

CALL FOR PAPERS

*Tracing the path of tolerance.  
History and critique of a political concept from the early modern period to the  
contemporary debate*

Padua, May 26-27, 2015.

The International Conference is organized by the Associazione Alumni della Scuola Galileiana, in collaboration with the University of Padua and the Galileian School of Higher Education.

During the history of political thought the **concept of tolerance** represented not merely an abstract idea, but rather a concrete political public space that rendered possible the recognition of those **civil and political rights** which contributed to the development of **democratic societies**. The concept has undergone radical changes during the centuries: from constituting a claim in favour of **religious freedom** within reformed communities in early modern Europe, to a representation of an **institutional principle** deemed to regulate social life. A concept largely accepted but, at the same time, often criticised being considered a surreptitious instrument of hegemonic political power.

After 250 years from the entry *Tolérance* in Diderot's and d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie* and 50 years after the publication of the famous Marcuse's essay *Repressive Tolerance*, wherein the limits of a passive tolerance were forcefully denounced, this conference aims at highlighting the different meanings the concept acquired in different contexts and different times. In particular, the analysis of the concept will be conducted from an **interdisciplinary perspective** which will merge philosophy, history of political and legal thought, history of literature and political science, by tracing the history of this idea and practice from the early modern period up to the modern debate, focusing on questions such as pluralism and **multiculturalism**.

Within this framework, papers analysing the evolution of the idea of tolerance from an historical or more theoretical perspective, as well as papers focusing on the importance of the concept in current political debates will be welcomed. Some suggested themes are here indicated in order to provide examples of the topics which will be likely to be treated during the conference:

- The evolution of the concept of tolerance: a path through the centuries. The concept of tolerance has been characterized, from the Early Modern period, by a semantic mobility which cannot let us to bestow on this idea a neutral and stable meaning, due to the fact that its sense changes depending on the historical and geographical context wherein it is defined and used. Consequently, we invite studies which tackle the conception, the development, the crystallization of the idea of tolerance along the modernity, giving reason of the **cultural itinerary of the concept** and pointing out continuities and discontinuities between different texts and periods. Analyses on single authors or volumes dealing with the history of the modern idea of this notion, such as Spinoza, Locke, Voltaire, Mill, Marcuse are also encouraged. Contributions on specific juridical, literary or theological works which concern the matter of tolerance are also welcomed.

- Does the concept of tolerance constitute a positive value? The abovementioned essay by Marcuse brought into question the effectiveness of the concept of tolerance in the contemporary politics, laying the groundwork for a general afterthought on the **usefulness of the politics of tolerance** as it was conceived by the **capitalistic liberal democracies** of the Western society. Fifty years later its first publication, Marcuse's pamphlet still forces us to meditate on the system of values of the contemporary societies and on the problematic nature of the concept of tolerance. Therefore we invite proposals on the twentieth-century critical attitudes towards this concept, particularly from a philosophical, political, literary, legal and theological point of view, looking not only at Marcuse's essay, but also, for example, at the works of Lani Guinier (*The tyranny of the majority*, 1994), or Slavoj Zizek (*Ein Plädoyer für die Intoleranz*, 1998).

Tolerance and democracy: theory and practices of political policies. In the globalized postmodern world the production of encounters and clashes between dissimilar cultures, ways of life and systems of values drastically increased in number. Quite often in the past decades these cultural exchanges originated **conflicts**, sometimes particularly ferocious, due to the hostility towards alternative ways of living and thinking - culturally, religiously, economically or politically speaking. Part of the recent political theory had also reintroduced a strategy of tolerance, depicted as one of the most efficient solution in order to reconcile thorny **intercultural conflicts**. The problem strictly concerns also Western democracies, which have to face similar clashes within their internal process of multicultural integration. Consequently, reflections on what tolerance can do (or either what it can't do) in settle these controversies in contemporary politics are strongly encouraged.

The official languages of the conference are English, Italian, Spanish and French. The deadline for submission of proposals is **March 1, 2015**. Applications should be submitted electronically, with an abstract of the proposal (300 words) and CV as an attached document, to **convegnotolleranza2015@gmail.com**. The fee for participating authors is 50 €, and includes the conference materials, social dinner and the coffee break. Travel and accommodation costs will be at the participants' expense. The most significant papers, selected by the scientific board, will be published in a **proceedings volume**. Further informations, including **keynote speakers**, could be found at <http://tolerance2015.wordpress.com/>.

Scientific Board:

- Paolo Bettiolo (Galileian School of Higher Education);
- Adone Brandalise (University of Padua);
- Vincenzo Pace (Galileian School of Higher Education);
- Paolo Scotton (IMT Institute for Advanced Studies Lucca);
- Enrico Zucchi (University of Padua).