Debating Toleration: Attitudes, Practices and Institutions

3 – 5 November, 2011

Faculty of Political Science, University of Pavia (Italy)

Instances of xenophobia, marginalisation and discrimination directed against vulnerable groups are often framed in terms of (in)tolerance on the part of the majority against a minority. Recent cases highlighted in the media include the Swiss referendum which resulted in the banning of new minarets and the expulsion of Roma in France. Yet, while appeals to toleration are often made in order to devise appropriate political responses to such questions, it is far from clear and uncontroversial what such appeals actually mean and require. Are such issues correctly understood and addressed in terms of toleration, or should they instead be interpreted with the aid of other cognate ideals, such as respect or recognition?

The conference invites discussions both of theoretical interpretations of toleration, respect and recognition, and of more applied contributions on the role of these ideals in informing social policies in contemporary democracies. Participants are invited to address the following questions:

- What does the ideal of toleration require of contemporary societies?
- What particular problems of societal conflict can be usefully analysed in terms of the concepts of tolerance and intolerance?
- Are issues raised by minority claims correctly understood in terms of toleration?
- Are respect and recognition interpretations of toleration, or do they represent different, and sometimes conflicting notions?
- Are group-oriented policies a threat to social cohesion? What alternative policy solutions can be offered to promote a tolerant society?

Keynote speakers

Colin Bird (University of Virginia)
Anna Elisabetta Galeotti (Università del Piemonte Orientale, Vercelli)
Peter Jones (University of Newcastle)

Papers are welcomed from the fields of ethics, political philosophy/theory, law and social policy.

Deadline for paper proposals (500 words): 26 June 2011

Conference registration is free of charge. Accommodation fees and details will be arranged individually. Anyone who wishes to attend the conference without presenting a paper can write to check availability. Details about meal arrangements and conference programme to follow.

For further information, or to submit a proposal, please contact: respect@iusspavia.it

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