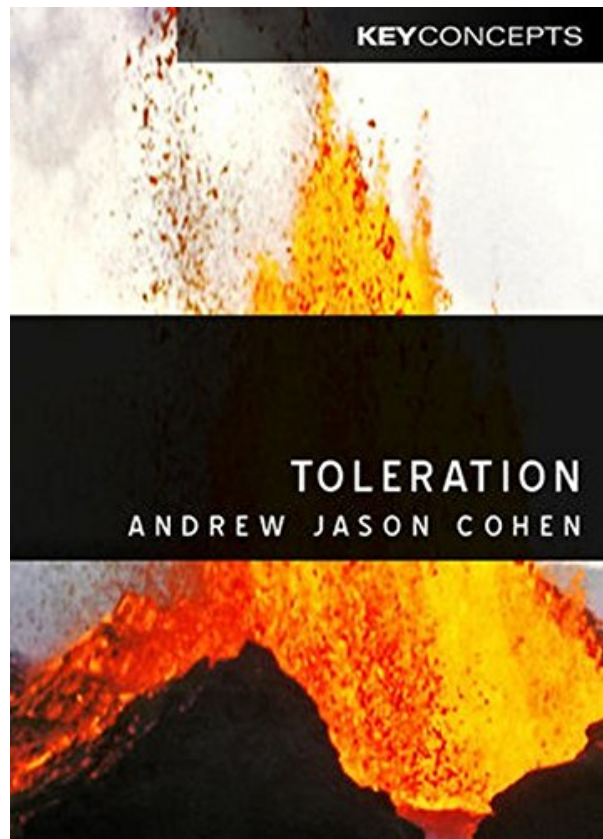
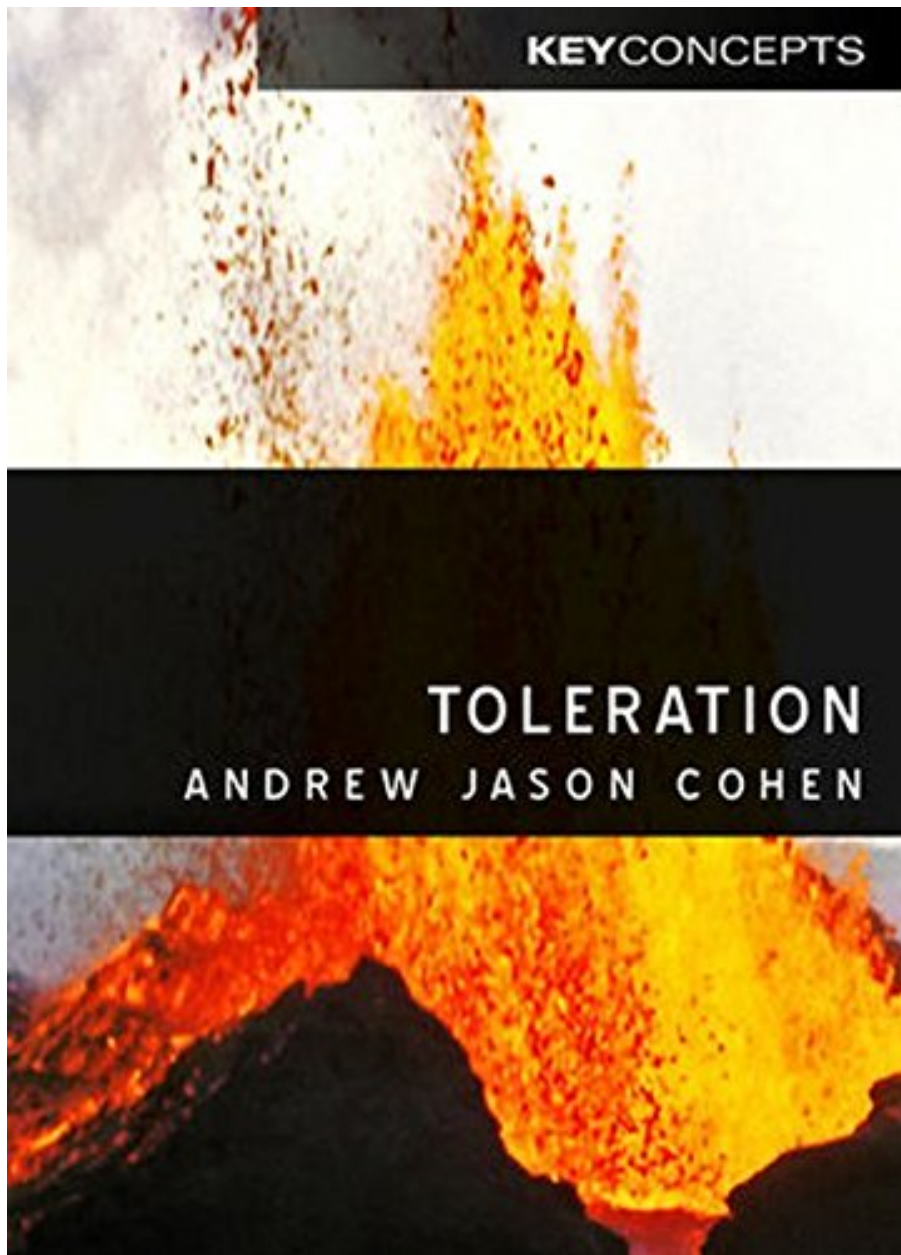


TOLERATION BY ANDREW JASON COHEN



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Review

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TOLERATION BY ANDREW JASON COHEN PDF

In this engaging and comprehensive introduction to the topic of toleration, Andrew Jason Cohen seeks to answer fundamental questions, such as: What is toleration? What should be tolerated? Why is toleration important?

