens are living a life that God rejects or that is utterly incompatible with human flourishing. Indeed, many of the Protestant sectarians for whom the modern regime of toleration was first designed, and who made it work, believed and said just such things.

The point of separating church and state in the modern regimes is to deny political power to all religious authorities, on the realistic assumption that all of them are at least potentially intolerant. Given the effectiveness of the denial, they may learn tolerance; more likely, they will learn to live as if they possessed this virtue. Many more ordinary believers obviously do possess it, especially in immigrant societies, where daily encounters with both internal and external "others" are unavoidable. But these people too need separation, and they are likely to support it politically as a way of protecting themselves, and everyone else, against the possible fanaticism of their fellow believers. The same possibility of fanaticism also exists among ethnic activists and militants (in immigrant societies), and so ethnicity too has to be separated from the state, for exactly the same reasons.

Democracy requires yet one more separation, one that is not well understood: that of politics itself from the state. Political parties compete for power and struggle to enact a program that is, let's say, shaped by an ideology. But the winning party, though it can turn its ideology into a set of laws,

cannot turn it into the official creed of the civil religion; it cannot make the day of its ascension to power into a national holiday, insist that party history be a required course in the public schools, or use state power to ban the publications or the assemblies of other parties.[15] That is what happens in totalitarian regimes, and it is exactly analogous to the political establishment of a single monolithic church. Religions that hope for establishment and parties that dream of total control can be tolerated both in liberal democratic nation-states and in immigrant societies, and they commonly are. But (as I suggested at the beginning of this essay) they can also be barred from seizing state power, and even from competing for it.[16] What separation means in their case is that they are confined to civil society: they can preach and write and meet; they are permitted only a sectarian existence.