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In search of the social: Rethinking toleration, remembering hospitality

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Abstract: This article puts forward a historical and philosophical critique of the concept of toleration that questions it as an ultimate achievement and instead interrogates its limitations and seeks ways in which it may point to its own supersession in more positive and durable social bonds. The violence which toleration historically aimed at containing remains a constant in present-day recourse to its relevancy, while the negative valuations of human interrelations that underlie such assessments are passed over. Reflections on genocide through the thought of Levinas prove the primal nature of the law of hospitality, while, following Aristotle, friendship, rather than marriage, safeguards society from violent conflict.

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That a people, as a people “should accept those who come and settle among them—even though they are foreigners”, would be the proof [gage] of a popular and public commitment [engagement], a political *res publica*, that cannot be reduced to a sort of “tolerance”, unless this tolerance requires the affirmation of a “love” without measure.¹

Is the philosophical discourse of tolerance and the practice of toleration sufficient to prevent the outbreak of violence and to foster peaceful co-existence between people sharing a community, city or state? In this essay, I will argue that tolerance only truly succeeds when it is superseded by the philosophy of ethical cosmopolitanism and the practices of hospitality and friendship. A critical reading of the philosophical discourse of tolerance will demonstrate its limitations but also its incipient

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

This article puts forward a historical and philosophical critique of toleration that questions it as an ultimate achievement. Instead it interrogates its limitations and seeks ways in which it may point to its own supersession in more positive and durable social bonds. The violence which toleration aims at containing continues to be a cause for concern. Reflections on extremes of violence, such as genocide, through the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, reinstate the primal nature of the law of hospitality, while a comparative discussion of Jacques Derrida and Simone Weil bring out different aspects of the ethical dimension of hospitality. Finally, I suggest that interpersonal friendship, rather than marriage, is a more effective safeguard from violent conflict in pluralistic societies and a next step in the evolution of the discussion from toleration to hospitality and cosmopolitanism.

gestures of affiliation with cosmopolitanism and friendship. In an examination of ethical philosophies of hospitality, the dimension of reciprocity will be defined beyond the limits of materialistic economic thought, in order to demonstrate how it operates in favour of an enduring sociality based on cosmopolitan ethics and friendship.

Even a cursory consideration of more or less publicized recent events and incidents in Europe and, indeed, all countries whose official cultural policies promote the theory and practice of tolerance, will reaffirm the need for a ceaseless and vigilant educational, political and legal activity to ensure its survival. Theoretical engagement is inseparable from this shared, ecumenical task to keep alive a viable and relevant practice of toleration.² To this purpose, the reflections gathered in this essay, developed from both scholarship and empirical observation for over more than two decades in different educational and national contexts, revisit the historical philosophical discourse on tolerance in order to renew it by forging connecting bridges with historically more recent discourses on hospitality and critical ethical cosmopolitanism. The argument to which the paper ultimately leads is the political and ethical necessity of the Aristotelian, non-economic concept of friendship (approximating the most ideal or perfect kind in Aristotle's analysis) as the only interpersonal and civic bond that could successfully resist the fall into identity-based violence, civil strife and genocide. It is not an essay addressed exclusively to any single group of theoreticians of tolerance, hospitality, cosmopolitanism, virtue ethics or genocide, but it is instead a comparative essay that aims at a general synthesis and the sketching of a larger picture with consequently broader strokes.

Objections may arise that the philosophical and theological arguments for tolerance and pleas for toleration have been made a hundredfold from the time of John Locke until today. What need then to rehearse or re-investigate this discourse today? Whether they originated in philosophical, religious, social or political discourse, the arguments and pleas for tolerance should perhaps be considered as successfully ingrained in the individual psyche and embedded as a constant in European discourse at the state and supra-state level. However, this is not to say that actual behaviours and practices conform to the principle of tolerance in all cases nor that toleration is accepted by all citizens. In addition, constant challenges thrown up by a ceaseless stream of social, economic and political events test individuals, institutions and governments as to their understanding of, and adherence to, the ethics of toleration. Today, from Europe's most multicultural societies, thousands brought up on the public discourse of toleration have fled to join an army committed to the murder of individuals for their ethnic, state or religious identity, which they regularly record to send back to their former European homelands, as well as the rest of the world. At the same time, thousands more perish in the Mediterranean in their attempt to flee from intolerant or totalitarian regimes, terrorism or violent civil conflict in Africa and Asia with the firm belief that Europe will offer them the necessary conditions for a life of safety from persecution and of equal opportunities. Against this belief in "the European dream", governments in Europe and their voters are anxious to control and manage this ever-rising human tide of refugees, asylum seekers and "economic migrants". Perhaps no greater moment of the failure of inculcating the belief and principle of tolerance for human society has been witnessed on such an international level in recent European history. My contention is that toleration had already long failed to work as an active ethical principle in European multicultural societies; not just in a minority of cases, the ones whose violence confronts us, but in thousands of other lives where it is not made evident to the public. Its failure has at least partly to do with the limitations of the historical discourse of tolerance itself, which requires supplementation by ethical discourses of hospitality, cosmopolitanism and friendship, if a profound and durable social ethics is to be established.

One of the problems of toleration has always been how much to tolerate; how one decides what should be deemed as intolerable. Here is how one writer, from the geographical heart of the European continent, put it in straightforward messianic terms to stress the urgency for tolerance to a wide readership:

The only hope for salvation of the world in our time is tolerance. [...] Tolerance must never mean tolerance of intolerance, tolerance of those who are prepared to limit the freedom or

even the right of life, of anyone else, though it be justified by the most noble of ends. (Klima, 1994, pp. 26–27)

Ivan Klima, a writer who lived through the fates of empire, nationhood, conquest and two versions of totalitarianism suffered by his Czech homeland, thus restates for the (long) record why tolerance still and always will matter, but also how we have continuously failed to live up to the implications of this ideal. An “ideal” that must become a rule because:

Over and over again, we watch helplessly as multitudes march towards a fate prepared for them by some new mutation of fanaticism, one that we are, for mostly selfish reasons, prepared to tolerate, or at least publicly declare our helplessness to do anything about. Over and over again, we miss the moment when it might have been possible to end the violence without a great deal of bloodshed. Experience warns me that if we don't learn from catastrophes and if we don't accept these simple principles, the moment when we might have done something to decide the fate of mankind will pass us by. (Klima, 1994, p. 27)

Time and again this moment was lost, and lost in full consciousness of those with the authority and power to stop the impending human catastrophes. Writing from the perspective of Europe or the USA, the complicity of this feigned “helplessness”, ineluctably intertwined with the very real interests of empires, led to the weight of genocides committed in the “non-European” and therefore “not our fault/responsibility” genocides in Africa, the Ottoman Empire/Turkey and then, the European “heartland” itself. Then it was pushed outward again, to the “periphery”: the USSR, the Balkans and so on back to the old places of neo- and post-colonial struggles.³ The full historical and philosophical appreciation of this world-wide *and* European problem of toleration of the intolerable has yet to emerge into the mainframe of official knowledge. Slumbering within this monstrous history lies the hope of Pandora's box, awaiting a resurrection of the possibility of progress away from the uncanny yet all too familiar outbreak of genocidal violence.

