ABSTRACT. Our time is characterized by what seems like an unprecedented process of intense global homogenization. This reality provides the context for exploring the nature and value of toleration. Hence, this essay is meant primarily as a contribution to international ethics rather than political philosophy. It is argued that because of the non-eliminability of differences in the world we should not even hope that there can be only one global religion or ideology. Further exploration exposes conceptual affinity between the concepts of intolerance, ideology, and doctrinal evil. The last concept is developed in contrast to pure evil and average evil, and under the assumption of the metaphysical necessity of free will. Doctrinal evil is found to represent the main source of intolerance as a result of a mechanism that tends to confuse doctrinal evil (or the competing conceptions of the good) with pure evil. This connection between doctrinal evil and pure evil provides ideologies with their forcefulness. Tolerance cannot be properly understood in terms of a simple opposition to intolerance, however. Tolerance emerges as a sort of vigilance, conscientiousness, and non-negligence based not on a supposedly correct interpretation of the good, but rather on the acceptance of the fallibility of any such attempted definition. Conversely, the principal evil in doctrinal evil is found in arrogance that accompanies the intolerance-inducing irresponsible thoughtlessness. With this conceptual topology in mind the paper also addresses questions regarding religious tolerance, the ideology of human rights and democracy, the right to self-defense, ways to face evil, the dialectics of using old names for novel evils, and related issues.

KEY WORDS: collective identity, evil, globalization, human rights, ideology, self-defense, tolerance

1. TOLERANCE, FREEDOM, AND GLOBALIZATION

To suggest that tolerance is clearly relevant and important in our time hardly needs arguing. However, a phenomenon that appears closely connected to tolerance, but has yet to be fully explored, is that of globalization. Gaining in momentum, at the time of millennial succession, globalization as a process generates many questions including the question of its value. Tolerance, on the other hand, is accepted as an uncontested value; the sort of value that by its nature is (or ought to be) fundamental to democracy as a structural societal organization that in our time is the imprimatur for any government. Intolerance, by contrast, is taken to be of negative value before the understanding of its nature is even attempted.
If tolerance is an important value, we may want to explain how this came about. The ultimate source of tolerance must be sought in religious tolerance. While some type of tolerance has always been a necessary precondition for human interaction, cooperation, and coexistence, religious tolerance represents its first explicitly articulated form. Given the nature of religious values – in that they aspire toward being foundational – religious tolerance is the most challenging, yet singularly important kind, of tolerance. While utterly incomprehensible and perhaps impermissible, viewed from the perspective of the absolute religious principle designed to provide the meaning of life in the world, the availability of some minimum of religious tolerance is what opens the possibility for doubting and questioning. The practice of doubting and questioning, on the other hand, both offers the basis for real differences (individual and collective) to emerge and provides a ground for individual self-respect to materialize. In the end, difference and self-respect are mutually reinforcing essential elements of the human condition.

This non-eliminability of differences implies something entirely unexpected: We cannot even hope to have only one final religion in the world. The unity of the world appears as elusive as the horizon, were we to attempt to grasp it. However, religions have at their disposal the virtue of humility – embedded as an element of religious essence – which facilitates an openness to tolerance. Once toleration of differences becomes possible, real decisions must be made, which may establish religions as social facts prone to underwriting the formation of traditions. Given that such decisions must be collective decisions, this exposes the inevitable political character of every religion.

Political tolerance, however, represents a real extension of the freedom of human decision-making that incorporates respect for the needs and integrity of present and future people. In this way, politics can focus on accomplishing and improving its worldly purposes, whatever they may be, as long as the interested parties formulate them as a result of consented adoption. Departing from a religious, transcendent criterion for worthy

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2 Religious humility, manifested in the form of prayer, is the result of the aspiration of all religions to have grasped the essence of the cosmos through its Creator. The latter seems to imply the impossibility of tolerance toward other conceptions of the meaning of life, but the awesome power attributed to God underscores human fallibility and necessitates prayer as a component of religious experience. Together, a sense of fallibility needed for prayer and humility make religious tolerance possible, and by implication, all other forms of tolerance.