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Fețele toleranței[1]
Faces of tolerance
Mihaela Frunză, ed.
Editura Fundatiei AXIS, Iasi, 2003

Tolerance has been granted in post-communist Romania a double status, being at the same time a desirable ideal and a conflicting social reality. Besides being a kind of "buzz' word used and abused, tolerance in Romanian society became a challenging situational study of the social change in itself, as this change eventually found out its course, from a totalitarian society toward a democratic society. The very process of democratization upheld in its implementation the ideal of tolerance, though sometimes as a desired approach rather than a pragmatic one. Many Romanian and foreign observers remarked critically on the peculiarly slow rhythm of setting tolerance at work, especially when European standards of tolerance had to be coped with. Nonetheless, no

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one could deny that Romanian society did not become more open to tolerant practices as well as to a great variety of debates regarding tolerance, or rather lack of tolerance in various sides of Romanian social life. Since 1989, tolerance has come a long way, and quite interestingly, it seemed it took longer to account for the awareness of tolerance as a common, everyday practice rather than speak about it when opportunities arose, no matter how often this happened in a changing society.

It would be therefore useful for a historian of ideas as well as for a student of Romanian modernity to leaf over the pages of the slim yet appealing volume dealing with the various sides of tolerance edited by *Mihaela Frunză*, a young and promising Assistant Professor of the Faculty of Philosophy at the BBU. In the introductory presentation of the volume, Mihaela Frunză speaks about the "frail" attributes of tolerance, as the concept of tolerance will not be fully hosted by classic philosophic disciplines, being thus divided among moral philosophy, theology, ethics and politics, to mention only some of them. Another issue particular to tolerance lies in its paradoxical status meant to claim acceptance of otherness, describing intolerance as the farthest limit of tolerance, not to be transgressed. As many of the contributor of the volume show, tolerance changed in the course of time its original semantic sphere, moving from the practices of conviviality, as restrained coexistence with otherness, to a deeper comprehension of otherness, and furthermore to sanctioning otherness as necessary trait of understanding tolerance in late modernity.

Camil Mureşanu, university professor, historian, member of the Romanian Academy, apparently glimpsing at the etymology at the word tolerance, writes about the hidden possibilities to interpret tolerance according to different historic epochs. Resorting to a Montaigne's quote " the world is nothing else but variety and dissemblance", the author of this elegant pleading for tolerance is of the mind that reflection on tolerance necessarily brings up the question of moral autonomy and individualism in modern society.

Ioan Chirilă, associate professor, theologian, presents the idea of tolerance related to the irenic principle of Christianity. He underlines the complexity of the irenic principle, envisioning possible social changes in accordance with ecclesiastic economy which would deter actual violence and make more manifest the humaneness of man. Writing about the prevalence of religious tolerance over civil tolerance as it occurred in the course of European history, the author focuses on the role of deism in 17th and 18th centuries in Transylvania, as well as about the modernization of religious thinking in this part of present-day Romania, then belonging to historical Hungary. The end of the article points

out to the philosophy of tolerance, as expressed by an Orthodox theologian, namely to the remarks that Christian tolerance fully abides in the prayer.

An interesting contribution to the volume belongs to university professor *Egyed Péter*, philosopher, who starts from a non-exclusive distinction regarding tolerance as being ethics and / or politics. Rooted in the golden age of Lockean classic liberal philosophy, tolerance underwent different phases of its rise toward modernity, due to different contexts of statehood and secularization. As Kantian moral philosophy projected the Enlightenment perception of tolerance over Europe and the world, it seems, writes the author, that the centralized state cannot do without a theocratic background to uphold authority, unless it opens the door to anarchy. Wondering whether tolerance was a Protestant invention, the author does not give a fully affirmative answer, remarking that tolerance was definitely not born in capitalism. The author stresses again on the issue of the limits of tolerance, seeing the limit as the representation of a habitus. Within this the very attempt to pinpoint the limit of tolerance, whether restrained or enlarged in the course of a developmental modernity, one can speak about modern honor, respect, or about a positive sense of tolerance.

Nicu Gavriluţă, associate professor, philosopher, remarks on two meaning of the term tolerance, a "weak" and a "strong" one. The first meaning would inchoate superiority over the tolerated one, with the exemplification of the figure of the barbarian since Roman times. The latter meaning brings in the idea of acceptance of the other, in a complex construction of the figure of otherness according to different hermeneutical interpretations

Sandu Frunză, lecturer, philosopher, author of a recently issued book on religious fundamentalism, questions the concept of tolerance from the present day perspectives of its unmediated reality. Though not being a sociological approach, Sandu Frunză's reflections on fundamentalism bear on recent developments in the world society. Writing about the birth and rise of fundamentalism in the 20th century as a new and distinct sequel of religious, ethnic, political intolerance, the author considers as a major source of fundamentalism the unbearable pressure ignited from contradictions within the capitalist society. The individual quest for truth and authenticity merged with the constraints of representing identity in everyday life exacted their toll on the community life. The dream of restoring the fragmented modern society into a global community respecting individual rights as well as a societal safe conduct is analyzed by the author as a case of failure to comply with the noble demands of tolerance. Instead, the author points out, religious ideologies erupt in violent ways, subvert-

ing not only the concept of tolerance, but also international affairs.

Two translations from the works of *Richard Rorty* and *Peter Van der Meer,* two illustrious authors, complete the local contributions on tolerance with a necessary international horizon.

Notes:

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