1. Toleration and its limitations

Politicians from all sections of the ideological spectrum as well as citizens worry about the rise of Neo-Nazi and xenophobic nationalist parties in Europe. Not without cause; if anything, belatedly. There is a call to deal with all present and imminent dangers: humanitarian crises, lack of adequate policies and provisions for the integration of both legal and illegal forms of immigration. To take one example, apart from individual attacks on foreign nationals, rioting is always a potential occurrence. Lord Scarman, who wrote the report on the Brixton riots in London, the weekend of April 10–12 1981 (that had been recently bombed by a Neo-Nazi terrorist group), in his 1983 Morrell Memorial Address entitled “Toleration and the Law”, makes the following critique of the principle of toleration in English law:

Toleration is, and has been for a hundred years or more, part and parcel of the English way of life. But toleration in a legal sense has only a negative content: it is at best a negative virtue. If you were to ask the ordinary man, “What is toleration?” I think he would reply, “Live and let live”. Those words are in fact captured in one of the basic mottos of the English common law ... “So use your own that you do not harm another” (Scarman, 1987, p. 49, cited in Mendus, 1989, p. 5).

In another context which has recently regained pertinence, that of allegedly blasphemous publications, the remark made by Lord Scarman in the 1977 trial of the editor of *Gay News*, Denis Lemon, accused of publishing a poem offensive to Christians, was that:

In an increasingly plural society [...] it is necessary not only to respect the differing religious beliefs, feelings and practices of all but also to protect them from scurrility, vilification, ridicule and contempt ... My criticism of the common law offence of blasphemy is not that it exists but that it is not sufficiently comprehensive.⁴

Clearly, the thorny issue of toleration with respect to freedom of expression is far from resolved today; instead it has paradoxically evolved as a complex, international problem in which incommensurable

ideologies are at war. However deeply offended, Mary Whitehouse, who brought the charge against this publication, resorted to legal action, not lethal violence, in order to redress the offence to her religious beliefs and identity. Herein lies the problem in part: certain beliefs, especially of a religious nature, found a theocratic concept of identity. Offences against these beliefs are taken to be a wrong directly affecting the divine, for which the individual believer, as agent, must take action against the perceived wrong-doer or blasphemer. In a society bound by the rule of law, clearly any offences should be brought before the court to decide. To override or not put one's trust in the law seems to be tantamount to an action against the state even more so than against any individual citizen; however, it also implies that the aggressor did not feel herself/himself to be part of that state and that their identity was not or could not be adequately represented in that political entity.

The practice of toleration is being called on to tolerate even the perceived intolerant citizens, in the sense of abstaining from violence, since only by such a practice can one prevent the outbreak of a generalized violence. Today racism has expanded its pool so that now it is directed against any stranger/foreigner—whether European or not, light or dark-skinned, poor migrant and asylum-seeker or well-educated middle-class professional. It is also often reciprocal. This racism has been allowed to grow, either by neglect and lack of well-thought out policies, or actively encouraged the media, those in positions of authority and parties seeking to exploit crises and gain power among the electorate. Therefore, rethinking what tolerance means and entails in contemporary European countries struggling to cope with shifting populations and opinions, and facing even greater challenges than before, is imperative for all.

Susan Mendus further qualifies the historical principle of tolerance in law by pointing out that religious tolerance in Britain dates from “the middle of the nineteenth century” and “rests upon a concept of toleration which construes it as involving only the absence of legal impediment or obstruction [...] to tolerate was to permit by law, but not to endorse or encourage members of dissenting groups, much less to provide them with equal opportunities” (Mendus, 1989, p. 7). Mendus makes the distinction that to allow the different practices or beliefs of others is “to favour liberty”, but “not to display tolerance” (Mendus, 1989, p. 8).

Tolerance is usually referred to in its ordinary usage as a disabling concept: it disables the outbreak of aggression. It also disables the move from a comparative recognition of difference to a competitive value judgement, in which the different is very often inferior and/or dangerous, perhaps especially when it renders one's own values relative and maybe even not superlative in an encounter with others. The different, the other, remains just that in a tolerant liberal framework: as such it remains in a separate, self-enclosed space, too, safe from attack, but also from becoming too much of an influence. Tolerance, whether in the seventeenth century or now, for those of other religions, sexual preferences, skin colour, language or whatever differences, seems to have often consisted in “leaving others alone”: at best this grants them a free space to exist, at worst it constitutes their isolation in that separate space.

Theorists tend to take two different views on the concept of tolerance: either it should be considered one concept, with a “positive” and “negative” aspect, or one should speak of two types of tolerance and therefore two concepts. The negative aspect or concept of tolerance refers to a “basic” or non-violent attitude or practice, while the positive aspect or concept refers to an “advanced” or interactive/dialogic attitude or practice. Following Peter P. Nicholson, my position is that there are two aspects to the concept of tolerance, not two concepts (Nicholson, 1985). Nicholson argues that “toleration, understood as a moral ideal, has both a negative side [...] and a positive side [...] and that its full moral force is grasped only when the two sides are taken together” (Horton & Mendus, 1985, p. 159).

2. Tolerance, religion, reason: from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century

If tolerance in its basic form seems a negative or limited principle for civil society, I will argue that toleration becomes completely positive only when it exceeds itself. This, after all, is already posited by Locke himself:

No private person has any right in any manner to prejudice another person in his civil enjoyments, because he is of another church or religion. No violence nor injury is to be offered him, whether he be Christian or pagan. *Nay, we must not content ourselves with the narrow measures of bare justice: charity, bounty and liberality must be added to it.* This the Gospel enjoins, this reason directs, and this that natural fellowship we are borne into requires of us (my emphasis).⁵

If toleration means merely the prevention of violence or harm against those whose difference is tolerated and that is considered justice enough, even an “ideal” manner of coexistence, its inadequacy makes it liable to turn into a negative, disabling concept, one which may lead people to believe that there is an innate, irrevocable and irredeemable tendency in individuals and groups towards aggressive rejection and violence in any “untutored” encounter with the O/other, with difference. Essentially, it returns us to the acceptance of a Hobbesian view of human society in the state of nature. Apart from the dubious psychological and anthropological premises of the Hobbesian hypothesis, this cannot be a productive standpoint for a lasting peaceful coexistence as it is essentially pessimistic. From Locke and Shaftesbury to Levinas, and from philosophy to neuroscience, there are studies which maintain, to the contrary, that human beings’ minds are oriented towards sociality through tendencies towards sympathy, empathy and cooperation—despite a minority of exceptions and no matter how much harm those lacking these tendencies can and have produced (see, for instance, Keltner, 2009).

How may we reflect on the commonly held contemporary understanding of tolerance and intolerance and how do they relate to the historical aims of the European Enlightenment championing of toleration? For thinkers like John Locke and Voltaire, tolerance was indispensable to enlightenment. If the true Christian, as Locke argues, could never justify violence against those of other religions and must therefore be tolerant, for Voltaire, tolerance becomes “l’apanage de la raison”, the principle of philosophy itself and what brings philosophy and religion together (Cassirer, 1951, p. 169, Koelln & Pettegrove, trans. 1955). Tolerance in both these enlightenment thinkers has to do with an end to religious persecution whether amongst Christians or between Christians and non-Christians. This was the most urgent historical context for the admonition and argumentation of tolerance from either a religious or philosophical standpoint. Within the historical context of the enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, tolerance as a concept denotes the championing of freedom of faith and conscience, the freedom to hold and profess whatever religious or other beliefs without suffering persecution by the king, church or civil authorities or other groups within a nation-state.

