"Universal toleration becomes questionable when its rationale no longer prevails, when tolerance is administered to manipulated and indoctrinated individuals who parrot, as their own, the opinion of their masters, for whom heteronomy has become autonomy."

–Herbert Marcuse–

Tolerance is a value that has a very high place in current political debates and especially for the humanitarian and intellectual spectrum of politics, tolerance is an indisputable ideal.

The idea is, that everybody should be allowed to exist as they are, to be free in their thought and their culture. Tolerance is also the foundation of multiculturalism, a form of life that is necessary and unavoidable nowadays, even though many people still fight it. Tolerance, as a form of freedom and interpersonal ground rule, is even part of the foundation of society, the constitution, at least in my country. Freedom of speech implies tolerance for all opinions. Freedom of religion implies tolerance for all religions. Artistic freedom, freedom of meeting, freedom of opinion. Also respect towards and fair treatment of any other inhabitant of the country are constitutionally secured. But why?

In a democratic country with human rights as its deepest foundation, why should we have to let far-right people have their demonstrations in our city? Why can I not assure that someone shuts up, if they insult me, my home or the values of our society? Why should it be possible for anti-democratic groups to walk our streets in demonstrations and to express their opinions through speakers in my home town? How can it be that a state that rests on human rights and democratic ideals doesn't defend itself at all? Democracy values its enemies as friends and members. Why should we indulge the people who want to destroy our system with the profits of that system? No dictatorship has ever used financial and human resources to protect demonstrators who try to bring the state leader to fall or who try to topple the system. Why should democracy do so then? Just because we're taking the higher ground? Because we hope that dictators and right-extremists will see it and take our example? That, I can assure you, won't happen.

If a religion is harmful of human rights or the democratic process, why ever should we then allow our citizens to practice it? While I certainly don't want a repeat of crusades and forcefully converted people, it does seem illogical that all ideas of persuasion and discussion in a religious field has vanished. While some religions still try to convert people to their cause, mostly they have given up the fight. It is politically incorrect and a no-go to go up to a Muslim and to try to convince them that the Christian faith is the better one. Every Christian would recoil from an Atheist trying to cure them of their faults. "Live and let live" is the ideal of modern society, but how are we ever going to evolve with that mind-set? If an idea is more logical than another one, then of course it is only reasonable to try and explain that to the world. There has been and there still is a lot of effort involved in bringing the idea of human rights into all countries of the world. On that level there still is a lot of exchange and a lot of that sort imperialistic dedication to one idea. The United Nations stand for human rights, all of us have signed an official treaty and are still trying to enforce that upholding of and respect for said rights all over the world. But if I meet with a Russian, for example, I would never dare to tell them that I think their government is corrupt and undemocratic, that would be rude. If somebody in my class practices a religion I don't agree with, where for example women are considered to be less worthy then men, as it is in at least four of the world religions, I would never go up to them and convince them to change their faith and everyone who does I would judge for non-existent tolerance and rudeness.

Tolerance, as it has been taught to me by my parents and my teachers, means that I have to respect other peoples cultures, even if they involve values and traditions that I don't agree with and that maybe even go strictly against my own code of morals. In return I expect the same from them and everyone lives in peace. This is a value that has emerged as a solution to thousands of years of religious wars and feuds and the billions of death that have resulted from it. It makes a lot of sense, too – if everyone practices tolerance in addition to their own culture and traditions, there should be no more conflict between any sort of religion or ideological group. While that theory doesn't work for religions whose religious values go directly against tolerance, as for example in the Christian literal tradition, the missionary duty of every Christian is explicitly stated, those religions can easily be adapted and persuaded to follow those ideals. While some of the more violent cultural traditions of clan-culture can't actually be taken out of their culture, they can mostly be convinced to at least not apply those traditions to uninvolved people or people of different faiths. If that state of cultural diversity and simultaneous tolerance could be reached, then the ideal of tolerance would be fulfilled. That would be the ultimate result and a peaceful solution indeed. Universal toleration by all involved parties would allow cultures to exist in their traditions and with each other in peace.

That, however, is not enough.

Firstly, there is a logical mistake in the very idea of universal tolerance and universal toleration, if universality is not only used in regards to the object of said tolerance, but as well to the subjects, as it has just been. If we truly want everyone to follow the ideal of tolerance in their own culture, our first step would have to be highly intolerant: We would have to go up to people and convince them of the benefits of universal tolerance in this sense and thereby be intolerant towards their current culture. Tolerance means acceptance of the differences of every culture, but to install tolerance means not to accept the intolerant parts of that culture.

If that logical mistake is overlooked, however, or accepted as a means to an end, there are still things lacking. While I know that people don't agree with me in this, which is incidentally the root of the problem, I still think that human rights such as the right to be physically and mentally unharmed and the assurance of property and the equality of opportunities and in front of the law are essential and unbreakable and universally so. If that is my conviction, however, how can I sit by and watch, as those rights are violated and systematically broken in Islamism or American international politics, in Russia's election system and in Turkey's new dictatorial regime. How can I watch people in my home country attacking refugee shelters or even simply bullying children with immigrant backgrounds? I cannot tolerate those injustices. This is where my tolerance ends.

But then, if I feel myself justified in ignoring tolerance in that regard, how can I logically draw a line between what has to be tolerated and what doesn't? In some cases people state that anything that violates the human rights cannot be tolerated. In that case, my own opinion can't be tolerated either. I just stated, that I want to limit the freedom of speech. Sooner or later every debate on that topic will end with a paradox. Every limitation of tolerance is a limitation of the human rights themselves and therefore not practicable after the self-appointed system.

