

doi:[10.1017/S0036930617000503](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930617000503)

John R. Bowlin, *Tolerance among the Virtues* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), pp. 265. \$39.50/£29.95.

[T]he problem with tolerance is not that it is unstable, that it dissolves into relativistic indifference. Rather, the problem is that it begins with judgment and ends in condescension. (p. 21)

Bowlin thus draws from critics who suggest that the supposed virtue of tolerance is complicit in the worst vices of liberal societies. ‘Tolerance encourages a passive-aggressive politics, a gentle and self-deceived paternalism that in fact betrays our commitment to the equal dignity of all’ (p. 22). Bowlin is aware of complaints that tolerance is to be overcome rather than accommodated, and recognises that tolerance is frequently viewed as an inherently resentful response to disagreement and difference (p. 47).

The task that he sets himself is to demonstrate that tolerance is a natural virtue ‘embedded in the form of life humans happen to lead’ (p. 25): if geared to ends we all desire and activities we cannot avoid taking up ‘then it is unlikely that the virtue itself can be resented’ (p. 25). At issue throughout the book is whether tolerance is not a virtue in the Aristotelian sense, not a human perfection, but merely the exercise of self-restraint. Tolerance does not feature in the classical world or in the writings of Thomas Aquinas as a moral virtue that belongs to justice as one of its parts. Bowlin’s constructive claim is that it should be recognised as such because natural to us, and because it functions like other virtues, namely courage: ‘Like courage, it comes with our humanity, with the life we lead according to our kind’ (p. 49).

Like all virtues in Aristotelian-Thomist tradition, Bowlin’s claim is that tolerance is virtuous in that it makes its subject and their work good; the virtue of tolerance corresponds to a special kind of good. This good is the mediation and ordering of human relations across various divides of objectionable difference. The kinds of difference that Bowlin mentions as examples of objectionable difference include taking pleasure in cockfighting, selling pornography, sacrificing animals, using hallucinogens, confessing certain beliefs and endorsing certain policies. All might cause harm but none substantively enough significantly to upset civic life. Legal remedies would likely make things worse. An indifference person simply would not care. Tolerance, by contrast, prompts tolerant actions, exemplifies humility, and somehow comes packaged with our humanity. It can be cultivated and praised without loss to our humanity (p. 67).

So, in Christian perspective, is forbearance the real virtue with tolerance the modern imposter? Should love for one another be cast in terms of virtuous endurance rather than tolerance as virtue’s semblance? Bowlin

discusses friendship with God and neighbour, and forbearance. All belong in the same family of virtues but his claim is that tolerance belongs to justice, with friendship and forbearance belonging to charity. And here is the core of the book. It is about participation in democratic societies. Bowlin's move is to resist any improper confusion of the foundational virtues of justice and love, implying that boundaries – albeit permeable – must be heeded. Thus the formal distinction between tolerance and forbearance arises when we consider the different ends their acts are ordered to achieve (p. 214).

Like the modern discourse on rights that finds no exact parallel in the ancient world in terms of rights that inhere in individual human beings qua human beings, the virtue of tolerance is not identical to classical theological treatments of friendship, forbearance or, we might add, magnanimity. Neither, of course, are our socio-economic and political contexts the same as classical or medieval contexts. Bowlin is concerned about not shutting down democratic debate (p. 203). The challenge, of course, is that democratic freedom is 'just another word for cockfighting' (p. 243). Bowlin's response is to ask whether or when an injustice is committed if certain freedoms are denied, and what pertains to the common good. The issue at the heart of the book is the relation between justice and love in the divinely created natural order. Readers are invited to accept that, in modern democratic societies, tolerance should be regarded as a portion of love's political work, not to be confused with prodigality of the loves of friendship and patient endurance beyond the proximate ends of citizenship (p. 249).

This is one of the few books during the course of reading which I changed my mind. Having started where the book starts, with problems associated with tolerance, I came to accept that the virtue of magnanimity (which is how many of the patristic writers would have tackled such issues) does not suffice today. Bowlin's claim is innovative and *Tolerance among the Virtues* sustains the ends of love and justice in a healthy tension – and with a writing style of uncommon élan. The demands of justice in modern, pluralistic, democratic societies require ventures such as this.

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doi:[10.1017/S0036930617000448](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930617000448)

Akiva Cohen: *Matthew and the Mishnah* (Tübingen: Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe 418, 2016), pp. xix + 636. €119.