Thus tolerance is an enabling concept, it is a condition enabling the freedom of the individual. It is also linked to philosophical scepticism since otherwise, to believe that only one’s own beliefs are true and disallow on that basis all other differing opinions, reveals lack of understanding of the limits and limitations of human knowledge. It is the impossibility of humans establishing with certainty the truth of any metaphysical belief that wins the argument for tolerance, according to Pierre Bayle’s *Commentaire philosophique sur ces paroles de Jésus Christ «Contrains-les d’entrer»* [1686]. Furthermore, there is a relativistic argument behind religious tolerance that can be extended to all sorts of tolerance of conflicting beliefs. As Locke says in the 1692 “Letter on Tolerance”, for everyone, one’s own faith is orthodox while everyone else’s is heretical or deviates from the truth. To be tolerant, in the enlightenment sense, could otherwise be briefly described as “keeping an open mind” and this has much to do with being aware of the fortuitous nature of many beliefs, depending as they do on one’s geocultural context. These perspectives on religion do not compromise, for the enlightenment, the truth of religion or God because the common denominator of all religious systems or institutions was (a universally common) “natural religion”.

Because the church is independent from civil government and is “a free and voluntary society”, Locke argues that: “peace, equity, and friendship, are always mutually to be observed by particular churches, in the same manner as by private persons, without any pretence of superiority or jurisdiction over one another” (Locke, 2003, p. 224). What is right and good according to the Christian faith

is simultaneously so according to reason; a parallelism that establishes an accessible rationality to religion and which from Rabelais to Locke virtually invests reason with a metaphysical guarantee, while revaluing religion in a way that will foster progress and improvement in all areas of human endeavour, rather than stand as a surreal bulwark against it. In an episode of François Rabelais's *Gargantua*, Ulrich Gallet, Master of Requests, is sent by Grandgousier, Gargantua's father, to deliver a speech to King Picrochole, instigator of a war, persuading him to end the war and offering reparations for perceived insults and damages to the cake-bearers of Lerné. Gallet says: "This thing is so far beyond the bounds of reason, so repugnant to common sense, as to be scarcely conceivable to human understanding; and it will remain incredible to strangers until the undoubted evidence of its effects convinces them that nothing is holy or sacred to those who have emancipated themselves from God and reason to follow their own perverse desires" (Rabelais, 1955, p. 106). Almost two centuries later, Locke makes a notably similar argument in the spare language of philosophy: "The toleration of those that differ from others in matter of religion is so agreeable to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and to the genuine reason of mankind, that it seems monstrous for men to be so blind, as not to perceive the necessity and advantage of it, in so clear a light" (Locke, 2003, p. 217).

Voltaire charged the state with the responsibility of keeping different religious denominations from each other's throats. Although this may seem an obvious and reasonable task in contemporary Europe, at the time of its publication in 1763—after the torture and execution of Jean Calas on the basis of a malicious rumour from the Catholic crowd which formed upon the discovery of the mysteriously strangled body of his elder son (that the son had been planning to convert to Catholicism)—when the Ancient Régime was busy persecuting Protestants as enemies of the state, such a recommendation amounted to political radicalism. Voltaire, unsurprisingly, strategically planned the content, style, select recipients and publication time of the *Traité sur la tolérance*.⁶ Both eloquent and emotive, sharply argued and witty, it aims to convince some through (accessible) philosophical reasoning, others through empathetic fear and pity, and, the state, through examples of the flourishing of other empires, states and kingdoms in which toleration of religion or superstition is practiced. Different rhetorical strategies are necessary since toleration may appeal to individuals and groups for a variety of reasons, depending on their point of investment on the spectrums of the individual to the community, and the moral to the political. Next, I will examine some underlying causes for these different modes and degrees of toleration.

3. Toleration, indifference and recognition

Bernard Williams points out how tolerance as a political practice and individual ethos was not the same in all European countries at different periods and for each individual or published thinker (see Williams, 1996, pp. 35–48). Williams argues that it is the underlying attitude behind the manifest tolerance which accounts for this difference, with the result that, viewed externally, what often passes as tolerance is merely indifference.⁷ In Scanlon's words, toleration "requires us to accept people and permit their practices even when we strongly disapprove of them".⁸ The three active verbs of this statement: "accept", "permit" and "disapprove" pose a number of problems; I will consider those due to underlying power relations and ethical complications for the significance they hold for human interaction. There is some difficulty in continuing to form judgements of situations and then in deciding upon appropriate action in the spirit of tolerance, and, on the side of the tolerated practices or people, some potential effects of being accepted, permitted though disapproved of.

To start with, acceptance of a person presupposes recognition of that person and their difference or their activity that the tolerance will be aimed towards. Recognition and acceptance are already well beyond the attitude of indifference, which may register the existence of other and their activity but denies acknowledgement of this fact and therefore refuses recognition of the existence of the other or the activity and denies them the interaction entailed by acceptance. Neither a paternalistic acceptance, mere permission to act as a free individual, nor indifference constitutes recognition or respect the dignity of the other. In distinguishing indifference from toleration, Williams argues that toleration presumes disapproval or a history of intolerance, but where "indifference or an absence of disapproval" have been the norm for a while, not only is toleration irrelevant, it may also constitute

an insult (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 36). But indifference may also be the result of ethical disengagement from others and, as such, the result of a lack of toleration, understood in its positive, enabling aspect of engagement with and recognition of the person, community or activity. This perspective of tolerance reveals it to be rooted, as Jeanne Hersch has written, “in the same soil as human rights” (Hersch, 1995/1996, p. 27). As Hersch argues, what entitles an individual to such rights is the ability to have absolute and unconditional commitment to what is held as true, which “demands of the other human being not a lessening of his or her conviction or moral exigency; it requires instead an absolute respect for the other’s conviction or different exigency, even when far from sharing it” (Ricoeur, 1996, p. 27). This degree of recognition demanded by the other goes beyond the materiality of their day-to-day existence in the world. In Fanon’s words:

I demand to be considered in my Desire. I am not only of the here and now, enclosed in thingness. I am for elsewhere and other things. My claim is that you acknowledge my negating activity in that I am pursuing something other than life; in that I am fighting for the birth of a human world, that is to say, of a world of reciprocal recognitions.⁹

The formation of judgments on the practices and people we encounter need not be suspended, though the manner or terms and conclusions of each judgement require critical deliberation and reflection. To suspend judgement may eventually make one slide into an abyss of indifference and/or radical scepticism. Instead, it is important to consider the worst case scenario: that the other defines his or her existence by practices which we deem intolerable and that we therefore disapprove of severely. What is deemed an intolerable practice will of course differ in different places and different times so that what I now am indifferent to, for instance, the homosexual practices of my neighbours or friends, will by others or in other times have been a matter in which the question of toleration would arise. Such a question would depend on whether or not I consider the particular practice (for instance, homosexuality) to have a moral value (in the above example I do not), or—if a moral judgement is made—it will depend on my belief or not in the moral autonomy of the other in respect of their sexual, political or other ideas and practices. It will also impinge on the right to moral autonomy of an individual or an entire community. Two possibilities of asymmetry arise: either I find something intolerable which is otherwise acceptable to the community in which I live, or the community majority and I find something intolerable which an individual or a minority practice or hold to be true or good. The balance of power makes toleration a greater ethical effort on my part in the latter case, and if this fails, the danger is for the tolerated party or parts to be isolated or persecuted; while, in the former case, I may end up the one being isolated. As one may easily end up experiencing either of these situations, tolerance as both an ethical stance and political practice demands everyone’s attention and reflection. If something is deemed intolerable, it automatically creates a response: from silent disapproval to physical intervention. If I see someone abusing a person in a weaker position, I may just silently disapprove of them and condemn them as an uncivilized, intolerant person, or I may try to intervene by speaking to them and/or trying to stop them physically. The choice of intervention may well be based on how much moral autonomy I grant to every person as an individual first and foremost, and not think “I must respect the autonomy of the couple or the parent/child relation or the religious or ethnic community or the state”. In each case, should I decide that to practice tolerance would support intolerance, I must proceed to an even more difficult deliberation on the course of action appropriate, one that does not make use of intolerable or intolerant means, in order not to provoke further disorder, intolerance or deterioration in the condition of the first perceived victim of injustice.

