

**“In a technological age public professional interaction requires neutrality of thought for effective collaboration and political coexistence. As an administrative attitude neutrality differs from tolerance which is an ethical virtue; but neutrality in the professional sphere is implied and included within the ethical virtue of tolerance. Note that this objective modification of the virtue of tolerance, from patience in regard to other persons’ defective acts to permission of different types of activity, is an objective modification of virtue in our technological society.”**

**–Tomonobu Imamichi**

Computers are all around the world, making relative distance so small, that virtually travelling to the other side of the world isn’t even thought about anymore. For the richest people in the society, those who own the newest computers and the fastest internet-providers, it is so normal, that when they do not have a connection with the whole world, they get irritated, or even angry at their computer for not transporting their email in a split second to the other side of the world, thousands of kilometres away. For them, the technological society is not a gift, a blessing, but something really normal.

Which I can understand: if not for the internet or television or other electronica, how could I buy products that are only available in the USA or China, how could I see on a webcam how the weather is in the tropical destination, where I want to visit a friend I made via social-media? Very normal things for a girl like me. Electronica opens the world up for me, and I open up for the world. But one thing: the internet allows you to keep your friends close, but you keep you even closer; Nowadays we do not only find bakers who fear for their business, because of the baker on the other side of the street. We also find huge money-makers, people who could buy off all the debts of several countries, in fear of their rivals in a place that is as far away as twenty hours with the plane and yet as close as one mouse-click. All made possible by our technological society.

Rivalry is even older than the human race: when there is a social order in a group of animals, there is rivalry. Animals even fight to the death, in order to get a better social status. The only problem with humans is that they are so smart, that they have found ways to make their fights global, so that it affects not only them, but all the people who are tangled up in the network of their company or the spills of their country. And that’s why the technological society is so dangerous.

Luckily, some members of the human race do care about installing a stable and a healthy environment, also in the technological sphere. And even more luckily, the human race counts enough of this kind of members that it has been possible to set up standards and a moral code that pursue this stable and healthy environment. One of these standards is neutrality: because we are able to have so much contact over a short span of time, it is necessary to maintain a neutral point of view, so that things won’t get out of hand.

But everyone is different, and to maintain the neutral state of mind towards one another, we must tolerate the differences and faults of the other side, to keep things neat and not get entangled in a fight that is about those differences.

And because we can find and follow almost everyone who is involved in the technological society, there are a lot of differences and mistakes to find. So it comes down to how faster and more open our society becomes, how more important it becomes to keep our virtue of tolerance.

However, the virtue of tolerance cannot change objectively. Furthermore, tolerance is a general idea that is not defined and that is impossible to define! And last but not least, there is a faint, but not strong enough connection between neutrality and tolerance, to say that neutrality is “included in the ethical virtue of tolerance.” Let me explain:

Rivalry is something in our nature, something that is a primitive instinct. However, it gets overruled by other standards and morals, like tolerance, that we have, which are there to better the world, not better yourself. The human being is an individual, but an individual who is part of a larger group. They get joy out of the fact that the other things they love, besides themselves, are faring well too. So they do their best to care for themselves and for the group.

In every person the balance between loving themselves and loving the group is different, so first of all, the balance between choosing to fight (rivalry or intolerance) and choosing to (maybe grudgingly) accept something (tolerance), is different in every person.

Those different persons form a society, and over time, each society develops, according to the mix of these persons, common standards and moral codes. So the concept of tolerance is already subjective to the person itself and the social environment of that person. And because there is still no world-wide definition of tolerance, everyone can choose his or her own version of it.

And furthermore: there is only one way to make tolerance objective. That is if, and only if, everyone agrees to a common, definite agreement and official statement what tolerance is. And with everyone, I mean the whole population of beings that have an opinion about what tolerance is. And ‘everyone’ is more than 7 billion people, if we do not include other beings but humans.

So, fat chance that ‘tolerance’ is going to be objective.

So, tolerance is subjective. That is prove that tolerance can’t change objectively. Let’s do a thought-experiment to make clear why:

In this thought-experiment, we have three people, Jib, Jill and Jir, who all have an opinion about tolerance. But in this case, tolerance is a path that they chose. Jib chose the path that went left, Jill chose the path that went straight and Jir chose the path that went right. Now, they’ve been walking that path for some time. But things change: our technological society begins to form. So, that implies that an objective moderation must be made to all three routes: they all have to go straight.

For Jib, this means that he must leave the path, and that he sees the path sway away on his left side.

For Jill, this means that she can stay on the path, because hers is already going straight.

For Jir, this means that Jir must also leave the path, just like Jib. But the difference is that Jib’s path was turning away on the left side, while Jir’s path turns away on the right side of Jir.

So, they all change their course the same way, an objective change, you would say. But everyone single one of them experiences this change differently. So, it becomes a subjective change, because the concept toleration is determined by everyone him- or herself, because no one can experience the toleration of the other. So, for the change to be an objective change for humanity, every single human must experience it the same.

This can only happen when everyone chooses the same path. But this time, in real, there are not three people who can choose the same path or make on of their own, but seven billion or more.

And, as I explained earlier, fat chance that all of those people are going to choose the same path, so that tolerance is an objective concept.

Therefore, if it is necessary, for an objective change of tolerance, that all people have an objective idea of tolerance, there will be no objective change of tolerance, because there will be no objective idea of tolerance.

But, tolerance is a word. A word has a meaning. So that means that there is an objective idea of tolerance, right? In this case, it comes from the Latin word 'tollere', which means to carry or to endure. So, there you have a meaning of the word: when you tolerate someone or something, you endure the errors, faults and other bad things of that someone or something, without trying to fight it.