It has to be, then, something that isn't universally applicable. Herbert Marcuse states that "universal toleration becomes questionable when its rationale no longer prevails." What is that rationale, then? The rational groundwork of tolerance, where does it lie, how can we find it, how can we justify our use of it? Do we only tolerate totally rational opinions? In that case I believe that all humankind can be tolerated no longer. Is our application of tolerance wholly rational? What sort of rationality do we use, then? Simple logic and personal gain? In that case I have to tolerate anybody who I want to tolerate me or who can bring me some sort of gain by sticking to their tolerated traditions. I

would not have to tolerate Native American cultures, in that case. Quite the opposite, in fact, if this rule applies, then it was only rational for the American settlers to abuse and kill the Native Americans instead of tolerating them, as their personal gain was highest with this course of action. As I want to defend human rights in my views, however, I can't accept this result of a moral consideration. It has to be another sort of rationale then.

As Marcuse follows the statement up with the critique of parroting followers and groups of "manipulated and indoctrinated individuals", I believe that he asks for the sort of rationale that follows from personal reflection and thought. If, through moral consideration and logical analysis of a situation, you have decided that it is the most rational course of action, to tolerate a culture or an individual's behaviour, you would do best to follow that course. That does, however, never forbid you from questioning what you're tolerating. Even entering in a discussion trying to convince your counterpart of the rightness and superiority of your own position is in no way discouraged by that sort of tolerance, as long as you do so respectfully and without violence. Rational tolerance doesn't prevent conflict and opposition, it just prevents the violent outcome and the stagnation of society that comes with it. True universal tolerance can only be practiced by someone who is willing to interact with the tolerated. Someone who has enough rational dynamic and flexibility to accept the good parts of a strange culture or opinion and to even be influenced by them or adapt them, as well as to reject and rationally dispute the bad or harmful parts of a strange culture and to try to convince others of their reasoning.

This form of tolerance, however can't be achieved through following a few simple rules or through repeating phrases from an overly tolerant superior. Even if everyone were to follow the punch lines like "Live and let live" or "Everyone their own". The fact, that the last example ("Jedem das Seine") was the line engraved above the entrance to Auschwitz should be warning enough to realise that it is not enough of a foundation for decent tolerance. Dangerous, morally bad or acutely harmful actions, words and systems can be explained and legitimised with a false sense of tolerance. For the rational person, that will automatically induce a critical reaction and a thorough examination of said justification. If, for example hate speech in the internet is justified through words like "It's just my opinion, you have to tolerate me!", then that is not an actual occasion for tolerance, oppositely, in this case it is everyone's duty to actively oppose them and protect the victims of such rhetoric. While they are, in fact, protected by the freedom of expression, they are also bound by the interdiction of harmful offense and respectful interaction. While it is free to them to express the opinion that they dislike somebody and even that they hate them, the form of expression is not entirely free and as soon as said form is harmful to the victim, they are no longer protected by freedom of speech and therefore deserve no tolerance. Still, the fact that mosques in Switzerland disrupt peoples sleep and cause noise is not enough reason to forbid their construction.

Whether a situation can and should be treated with a tolerant mind-set can only be decided by an autonomous and individually rational person, not by somebody who simply repeats a flesh-less and hollow idea, that others have told them. It is not enough that everyone be as they are, simple heteronomy is not an ideal society. If every culture, community and opinion were to exist peacefully next to each other, without conflict and only entirely tolerant, respectful and distant interaction, then the whole world would stagnate and whither. Progress, especially political and social progress, has always been a result of conflict, of interaction, of friction between different and diverse groups. Of course we don't want small or so called exotic cultures to die out and be eradicated by megalomaniac culture monopoles like the United States, but I personally am very glad that the European culture for example has changed enough to allow me, a woman, to partake in an intellectual competition. This change has not happened by women saying: "Oh, my husband thinks

I'm worth nothing compared to him, well, I tolerate his opinion." Democracy has not been installed by the French saying: "Well, we tolerate the life-style and culture of the clerics and the nobility, we have to accept their human-rights-defying-ways because that's an expression of their cultural individuality". Some things are bad and some things have to change. No culture is the result of one always tolerated tradition either. Cultures form in duress, in conflict in the opposition and the mixing with other cultures. The lower part of a society can't simply tolerate the life-style of "upper-class" people, even if drinking champagne isn't technically a human rights violation. Conflict is necessary for progress.

And while I find the ideology of people assuming they can simply copy and paste their own culture onto refugees who come to their country sickening, the idea of simply letting them live on as they have is also illogical and unreasonable, while very tolerant. Pure tolerance results in phenomenons like the development of ghettos and racially monotonous parts of a city, like Chinatown or the mostly Muslim Banlieus in Paris. In those separated societies, cultures can live on as they have, we respect their traditions, we tolerate them in our country. This is tolerance. This is not, however, good integration or the right treatment of a refugee. More successful and reasonable would be to involve them into the culture of the country they come into and to let them experience our culture, while not forcing them to adapt it, and also to let them show us their culture, while not forcing us to adapt it. That is not "live and let live", but it is reasonable tolerance.

People who are already formed as autonomous human beings and as individual thinkers are best prepared to enter in those conflicts respectfully and to emerge from them unharmed. They are also the only ones actually able to defend their own culture and their own opinions, therefore the things that should be tolerated. If toleration is a value that has been impressed on an individual through manipulation and indoctrination, then it is impossible for said individual to enter into a conflict, where tolerance for example is a value to be defended. If the goal of tolerance is to respect the individual opinion and values of a person, then there is nobody less qualified then they who have no individual opinions and values of their own.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly agree with Herbert Marcuse, universal toleration is questionable if it is not employed by individual, autonomous and upstanding people, and while it can be taught by one individual to the next, it can never be preached. Rational tolerance, though, is one of the most important foundations of our society.