Tolerance already implies that one is at one’s limits, that something perceived or present is endured; that is, something is annoying, irritating, unpleasant, undesirable, but rather than aggressively react by a violent removal of ourselves or a violent ejection of this something, we merely suppress our response and refuse to make it known. Maurice Cranston, commenting on Locke’s letter, says “only the undesirable—or at any rate, the undesired, is a candidate for toleration” (Cranston, 1987, p. 101, in Mendus, 1989, p. 9). Thus toleration is always fragile, always ready to release a violence that is immanent as soon as the object tolerated surpasses an always obscure limit of irritability or unpleasantness.

Toleration is a suspension or temporary freezing or zeroing of a negative and immanently violent state of affairs or interface between the tolerator and the tolerated. Unfortunately, the tolerated are often deluded as to their designation since a good deal of intuitive judgement is needed to interpret the silence of toleration.

Instead, tolerance becomes productive (the enjoyment and appreciation of differences, working together towards common objectives) when it exceeds itself, when it exceeds the mere permitting of differences to exist alongside whatever is perceived as the norm for a person, a group or a larger community. Toleration is the first step away from violence as a reaction to the confrontation of differences: a form of ceasefire in conflicts, but not enough yet for a peaceful and friendly encounter.

The creation and protection of communal ties, of a sense of a content—if not happy—community is part of the answer I propose. People will happily and willingly want to join happy communities, which are those characterized by pleasure in human social activities, multiplying bonds that are open to newness. These communities would feel that they have something of value to offer to the new arrival. A strong sense of community does not have anything to fear of others, but must be welcoming, passively active in its openness and willing to discuss, re-examine and renew itself.

Another precondition is that these others who are new arrivals must want not to destroy the community they arrive in; they must want to participate in it. Not to belong but to participate; everything should be a question of participation. In their case they must be made to feel that what they know/do and who they are is worth knowing, has good to offer to the vibrant community. To exclude them, snub them, or barely tolerate them will only expose the shortcomings of that community and make the arrivals defensive, provoke angry pride, coldness or desperation and in the end usually the creation of tacitly ostracized “outsiders” forming a series of micro-sub-communities, condemned to stagnation and conservatism of all kinds for fear of losing all sense of who they are and what they are worth and also as a defensive gesture to hold on to “vacuum-packed” customs and values existing in a temporal limbo. Distinct, separate and non-interacting communities could exist for a long time in such conditions of negative, mutual toleration. Yet the possibility of violent conflict, even genocidal persecution, exists and has erupted in recent history (for instance, in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Iraq and Syria).

4. The return to *xenia*: hospitality as unwritten law of society and subjectivity

After this critical foray into the history of tolerance, I will now turn my attention to the second main preoccupation of this essay: the argument for *xenia* [love of the stranger/hospitality]. From *xenia*, which I will argue is a fundamental principle of society and subjectivity, it is a small step to cosmopolitan ethics and friendship as necessary counterparts to tolerance for a sustainable sociality. To demonstrate most effectively the intertwining of these four ethical theories (tolerance, *xenia*, cosmopolitanism and friendship), I will refer to genocide, the event that signals the failure of human society, as marked by the absence of all four.

Philip Gourevitch, the North American journalist who travelled to Rwanda after the genocide of the Tutsis by the Hutus, starts his book, *We wish to inform you that tomorrow we will be killed with our families*, with a brief account of a conversation he had with a pygmy at a bar in Gikongoro, a Southern town in Rwanda, not long after he arrived in May 1995. Here is a synoptic extract of the related exchange:

I believe in the principle of *Homo sapiens*. You get me?

I took a guess. “You mean that all humanity is one?”¹⁰

But all humanity must unite together in the struggle against nature [...] This is the principle of *Homo sapiens* [...] It is the only hope. It is the only way for peace and reconciliation—all humanity one against nature.

[...] After a while I said, “But humanity is part of nature, too.”

“Exactly,” the pygmy said. “That is exactly the problem.” (Gourevitch, 2000, pp. 8–9)

The anonymous pygmy interlocutor of Gourevitch goes on to conclude from this that it is necessary for him to marry a white woman. In this union of love with a woman representing the greatest degree of difference to himself, the principle of *Homo sapiens* would be achieved.

Genocide has provided the trigger for the most urgent re-emergence of the question: what is a human being? A question with profound ontological, but especially and in fact, primarily, *ethical* implications, that revisits, from a different perspective, the ancient axiom that *nomos* be ground in *physis*. What should a human being be *in nature*, i.e. not what its nature may or may not be (ontology) but what this being’s place should be within the cosmos, vis-à-vis its own species, other species and the cosmos in general. This is really, in turn, a *how* question: how should a human being be, *how* will co-existence be achieved within the cosmos (the Heideggerian being-in-the-world with others), and what exactly is *worthwhile* in the human being.

Levinas raised this question and devoted his life’s work to its deliberation. I refer to the primacy of *xenia* in Levinas’ ethical philosophy, which appears as a radical reevaluation of the primacy of the other (Levinas, 1998). Levinas presents his case for a subjectivity “founded in the idea of infinity”.¹¹ Infinity, he explains, is not created by subjectivity, but “is produced in the relationship of the same with the other;” a production whose field is magnetized by “the particular and the personal, which are unsurpassable” (Levinas, 1991, p. 26). In this way each subject, or what Levinas terms “existent”, will stand before justice at every instant and not only at the end of history, and will have a voice that is personal, not submerged in the anonymity of history (Levinas, 1991, p. 23).

The difficulty in establishing a viable ethical relation of the subject with the other is the difficulty of giving a definition of the subject “that somehow lies in its passivity” while preserving “the subject’s power over the world, meanwhile protecting its personality” (Levinas, 1997, p. 47). What is needed is a different understanding of subjectivity. This must include an ethical dimension, approximating or sharing important similarities with what Levinas proposes, in order to posit a relation to the Other/other which is not one of the mastery and “the virility of grasping the possible” (Hand, 1997, p. 47).

Homicide is the obverse of the ethical relationship of the face-to-face which gives primacy to the Other, whose face commands “Thou shalt not kill”. Homicide attempts to substitute death with the human subject and by force of that substitution to construct a subject who pretends to exercise a mastery over death which he cannot have otherwise. It is thus the reversal of the ethico-aesthetics of sublimity, the face-to-face; primacy is given instead to a solitary subject who, by denying recognition and engagement in the face-to-face, installs everywhere death and silence. It is by imagining the negation of the Levinasian asymmetrical relation of hospitality towards the O/other that we can in fact ascertain the necessity and truth within his ethical paradigm. The final conclusion of anti-Levinasian ethics would be the totality of destruction. In the emphatic focus placed on the other in Levinas’s ethical philosophy, one may be led to infer that the face-to-face posits an asymmetrical relation that denies any form of reciprocity.

