ABSTRACT. Teaching about homosexuality, especially in a positive light, has long been held to be a controversial issue. There is, however, a view of the capacity for reason that finds that those who deem homosexuality to be controversial will ultimately contradict themselves, becoming unreasonable. By this standard of reason, homosexuality should be treated as non controversial in schools. In this essay, John Petrovic argues that this epistemic position is problematic. Instead, he defends a Deweyan epistemology that casts reason as, in part, a set of socially acquired habits of mind. People who have been socialized into heterosexist habits of mind must be exposed to counterhegemonic discourses. One such discourse can be found in the public values of liberal democracy through which the practice of reason must be pursued. Petrovic discusses the practical guidance provided by assuming a view of normative reason versus habituated reason in terms of both pedagogy and curriculum.

INTRODUCTION

Sexuality education is generally understood to be one of the more controversial areas of education.1 But what does it mean to say that something is controversial, and what do understandings of “controversial” mean for teaching? These are the philosophical questions taken up by Michael Hand in two provocative articles and in this volume. In each, Hand defends an “epistemic criterion” for determining the controversial.2 The epistemic criterion casts a matter as controversial only “when contrary views can be held on it without those views being contrary to reason” ([WSW, 214]. Hand takes the teaching of homosexuality as a case study, arguing that the epistemic criterion reveals homosexuality to be, in fact, noncontroversial.3 It should, therefore, be treated as such in schools.

Against the epistemic criterion, Hand presents the political criterion. According to this criterion, “a moral question should be taught as controversial when no answer to it is entailed by the public values of the liberal democratic

1. While the term “sex education” is more typical, it connotes a very narrow range of topics, namely sex and its constituent topics: safe sex, abstinence, reproduction, and so on. Furthermore, all of these topics are typically isolated in a single course. Sexuality education, to my mind, includes a broader range of and more far-reaching topics such as relationships (both opposite-sex and same-sex ones), gender expression, transgender identity, and the like. These should cut across the curriculum. To the extent that we view the issues I have mentioned only under the rubric of “sex education,” sex education becomes, in effect, heterosexist education. It is, of course, these latter issues within sexuality education, already contentious itself, that make up the bulk of controversy in this area.


3. Hand, “Should We Teach Homosexuality as a Controversial Issue?”
state” (WSW, 221). Hand dismisses the political criterion since it rests, he argues, “on a misunderstanding of what is involved in directive moral education or on an unwarranted moral skepticism” (WSW, 215). As regards the former, those who “misunderstand” what is involved in directive moral education take the position that it is indoctrination as opposed to equipping children with the capacity to practice rational thought and action.

I want to suggest that Hand is wrong to view these as severable. It would seem, at first blush, that equipping children to practice rational thought and action is in direct opposition to indoctrination. But the idea of rational thought and action (not to mention the curriculum and pedagogy that their promotion entails) is a political value as well as an epistemic one. Furthermore, it is not a value that has been or is always applied in children’s education. Hand’s convincing refutation of the ways, for example, that religion sometimes gets applied to issues of homosexuality signals how children in those communities are taught. While I might agree that moral questions can be determined by reason, even in the way that Hand couches reason, this cannot be a universally pronounced and accepted strategy vis-à-vis homosexuality.

Thus, building on Hand, there are two issues, one philosophical and the other practical, that I wish to expand upon. First, I think the political criterion is much more relevant and useful to Hand’s project than he recognizes, for he goes beyond merely defining controversy: in defending an education that equips children with the capacity to practice rational thought and action, he speaks directly to the purposes of education — always already political — and to the pedagogy required to achieve those purposes. I will argue that the epistemic should be guided by the political values of liberalism since reason is conditioned or, as later explained by drawing on John Dewey, “habituated” in problematic ways. Second, Hand’s take on “directive moral education” and his notion of “steering” require substantial elaboration in ways that resist a false pedagogical binary and that are robust enough to deal with real-world circumstances that derive from habituated reason.4

Ultimately, education should aim to direct social change — in this particular case, toward antiheterosexism. This is certainly both an epistemic and political act, and political principles are required to guide determinations regarding how to deal with (non)controversial issues and why. While Hand and I may arrive at similar pedagogical conclusions, he gets there by means of a nondialogical liberal epistemology of universalism. This is because Hand assumes that the natural [by which he means presocial and ahistorical] capacity for reason shared by all human

4. See Michael Hand, “Framing Classroom Discussion of Same-Sex Marriage,” in this issue. I take “directive moral education” and “steering” to be interchangeable terms.