Beginning with some key insights into what we mean by toleration, Cohen goes on to investigate what should be tolerated and why. We should not be free to do everything—murder, rape, and theft, for clear examples, should not be tolerated. But should we be free to take drugs, hire a prostitute, or kill ourselves? Should our governments outlaw such activities or tolerate them? Should they tolerate “outsourcing” of jobs or importing of goods or put embargos on other countries? Cohen examines these difficult questions, among others, and argues that we should look to principles of toleration to guide our answers. These principles tell us when limiting freedom is acceptable—that is, they indicate the proper limits of toleration. Cohen deftly explains the main principles on offer and indicates why one of these stands out from the rest.

This wide-ranging new book on an important topic will be essential reading for students taking courses in philosophy, political science and religious studies.

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3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A detailed and accessible look at tolerance

By Amazon Customer

"If the young are to be instructed at all, it seems to me that they ought to be instructed in the high human value of this toleration. They should be taught what they learn by experience in the school yard: that human beings differ enormously, one from the other, and that it is stupid and imprudent for A to try to change B. They should be taught that mutual confidence and good will are worth all the laws ever heard of, ghostly or secular, and that one man who minds his own business is more valuable to the world than 10,000 cocksure moralists." H.L. Mencken

One of the great mysteries of our world is how it suddenly became so rich. For over 50,000 years of human existence, humans were poor. Only a small elite could raise itself, but only on the backs of everyone else. Then something mysterious happened and over the last two hundred years, but a blink of the last 50,000 years, the world became much richer. About forty times richer in the leading developed countries.

Though there are no clear answers about what happened to trigger this massive, wonderful and ongoing rise in human prosperity, values surely have something to do with it. Tolerance must be among the necessary values.

This scholarly yet admirably accessible work of philosophy describes, evaluates and dissects tolerance with clarity, care and rigour.

Tolerance is the virtue in the middle of the spectrum, with agreement on one side and opposition on the other. As defined by Dr. Cohen, tolerance does not imply agreement. Indeed, disagreement is an essential element of tolerance, for you can not tolerate what you don't disagree with. Not opposing what you disagree with is what makes it tolerance, exactly as you hope another would not oppose you if they disagreed with you. Imagine the breakthrough in human relations to simply live and let live, even if one disagrees with another's choice of religion, marriage partner, customs or politics?

Like Goldilocks' porridge, to be effective tolerance has to be just right. At one extreme, tolerance fails to oppose evil, while at the other, tolerance opposes good. The harm principle is key to striking a balance. Outside of harm, none of the other possible norms considered by Dr. Cohen strike the right balance. Harm, not offence, is what justifies an end to toleration and the beginning of opposition.

Finally, Dr. Cohen considers toleration in the context of children, animals, the environment and social groups, including countries and corporations.

Overall, this book is a worthy addition to the body of knowledge that grapples with the challenge of how we all might live together such that all of us achieve our fullest potential.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Understand toleration, its justification, value, and limits.

By Shawn Klein

Andrew J. Cohen's *Toleration* starts with the "aim to provide a clear and lively introduction to the issues surrounding toleration" (1). He successfully, in my view, achieves this aim. He grounds the concept of toleration historically in the history of western liberalism. Then, after a theoretical interlude, he presents several different principles that (might) ground and guide toleration. The most important of these is the Harm Principle. Cohen's account of toleration, unsurprisingly, is rooted largely (and rightly in my view) in Mill's *On Liberty*. He closes with an analysis of the general value and good of toleration. All in all, it is clear and it is lively; it is written, for the most part, in a direct and accessible way. So much so that this would make a great text for an introduction to political philosophy class.

I say "for the most part" above because there were a few sections that got bogged down in a bit. First, the theoretical section of chapter 2 seems to play more to a particular trend in professional political philosophy. The value of this chapter in relation to the rest of book was unclear to me. Second, Cohen's discusses an argument for basing toleration on a principle of benefiting others (4B). This was the one section of the book I found hard to follow; the argument here being opaque. This might be much more to do with the difficulty of trying to articulate a view that is itself unclear than to a deficiency on Cohen's part.

Cohen is careful to distinguish toleration from relativism, subjectivism, or non-judgmentalism. In fact, Cohen intends his view to be universal and it is based on a kind of objective morality. Moreover, the very idea or need for toleration depends on the prior fact of having judged someone (or his or her actions) to be objectionable.

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Although relatively short (156 pp), Cohen's book covers a lot of ground. It is a useful book for those interested in understand better the concept of toleration, its justification, its value, and its limits.

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