It is not that Levinas disagrees with the idea of reciprocity—which is fundamental to the ancient Greek representation of the law of *xenia*, in which the Other too had obligation towards the host; it is rather that he is not concerned with delineating the Other’s responsibility; for Levinas, this is clearly however implied, as every Other will also be in the position of subject in the face-to-face (at least this is what he asserts when pressed in *Ethics and Infinity*).¹² Speaking of the face as being inscribed with the biblical “Thou Shalt Not Murder”, he says:

Speech then, is a relationship between freedoms who neither limit nor deny one another, but reciprocally affirm one another [...] The term respect can be taken up again here; provided

we emphasize that the reciprocity of this respect is not an indifferent relationship, such as serene contemplation, and that it is not the result, but the condition of ethics.¹³

Furthermore, he is content to allow the third person, as witness, to play the regulating role of the “law” so that the asymmetrical relation of the face-to-face is not abused by the Other who is given such extravagant prerogatives. Yet he is adamant on the non-transferable uniqueness, extremity and absoluteness of the responsibility of the I, quoting Dostoevsky on this point: *We are all responsible for all men before all, and I more than all the others* (Levinas, 1985, p. 101). In asserting the primacy of a discourse of “duty” over a discourse of “rights”, Levinas is closer to Simone Weil (*Of The Need for Roots*) than to contemporary human rights-oriented discourses of hospitality. Weil reminds us that: Recognition of an obligation makes it effectual. An obligation which goes unrecognized by anybody loses none of the full force of its existence.¹⁴

Nevertheless, by allowing the reciprocal dimension to remain virtually in the unsaid of his philosophy, Levinas courts the danger of making the subject entirely *subjugated* to every and any Other, thus creating the impression that the Other is somehow the Infinite or God (rather than the infinite being produced in the relation to the Other), or, conversely, of denying the human dimension of the Other as also *another* subject.

What conditions place two individuals in the position of “host” and “guest” or “stranger”? Does one have a duty to be hospitable or a right to hospitality? In what ways do we offer hospitality to one another and what does the refusal to offer it or the denial that it is being offered suggest? Can collectivities or institutions offer hospitality? Finally, does (and should) dissymmetry or equality and reciprocity characterize the host/guest relation? The degree of the corruption of the idea of hospitality is perhaps articulated most clearly by its “replacement” by an industry: where “hospitality” has been replaced by “tourism”.

To investigate and discover the conditions underlying hospitality in many forms, one must consider its many and varied forms: from the instances of welcoming another in speech and in one’s dwelling, to the inclusion of immigrants and refugees by national and supra-national states. The conditions underlying hospitality will be found to be necessarily and in all cases equal duties between host and guest in order for the relation to evade violation and violence but also in order for it to be exceeded in a truly democratic and, therefore, pluralistic civil society.

Let us start with the commonly understood use of “hospitality” as a question arising when one arrives, invited or not, on the threshold of the dwelling of another person. The stranger/guest, invited or not, makes an immediate ethical demand upon the host by her/his mere presence at the “threshold” of the host’s “home”. The guest/stranger is someone standing on a border. This recognition instigates the potential for hospitality and activates ambivalence, ambiguity and uncertainty. Does the separation at the threshold hinge on possession? The host is the one who claims a location, enclosed by boundaries of some sort, for us usually walls, as her or his “own”. This is so, whether or not one owns a property, pays rent or not; by the mere fact, that is, of dwelling there, usually also keeping there some or all of the objects which belong to them and/or which they need in order to live (food, clothes and other) but also others they often cherish more so because they enhance their living environment and their sense of identity according to varying personal, cultural and historical codes. In other words, one’s dwelling is perceived as one’s own, meaningful, self-created, microcosm.

One may attach enormous, little or no material value to one’s dwelling, but by the mere activity of dwelling there, of inhabiting a certain space prior to the arrival of the stranger, one is immediately placed on the side of the host, on the side of the one who makes a response to the stranger arriving at the threshold marking the border of the dwelling: that which separates the inside from the outside, the little world within the greater one. Therefore, the host is the one who has priority in terms of occupying a location, and who therefore also has used that space to store and protect items and facilities perceived as necessary for the dweller’s well-being, however that individual defines such a

state. Once an individual leaves their dwelling, for whatever length of time, they become a stranger, potentially a guest, everywhere else.¹⁵

What obligation then could one possibly have to someone standing on the threshold of one's dwelling?

The object of any obligation, in the realm of human affairs, is always the human being as such. There exists an obligation towards every human being for the sole reason that he or she is a human being, without any other condition requiring to be fulfilled, and even without any recognition of such obligation on the part of the individual concerned [...] Although this eternal obligation is coextensive with the eternal destiny of the human being, this destiny is not its direct motive [...] The fact that a human being possesses an eternal destiny imposes only one obligation: respect. The obligation is only performed if the respect is effectively expressed in a real, not a fictitious, way; and this can only be done through the medium of Man's earthly needs. (Weil, 1978, p. 5, 6)

Simone Weil speaks of the "eternal obligation" of the human being as being "unconditional" and "In our world, not founded on anything at all", (Ibid., p. 5). therefore, unknowable. If we see this "eternal obligation" so long as there is an "eternal destiny" of the human being, within the hospitality offered by the inhuman world (nature, the Earth, the Universe) towards the human being, then it is understandable that the hospitality offered by one human being to another, is founded on the radical hospitality offered to the human being. It may appear that this hospitality prior to all hospitable human acts is one characterized by insurmountable dissymmetry; one in which the human being can never reciprocate or be able to fulfil equal duties towards her/his "host". By analogy, "ideal" hospitality must necessarily follow this blueprint of a dissymmetrical relation between host and guest, self and other. But in making such an argument, we will only provide the grounds for violence. For human beings find themselves by their mere existence in a myriad of situations in which they can and should recognize and fulfil equal duties to the world as their "host". Not only do human beings in return make a "home" for other human beings, animals, plants and themselves directly or indirectly—by protecting their environment and the conditions necessary for their dwelling, but they also make each other's existence possible by welcoming them in the very act of speech:

The exiles, the deported, the evicted, the uprooted, the stateless, the nomads, the lawless, the absolutely estranged often continue to recognize language, the so-called maternal language, as their ultimate homeland, their final resting place [...] What does language, so-called maternal language, what we carry with us, what carries us also from birth to death, name? Doesn't it constitute the "at home" that never leaves us? The proper, or "one's own", the fantasme at least of ownership that, closest to our body, [...] would give place to the most inalienable place, to a sort of mobile habitat, an apparel or a tent?¹⁶

Because of these conditions of existence, which place each human being in the position of guest first, but also of host in order to remain a guest; the condition of dwelling, which make us wander in all but one small part of the world beyond our "home" (whether as roof over our head, village, town, city, region, culture, nation-state, the EU, or a continent) as a stranger/guest; and of language, which makes of us both host and guest when we address the other in a natural language they understand; we are each always host and guest simultaneously, at "home" and "strangers" depending on hospitality becoming effective, that is, recognized, as an ethical relation, one that, as Levinas describes it, calls for a response and responsibility to the other. At the same time, at any given instance, we are not equally host and guest; each situation tips the scale more towards one than the other so that sometimes we are more of a host and less of a guest and vice versa, but within the length of a lifetime it is absolutely impossible to always be in the position of one or the other only towards all human beings. The fluctuation of this positioning between host and guest, together with the unknowability of the future, make of hospitality the most pervasive and ubiquitous form of human sociality and the basic structure of ethical relations between human beings that found communities.

