**Abstract**

Retrieving the etymological meaning of the word “tolerance,” accompanying the evolution of the concept along its history, and exploring some of its major current uses and their impact in common morality and within bioethics, this article proposes to make clear and accurately define the legitimate usage of the term “tolerance.”

“Tolerance” started to be advocated in the wake of the rejection of moral absolutism and gained importance in an increasingly pluralistic world. But its growing hegemony in the moral debate leads dangerously to a moral indifferentism, which subsequently leads to the suppression of morality itself. The issue of the limits of tolerance becomes unavoidable.

In this context, the moral status of tolerance is also examined, being challenged as an ideal, and as a value, and being redefined as a virtue.

This reflection will unfold at the level of philosophical clarification of “tolerance,” the common morality perception of it, and its impact on bioethical theory and practice.

**Keywords**

Moral absolutism Moral indifferentism Pluralism Value Virtue John Locke John Stuart Mill Tristram Engelhardt, Jr.