

Foreword

Paul Ricœur

Tolerance is a tricky subject: too easy or too difficult. It is indeed too easy to deplore intolerance, without putting oneself into question, oneself and the different allegiances with which each person identifies. But it is too difficult to establish a total coherence between the multiple moral, legal, political, spiritual exigencies that claim to ensure its legitimacy: whether it be about truth, about liberty, about justice, about solidarity, about benevolence. More precisely, is a conviction coming from one or another of these above mentioned registers conceivable without the belief in its truth? But then, how escape from the intolerance of truth? And if liberty implies a right to error, how avoid pouring intolerance into indifference, and how prevent indifference from transforming itself into a tolerance towards the wrong done to others, in particular to the most fragile?

In this issue of the journal *Diogenes*, we have wanted, to the extent that it depended on us, to play the difficulty. This is why we have framed the articles devoted to legal aspects and those devoted to the spiritual aspects of tolerance in two series that answer to one another and for which the titles could have been exchanged: *to think tolerance – obstacles and limits to tolerance*. For, how could we think tolerance without evaluating its obstacles and measuring its limits? And how carry out this critical exercise without some premonition about the conceptual hold of the idea of tolerance? Yet tolerance is only thinkable when both the obstacle of intolerance has been conquered, and exposed to the sort of deterioration against which the intolerable protected it.

In this sense, the entire issue consists in a progression against intolerance and the intolerable.

But if tolerance does not reduce itself to a lukewarm compromise but must be taken as a steep road between two abysses, it is first as

a virtue, as much public as private, that it gives itself to thinking. This is what we have wanted to signify in placing in a position of bookplate in a sense Norberto Bobbio's praise of the *mitezza*. It is a praise that merited this difficult virtue, at the forefront of the discussion and argumentation. Yet this praise has the price of a little semantic enigma; how translate *mitezza* into other languages besides Italian? This difficulty in translating announces the difficulty in thinking tolerance, its reasons, its obstacles, its limits.