Hospitality regulates human possessions and the inequalities they produce. Or at least, if we re-examine the typically recognized instance of hospitality, it will be clear that this is what hospitality aims to do in all instances, leading us to an analysis of the motives causing the refusal of hospitality. From the world depicted in the *Odyssey* to today, when one praises someone's hospitality at least one thing can be consistently identified as laudable: that the host offered the best of the goods available for the refreshment and comfort of their guests in terms of drink, food and lodging. This is irrespective of the wealth of the host or guest. This quality enables the host to become the equal of the guest in terms of generosity. Whatever their material inequalities when separate, once one enters the home of the other and *partakes* in their best, they are temporarily equalized. However, this is so only if the host offers the best and the guest accepts whatever it is with grace. Both generosity and grace are dependent on their being successfully communicated. If either of the two suspect they are being treated as "inferior" and offered "lesser", or refuse what is offered because it is perceived as "lesser", what is in all generosity offered as the best, then the violation of the equality necessary for the relation to come into effect has caused violence to one at least of the two and, of course, there is the possibility of this violence to be returned in verbal or physical abuse, or indeed even the breakdown of relations of hospitality beyond those two individuals to include others on both sides in whose dwellings they are welcome or with whom they form "homes".

There is a prior inequality which hospitality erases and which automatically occurs whenever one arrives at the threshold of another's home. The stranger or guest is always in a position of "need" when in another's dwelling. Need, in this case, is to be understood as a lack to some degree in relation to the host. One does not have to be in truth dying of hunger or thirst or fatigue or solitude or cold or heat in order to be in need. The host is structurally in a position whereby they might well have more, unless the guest is one that carries all their possessions, family and friends with them.¹⁷ The guest is someone who has dislocated themselves; indeed, the nomadic guest is constantly dislocating themselves; the mobility of their dwelling does not undo this fact. It is, therefore, the arrival of one from a distance which bids me to say welcome, "it is good that you have come" or not. It is a question of opening my mouth and my dwelling, or not, to the one that arrives and waits at the threshold. The one who stops and waits at the threshold has recognized the borders of another's dwelling and requires a response although their arrival in itself shows that they are hoping this response will be a welcoming one.

Is hospitality then a human attempt to make up for and even repress the inalienable fact of the alienation inherent in the human condition by welcoming someone into one's home and making them feel *as if* they (who? both host and guest) are at home when offering them the "goods" of hospitality: friendly speech, comfort and refreshment in abundance. We act *as if* "home" is our "own" by acting as a host, but by acting as a *good* host we "disown" this home because we offer it to the other to inhabit and use *as if* it were his/her own, that is, with respect.

What can further be said of an economy or law of hospitality, an *oiko-nomia* of *xenia*? What is the law of hospitality one abides by in one's home? Does it mostly reside in one's goods or one's "good" manner? Is it quantifiable or not? In this too hospitality is a paradoxical activity. Although hospitality includes money and material goods, the more one gives the more one has. This law is predicated on the reciprocity of hospitality and guarantees the equality of host and guest. Reciprocity involves host and guest in a cyclical relation of obligation that may and indeed should have no end. It is not "an exchange of goods" nor does it imply that hospitality is a "calculating" relation that somehow compromises its ethical stature. This is, however, what Derrida argues in *De l'hospitalité*; the juxtaposition of an ideal and dissymmetrical hospitality (which he founds on Levinas' writing, particularly *Totality and Infinity*) with a juridical/philosophical/social set of laws of hospitality creates a false split within hospitality and therefore a spurious antinomy. Indeed, it is the very notion of such a dissymmetrical hospitality, as he describes it, which sustains inequalities and creates violations; such that distorting and unethical limitations are then imposed on the practice of hospitality on the interpersonal, communal or institutional levels. The problem, in brief, is not in the practice or the philosophy of hospitality, but in the lapses and misunderstandings of that practice and that philosophy underlying it.¹⁸

The main reason is simply that hospitality resides equally in one's speech and manner of addressing the other as it does in the material goods offered to the stranger as guest. And this common speech between the two inhabiting a single dwelling is what equalizes the two most effectively, host and guest, and where we find the ultimate proof of the equality towards which hospitality strives and which guarantees the peacefulness of the host/guest relation. Each welcomes the other in addressing the other with *openness* in countenance and *grace* in recognition of the respect due to another as a human being. Both host and guest are able to fulfil their duty to each other as human beings in fulfilling the non-material "needs of the soul" each has.¹⁹ For instance, each treats the other with respect for their person and their difference while helping to make the other feel as free and relaxed as if they were in their own home; this again tends to eradicate privilege and to diminish the awkwardness of being less "familiar" to a place than one who has been there longer and has even made it or contributed towards making it what it now is. That there are no universal precise rules as to how to achieve this merely allows for greater equality as one must use one's judgement at all times and may err as frequently as any other.

Because the things that count are generosity, grace, respect, openness, while the degree of one's wealth or physical need do not exclude or make one exempt from entering into relations of hospitality, it is clear that this is a relation governed by a superlative idea: that of transcending materiality by offering the most and best of one's material conditions for the enjoyment of the stranger as guest. One offers the best but at the same time acts as if what is offered is not material and therefore not subject to the law of decrease upon expenditure. The material goods are not diminished or "used up" because they are imbued or covered over with the manner in which they are given (and received): as gestures of goodwill, as feelings and words. Without being divested of their materiality they accede to the state of emblems expressing one's generosity and goodwill towards another. And, just as one does not think of having fewer friends, loving people less or giving them less pleasure in one's company in order to "have more" friendship [*philia*], spiritual love [*agape*], sexual love [*eros*], pleasure or "oneself" left (this is a ridiculous thought to everyone but those who mistakenly translate everything, whether matter or energy, into money), one exceeds the quantifiable aspect of "the goods" of hospitality by offering the best, in abundance, to any and every guest. To accept, in turn, material gifts from this guest, then or at any future time, and/or to accept an invitation to become their guest, even if this is not likely to occur for practical reasons, allows the guest the opportunity to make a gesture of acknowledgement, which, in itself, tends to equalize the relation, since it is one characterized more by its symbolic than its material dimension, but also indicates the universality of hospitality for human beings.

Does hospitality enter one into ethical, political or aesthetic relations with others? There is no modern separation of the spheres to be artificially constructed in this case. Hospitality binds one in ethical obligations towards the other, whether host or stranger/guest in order to fulfil needs of *aesthesis*: to do with the body, senses and pleasure (clearly including the pleasures of speaking, listening, music and so on), upon which rely the integrity and dignity of a person. In turn, this ethico-aesthetic dimension already includes the political (recognition of the other, freedom, responsibility, equality, participation). It is an instance, perhaps the first, or most primary, of the political. The kind of political relations it suggests are clearly those pertaining to a true democracy: where all are equal and equally responsible to each other, must use their judgement and act with respect to others, where differences do not imply hierarchy in power or value, but power resides in all the people and therefore no one person in particular, and value is attained whenever one offers the best of their judgement, skills and abilities to others, who, in return, honour the generosity of the gifts.²⁰

If hospitality becomes effective when it equalizes host and guest, transcends the materiality of things and both host and guest act as if there were no inequalities based on need or dislocation in order to forfeit privilege and power imbalances, which in fact are not only temporary but spurious, what happens when hospitality does not become effective? And why does it not?