To be tolerant is to endure. Seems clear, seems objective. But the tricky thing is: what is to endure? What is an error, a fault? When do you cross the line of being tolerant and pushing someone towards your beliefs?

To 'endure' has already in itself a subjective meaning. Someone who has never known pain, will scream and howl at stubbing their toe. He or she is enduring the pain like a tough person, in his or her vision. For someone who crashes into everything (tables, the walls, cabinets), stubbing his or her toe is nothing. It is not something you can endure. It does simply not have the weight or importance to give the 'endure' label to.

And 'without trying to fight it'. That is a nasty one too. Take an area where a majority and a minority live, together. The minority has radically different beliefs than the majority. The majority could, because they have the power, exterminate the minority with all its wrong beliefs and traditions. However, they choose to be tolerant: they do not give the minority full rights as long as they keep believing the wrong thing, but they aren't going to use violence on the minority. For them, this may seem very tolerant, and they are not fighting. Letting the minority live in peace is a great gift, according to them. But others, who think of themselves as the people who know the real truth, won't be charmed by the way the other majority took care of the minority. They think that the majority is not tolerant, by giving the minority no rights. They think it is a crime.

I am not picking any side, but I just want to point out how different people think of the way things are handled. To point out how subjective 'tolerance' is.

It is now clear why tolerance is subjective. And what confuses me, is that in this quote, there is made a link between tolerance, which is subjective, and neutrality, which is highly objective. How can an objective state of mind come out of a subjective state of mind?

On first sight, there seems to be a connection between being tolerant and being neutral. If you're tolerant, you do not fight what is different, and wrong in your eyes. But being neutral, there is no wrong. When you are neutral, you pick no side. You do not prefer something above another. Unless there is objective proof that one party is a wrongdoer, there is no way to make an ordeal if you are neutral.

There is one mistake that is often made: when you're tolerant, you accept the wrong thing. You do not mind. No, that is called acceptance, not 'enduring something.' If you endure something, it is still wrong to you.

Neutrality is thus above toleration: you have no opinion unless there is objective proof that there is one wrong opinion.

I agree, toleration can brush the borders of acceptance, but that is a grey area. And acceptance is below neutrality in the objective order. But from acceptance, you can step easily in neutrality. So that's how tolerance and neutrality are faintly linked:

If you're tolerant, you can make the step to acceptance, by not only enduring the wrong thing, but seeing that it is not wrong at all. And from acceptance, you can step into neutrality, by forgetting that you once accepted something that you first thought was wrong, and now seeing it as equal.

However, I will still point out that tolerance is very important: a professional sphere is an aspect of real life, but not the whole of real life. In a complete life, full of the primitive and joyful sensations that are completely human, is it unrealistic to expect someone not to have prejudices towards things. Everyone has loved ones and loved things that they prefer above anything else, and everyone will do their best to preserve those. Having emotions means having a feeling and thus an opinion about something.

This may look faded in this age of technology: we get everyone's look on life in the form of letters, black on white words, pictures and drawings. Seeing the person giving his or her opinion becomes more rare and rare with the day. So then, when our social contact is fading into a screen, our feelings must be fading too, right? The opposite is true: we are overwhelmed by opinions, we have to choose which ones we want to hear, there are too much important things nowadays to know them all. And because it is so important to show how you feel, and because we can see what everyone thinks, we can get angered so easily, we can get hurt so fast. And that's when tolerance becomes important: we do not have to fight all these opinions, we do not have to try to exterminate everyone who does not agree. Because then, there would be so many people to kill, so many things to fight, that we would all go down in our own wars, our own misery.

You do not have to agree to everything, but to be tolerant in real life is still important than ever. To see what is wrong, but to agree that acting against every tiny thing that you do not agree with, is how we keep ourselves and everyone else who lives in this world safe and stable.

When it is impossible to be neutral, be tolerant.

### **Keep the power running**

There is truth in this quote, and a very important one. During this age of technology, the contact is so fast and intense that there is no room for errors: one slip, and you cannot keep up anymore.

Everything is so open and clear, that you must step carefully. If you insult one person, the whole world can and will find out. That's why in professional spheres neutrality is so important: relations are nowadays so complicated and change so fast, that keeping them healthy is a necessity. If you don't, there's little chance that keeping them well-organized is still going to happen.

Neutrality is the key: you are expected to not have prejudices, because there's so much information that you can get, that it is nearly impossible not to know more sides of the story than one. Thanks to technology.

But neutrality is not achieved by being tolerant: tolerance is a virtue of being able to endure, not to accept. Tolerance is important, though: we must endure all these opinions that get blown to us by technology.

However, we must see that, even if we share the same technology, we do not share the same tolerance. That is impossible, because each and one of us is different, from how we look to how we think to how we raise the next generation. And each change is accompanied by different experiences for everyone, meaning that we will never feel the same 'moderation of virtue'.

So to be able to be tolerant, and after that, accepting, is a necessity for being neutral. But it is not the other way around. Stepping from an objective (neutral) perspective to a subjective (tolerant) perspective is a step back. Because we can only keep a healthy relation if we solve disputes fairly and honestly, and that cannot happen if you still believe that something is wrong. And in our technological age, in our technological society, there will be so much wrong if we are only tolerant

and not neutral, that we have enough reason to pull the plug out of our society. Keep the power running by keeping accepting ,not enduring, other opinions, so that everyone still has reason to connect with each other.