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beings is retained. But Hand is mistaken in conflating the natural capacity for reason with the practice of reason, which is always already contained by our social and historical relations and contingencies. Such relations guide and sometimes override reason. Therefore, I arrive at my pedagogical conclusions via a much more dialogical view of the public values of liberalism, which provide a widely accepted guide for reason. That is to say that my view of liberalism and of liberal epistemology is that they rest on engagement, practice, and experiential transactions among individuals. On the one hand, this position may narrow the range of reasons to be taken into account in the determination of controversiality, that is, an issue is controversial or not to the extent that it defies or supports the public values of liberalism. On the other hand, the appeal to liberalism broadens — even as it complicates — the range of pedagogical options thereby allowing greater sensitivity to local context and personal values (including those that betray public ones).

Reason Is Dependent Upon Habits and Hitches

Hand’s defense of the epistemic criterion as a superior alternative to the political criterion reveals his preference for normative rationality, which should be viewed as problematic in democratic societies. Hand’s defense rests on the precarious argument that a given view is moral to the extent that arguments on one side are rational and arguments on the other side are not. Hand never tells us what he means by moral, and the closest he gets to setting out a definition of rational is to suggest that “part of what it means to be rational is that beliefs are formed or adopted on the basis of good reasons” (WSW, 227). It is not at all clear on what the notion of “good reasons” rests other than that reasons should be based on “evidence that is epistemically adequate” (WSW, 218). It is also not clear, then, why we should not dismiss such a standard as impracticable given that, as John Rawls recognizes in his notion of reasonable pluralism, people who freely exercise their reason will still disagree fundamentally and persistently about their values and principles, that is, those things that, in the end, guide or frequently override reason itself.5

This is because our reasoning is based not on good reasons, as Hand assumes, but on reasons that matter to us. As Dewey argues,

If one, after a generation or a century, reviews the controversy and finds that some consensus of judgment has finally been reached, he discovers that this has come about, not so much through exhaustive logical discussion, as through a change in men’s points of view. The solution is psychologically, rather than logically, justified.6

Thus, Peter Gardner argues that if an issue is epistemically controversial, then reason cannot gain a grip on the issue (WSW, 215).7 In this way, the epistemic criterion simply slips into subjectivism. Hand, in turn, argues that reason is


still involved since we can reason through the arguments and come to our own reasoned conclusions even as we recognize the reasonableness of other positions. But this response misses the point. “Reasoning through,” for Hand, means “to apply reason to.” However, even as we can apply reason to the arguments, we still tend to reason through some lens: a network of beliefs, attitudes, and experiences that make up our subjectivity. To put Dewey’s point about logic in slightly different terms, it is the case that belief and reason are interactive, and it is the emotional and other psychological attachments to one’s beliefs that tend to induce action, democratic or otherwise. For Dewey, the purpose of intelligence is to generate action, and this does not occur “except as it is enkindled by feeling.”

My argument for a socially and historically encumbered conceptualization of reason is captured by Dewey’s discussion of habits, including habits of mind. Further, the practice of reason can be viewed as transactions occasioned by what Dewey refers to as “hitches” in the empirical situation. Formed within the subject’s particular social context, habits shape who we are and how we feel, constituting the reality of the self. Dewey is careful to stress that these habits “are active means that project themselves, energetic and dominating ways of acting” in order to dispel the “myth” that it is “a mind or consciousness or soul in general which performs these operations.” Habits project themselves prior to reflection: “Habit incorporates, enacts or overrides objects, but it doesn’t know them.”