There is an inherent ambivalence in the psychological dynamics of the host-guest relation as well as a constitutive ambiguity in the status of the guest as either (more or less) suppliant or stranger. This ambiguity pivots on the degree of need of the guest in the basic "goods" of the host: food,

lodging and means of subsistence; but also the distance from one's geographical location, economic class, professional category and cultural or religious community that the stranger represents. These may lead a potential host to view the potential guest with more or less goodwill, as more or less of a stranger and as more or less likely to fulfil their obligations as guest or generally recognize the cyclical obligation of hospitable relations described above. Thus, the arrival of a stranger hoping for a welcome instigates the potential for hospitality but also activates ambivalence, ambiguity and uncertainty. All three of these can be translated into a series of questions on both sides, posed and answered (or not) according to custom, law, class code, personal temperament and interpersonal dynamics. The host: has the stranger come in peace or does s/he mean to harm? How great is their need or, what do they want? Who are they and why have they left their home and come here? How long will they stay? The stranger/guest: Will they be welcomed or turned away? What will the host offer them and under what terms? Will they be treated with respect and accorded dignity or will they have to forfeit these because of their condition of need and be treated as inferior and abject?

That such questions may be posed demonstrates the limitations on hospitality due to three easily identifiable causes: the misapprehension of the universal and primordial law founding the obligation of hospitality for "host" and "guest"; concrete violations of the obligations of host and guest in the past which render each suspicious of the other; and, the translation of human existence into the purely quantifiable with the resultant development of inequalities sustained by virtue of rules of exclusion. In a nutshell, the fault lies with a misunderstanding of the *oiko-nomia* of hospitality and the totalizing triumph of materiality in the form of money. Thus the exploitation and deprivation of resources, whether in terms of human life, skills, or wealth in natural goods, practiced by entire social classes, professions, institutions, nation-states and supra-national organizations constitute a gross violation of hospitality towards those whose dwellings are robbed. The result as we all know it is the impoverishment, persecution and diaspora of those people, and/or even the permanent destruction of their communities and natural resources. Often, these "results" serve well as the method for achieving the exploitation by violent means.

Following this line of thought, it is hardly surprising then, that these dislocated human beings and whole communities or "classes" are least of all welcomed in the "dwelling" of their exploiters, whether we take dwelling here to mean private "home", community, class, nation-state or supra-state organization. The categorial existence of the exploiters/violators is predicated on the permanent estrangement of these others from their own lives, dwellings and communities. Their mere presence in the presence of what estranged them in this way disturbs the radical violence and inequality upon which those individuals and/or groups found their hierarchical and segregated existence since even one's presence opens the space for equalizing that is effected by the relation of hospitality. The next step would be dialogue and then the offering of material goods. Thus, whenever possible, such "hosts" close their doors, their mouths and their ears to these estranged human beings, who are ostracized and excluded from the host/guest relations and therefore from participation in a truly democratic and pluralistic society.

Where a degree of hospitality is inevitable, if only to evade the accusation of brutality and cover up the violence, this is presented instead as a "charitable", "humanitarian" offering or "obligation", which implies little if any reciprocity and no equality possible between "host" and "guest". As "caritas", the (fabricated) dissymmetrical relation gives rise to resentment on both sides, which parades as muted gratitude of a slave towards a master on the side of the stranger forced into a permanent "guest" relation without their dimension of "host" recognized (even in other forms). This is clear by the official or unofficial denial and limitations to freedom of speech and political participation, which becomes clearer when they abstain - because they have fallen for this distortion of hospitality into false charity, out of fear or actual laws which forbid it on pain of deportation - from criticism of the "host" who has become a "master": "On no occasion does the slave have the licence to express anything, except that which could please his master" ["En aucune occasion l'esclave n'a licence de rien exprimer, sinon ce qui peut complaire au maître"].²¹ All too quickly, hospitality diminishes between individuals who have suffered this relegation into charity guests and individuals who identify themselves as permanently privileged in terms of possessions and location "master hosts". But as the inequality necessarily persists, the possibility of further violence on both "sides" increases. The

longer the inequality persists, the greater it becomes, the more the strangers lurking outside the dwellings of those who have uprooted them (directly or indirectly, recently or not). If the proximity of their presence is barely tolerated, ways of achieving distance, whether geographically, through one's activities and methods of transport or, if necessary, through the refusal to look or return their look, address or respond to them in speech, never cease. The logic of such a predicament tends, quite predictably, to the final breakdown of civil society, the deterioration of democratic processes and conflict at all levels.

5. Concluding reflections

Tolerance is paramount in the liberal tradition in political theory: "Liberals are frequently *defined* as people who value liberty and the toleration necessary for the promotion of liberty" (Arblaster 1984; Waldron 1987; Raz 1982, 1986, 1988; Rawls 1971). Although other political ideologies may find a place for the value of toleration, it is in liberalism that toleration is most exalted. Moreover, it is the liberal tradition which has most robustly defended toleration as a good in itself, not a mere pragmatic device or prudential expedient" (Mendus, 1989, p. 3). This, however, does not preclude other traditions from including toleration within their political philosophy.²² Above all, I hold that notwithstanding the clarificatory power and rhetorical force of philosophical discourse, there can neither be any final accord harmonizing all positions on tolerance nor some prescriptive theoretical norm imposed on real-life situations. Yet even when a quantum of individual freedom exists, there will be occasions that call on each to critically reflect on the theory as well as the practice of toleration. Without such reflection and reconsideration, tolerance can become a mere cliché and lose socio-political effect.

How can toleration be prevented from turning into the stagnant form of indifference and compartmentalization of differences that can be observed in so many "multi-cultural" European cities? The tenuous co-existence of people of different values, beliefs and lifestyles under liberal democratic governments does not guard against the outbreak of violence. A deterioration in economic circumstances, rise in demographics or change of governing party are just a few variables that could significantly and adversely affect toleration. All too often the accepted rule for deciding whether a society is inclusive or not, racist or not, is whether there is high incidence of intermarriage between so-called native populations and foreigners, ethnic majorities and minorities, or members of different regional cultural communities. Although the degree of intermarriage has some value as an index of peaceful, interactive co-existence, it cannot suffice for a tolerant, cosmopolitan ethics. Marriage, to mention only three significant limitations, is inevitably an assimilation of otherness to some degree; it is conservative since it usually presupposes heterosexuality and monogamy; and, more importantly, it is a mediated social relationship, dependent on a singular relation to one person: the spouse. Historically, this ostensible integration or marker of acceptance has not prevented the worst forms of violence, even at a distance of generations. Not only marriage, but also sexual love [*eros*] is equally unable to provide a basis for the social. "The society of love is a society of two, a society of solitudes, resisting universality", Levinas says, concluding his analysis: "The closed society is the couple".²³

Rather than take the institution of marriage as index, paradigm or foundation of cosmopolitan ethics that exceeds tolerance, this paper's critical engagement with the discourses of tolerance, cosmopolitanism and hospitality [*xenia*] lead instead to the primacy of true friendship as the relationship that may found sustainable sociality. Notwithstanding the antiquity of the idea of friendship as crucial to the political, it is important that we arrive at this final segment of the investigation of sociality after establishing a critical discourse linking tolerance with *xenia* and cosmopolitan ethics. In this way, we avoid the pitfalls of establishing friendship on gendered (brotherhood), patriarchal (family) or politically conservative terms (ethnicity).²⁴

In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle considered not marriage but friendship as the bond that the life of the city depended on, as well as a foremost activity for the individual that was in the process of achieving happiness [*eudaimonia*] (Aristotle, 2002). From today's perspective, the increasing commodification of human relations, a deeply ingrained "economics" of exchange and use-value pose significant challenges to the ethics of friendship. The term continues to spiral in a catechistic vortex

and is propelled by modern media into an ever more deeply ingrained reification. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle distinguishes three kinds of friendship: true/ideal/primary friendship, which is the friendship, between those equal in virtue; friendship based on usefulness and friendship based on pleasure. The latter two kinds of friendships last as long as there continues to be mutual use/gain or pleasure, respectively. Of course, these distinctions are not absolute. The main differentiation of the true, the highest type of friendship from the other two is that it is based on mutual recognition of virtuous character. As a result, it is likely to last the longest since it is not contingent on one being always useful or pleasurable to the other. Aristotle does not envisage the situation whereby someone only considers another virtuous if they are also useful or pleasurable, a means to an end. He is concerned with the evaluation of character, and character is still taken to be a stable parameter since it is proven over time, repeatedly, by the quality of one's actions, words and decisions.

In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida's reading of Aristotle's discourse on friendship in the *Nicomachean* and *Eudemian Ethics* and in the *Politics*, leads him to conclude that "Philia seems, therefore, to be thoroughly political", clarifying however: "Even if all friendship is in some respect political, strictly or properly political friendship is only one kind of friendship [...] not the primary or the highest of its forms" (Derrida, 2005, p. 200). Indeed, although in the *Eudemian Ethics*, Derrida notes the "co-implication" of "the political as such, fraternity and democracy",²⁵ in his reading of the *Nicomachean Ethics* he remarks: "Friendship is irreducible and heterogeneous to the tool (*órganon*), to instrumentalization" and "this same axiomatic dooms friendship in advance to democracy *qua* its destiny" (197).

Despite the totalizing effect of reification and commercialization of human relations, it is still possible and evident that friendships based on respect, recognition and love of the person *qua* human being and virtue still exist and endure. The significance of friendship for the life of the community, for a viable community, remains just as foundational; without it, any *polis*, any political organization, will only be predicated on what divides, not only one group from another (on the basis of whatever physical, economic or social characteristics), one person from another, but even one individual from within: divided into their needs, roles, desires; an indefinite schizo-analytic logic leading to disintegration on both individual and collective levels. Thus friendship, that is, *philia*, love for another, from which *philo-xenia* [hospitality], love for the stranger/foreigner derives, and as one kind of love is linked to Locke's *caritas*, must again gain prominence. This, in itself, is a resistance to the commodification of relations, to the xeno-racism spreading across Europe, and will redirect the concept and practice of hospitality away from a pure focus on materiality and space, which paradoxically underlies both the Derridean adoption of an extreme Levinasian discourse and the xeno-racism of individuals, groups, institutions and government agencies. In lieu of a conclusion that would provide closure to the chain of propositions in this essay, I would rather make this closing into an opening gesture towards the Aristotelian discourse of friendship based on virtue as the next step in the ethical progression from toleration to hospitality and cosmopolitanism.

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Notes

1. Derrida (1999, p. 72). Derrida is also citing Levinas (1994, p. 98), where Levinas is commenting on the injunction to welcome foreigners in Deuteronomy 23:8.
2. The term "tolerance" is used throughout this essay when I am referring to philosophical discourse and the term "toleration" refers to the practice or behaviour that exhibits the principle of tolerance. In cases where I am referring to both the theory and practice, the term tolerance is used.
3. For a comparative study of genocide and the (all too often "politic") problems of interpretation and efficient recourse to the 1948 *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, see Tatz (2003) and Power (2003).
4. Cited in Horton and Mendus (1985, p. 9). For an in-depth discussion of the blasphemy law which also considers the 1977 *Gay News* case, see Edwards (1985).

5. Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, p. 224, in Ian Shapiro, ed, Locke (2003). E-book. The need for toleration to exceed itself has also been argued much more recently. See, for instance, the essays by Abrams (2008).
6. Voltaire (1989). See the "Introduction" by René Po-meau (1989, pp. 7–28) on the appeal made to Voltaire to make an intervention on behalf of the persecuted and prosecuted Protestants, the planning of the treatise on the occasion of the Calas affair and the targeting of important figures in France, Germany and Prussia as special recipients of copies.
7. John Horton and Susan Mendus distinguish indifference from toleration in that the former results from not caring about others' conduct or preferences, especially on matters which do not matter to oneself. See "Introduction", p. 18, in Horton and Mendus (1985).
8. Scanlon (1996, p. 226), cited by Williams (1996, p. 36).
9. Fanon (1995, p. 177): "Je demande qu'on me considère à partir de mon Désir. Je ne suis pas seulement ici-maintenant, enfermé dans la choséité. Je suis pour ailleurs et pour autre chose. Je réclame qu'on tienne compte de mon activité négatrice en tant que je poursuis autre chose que la vie; en tant que je lutte pour la naissance d'un monde humain, c'est-à-dire d'un monde de reconnaissances réciproques".
10. Gourevitch (2000, p. 6). First published 1998 by Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.
11. "Preface" to Levinas (1991, p. 26).
12. Levinas (1985). In *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, Levinas states: "Responsibility without concern for reciprocity: I have to be responsible for the Other without concerning myself about the Other's responsibility toward me" (cited in Derrida, 1999, p. 148).
13. Levinas, "The I and the Totality", in *Entre-Nous*, p. 35.
14. Weil (1978), "The Needs of the Soul". Weil worked on this until her early death at the age of thirty-four in 1943.
15. This "strangerhood", of course, in a sense precedes one's exit from the dwelling since it finds one's existence in the world as such; the world has not been "created" by any human being, living or dead, and therefore, it is an unalterable fact that we are the strangers who have made ourselves a(t) home, comfortable or not, as guests.
16. "Les exilés, les déportés, les expulsés, les déracinés, les apatrides, les nomades anomiques, les étrangers absolus continuent souvent de reconnaître la langue, la langue dite maternelle, pour leur ultime patrie, voir leur dernière demeure [...] Que nomme en effet la langue, la langue dite maternelle, celle qu'on emporte avec soi, celle qui nous emporte aussi de la naissance à la mort? Ne figure-t-elle pas le *chez-soi* qui ne nous quitte jamais? Le *propre* ou la propriété, le *phantasme* au moins de propriété qui, au plus près de notre corps [...] donnerait lieu au lieu le plus inalienable, à une sorte d'habitat mobile, un vêtement ou une tente?" Derrida (1997), my translation, p. 83.
17. In the case of a trailer, a group of nomads or a gypsy caravan visiting an immobile house, the one arriving is still offered hospitality although they are in a better position to reciprocate as guests; hence, they are all hosts and guests simultaneously and in all senses and manner.
18. See, in particular *De l'hospitalité*, p. 73, 75.
19. Simone Weil had indicated what some of these might be in her book, *The Need for Roots* and offered a brief justification and argumentation for each. What these needs might be is undoubtedly a subject for debate, but that one has needs that exceed and differ from the material/physical is not, in my mind, subject to doubt.
20. Simone Weil's discussion of equality as one of the needs of the soul, in *The Needs of the Soul*, pp. 15–18, points out the vital need of being recognized and treated as equal, whatever it is that one does or earns in money; she also points out the erosive effect of money for a truly pluralistic and democratic society.
21. Weil, "L'Iliade ou le Poème de la Force", (Weil, 1953), my translation, p. 17.
22. For the communitarian view on toleration, see, for instance, Gardner (1992, pp. 67–90) and Crisp (1992, pp. 108–125) respectively.
23. Levinas, "The I and the Totality", in *Entre-Nous*, p. 20, 21.
24. In *The Politics of Friendship*, Derrida (2005) underlines the reference to fraternity as a paradigmatic relation of comradeship and equality (pp. 202–203). In *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas*, Derrida makes a similar identification of the centrality of fraternity: "Levinas orients his interpretation toward the equivalence of three concepts—fraternity, humanity, hospitality" (1999, p. 67).
25. Derrida (2005, p. 198) refers the reader to 1236ab in the *Eudemian Ethics*.

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