This said, Dewey does not conceive of the social context in which human selves are constituted as hermetically sealed from external influences. Although the subject is certainly shaped by habits and often led mechanically by them, this need not be the case. Moments occur when those habits are raised to the conscious attention of the one possessing them. In those moments reflection can occur, even reflection upon one’s most deeply socialized habits. This is

8. This is not to suggest that Dewey separates the psychological from the logical. Taken within his emphasis on wholeness and his frequent disapprobation of binary thinking generally and the mind-body binary specifically, the logical and the psychological — or what Dewey categorizes as mental functions, within which he also, it should be noted, includes desiring, hoping, loving, and fearing — must also be viewed holistically, in recursion. This recursion provides knowledge and understanding to guide “the labor of multitudes now too predominantly physical in character,” which must also “be inspired by purpose and emotion.” John Dewey, “Body and Mind,” Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine 4, no. 1 (1928): 8.


12. Ibid., 177.
because reason is sustained and developed through men’s moral relations to one another.13

Such relations engender reflection upon one’s habits, prompted when there is “a hitch in [their] workings [that] occasions emotion and provokes thought.”14 These “hitches” evoke incompatible responses. The subject is then forced to reflect on the tension created and devise a way to cope with it. This coping requires the modification of both the subject and the object of study. In this transaction the object acquires new meaning for the subject, and anytime a subject reconstructs the object of inquiry, he or she is also changed. For the subject now “knows” in an altered way, and this new knowing must be made consistent with the other habits that constitute the self.

Applied to the issue of “knowing” other people, Dewey eloquently argues that

Bigotry, intolerance, or even unswerving faith in the superiority of one’s own religious and political creed are much shaken when individuals are brought face to face with each other, or have the ideas of others continuously and forcibly placed before them.15

In short, knowing, — particularly knowing that some other is X — is a social process, revealed especially when in close proximity to the other. In this process, the interaction with a person whose subjectivity is constituted by a different discourse [or constituted differently by a shared discourse by virtue of occupying a different position in that discourse] need pose no threat to the possibility of mutual understanding.

To bring the discussion back to the issue at hand, by framing heteronormativity in terms of habits, as broadly conceived by Dewey, we are able to look for ways of bringing different patterns of belief and feeling into conflict with heteronormative habits such that educative transaction occurs. The challenge for this transactional view of subjectivity is to overcome the exclusionary practices — the avoidance, the dismissal, and the dehumanizing rhetoric directed toward those who are different — through which coherent subject positions are assumed. For example, heterosexual subjectivity is often constituted through the repudiation of homosexuality. Thus, it is crucial that educational transactions “force a reworking of that logic of non-contradiction by which one identification is always and only purchased at the expense of another,” for this is part of how we might “find a way both to occupy such sites and to subject them to a democratizing contestation in which the exclusionary conditions of their production are perpetually reworked.”16

In sum, Dewey’s conceptualization of habits that “project themselves” and “dominate[e] ways of acting” reiterates the earlier claim that belief is always already in interaction with reason, requiring reason not only about but through habits. Hitches engender a pause in the interaction, creating space within which reason might be engaged with, against, or alongside other habits. Accordingly, Dewey’s habits, hitches, and the transactions they cause speak to the importance of reason while revealing its embeddedness. It functions within and by means of specific experiential conditions and discursive relations. As Michel de Certeau writes, “in spite of a persistent fiction, we never write on a blank page, but always on one that has already been written on.”

This being the case, around what habits should our justifications coalesce? It cannot be reason alone. On the one hand, habits of being and feeling that constitute subjectivity can be nonreflective, becoming negative limits on inquiry and preventing the acquisition of new knowledge, despite any appeal to be reasonable. On the other hand, some kinds of habits are the necessary prereflective prerequisites of inquiry. Without them there is no problematic tension between habits in conflict to prompt the inquiry. The difference is whether the habits lend themselves to the deliberate engagement in inquiry. It is here that the necessity of habituating students to reason through democratic habits is revealed, and it is here that the importance of the political to the epistemic comes to light. For political liberalism not only provides a standard of good reason but also evokes the hitch that undermines heteronormative practices in schools.

**Liberal Supplementation of the Epistemic**

Importantly, it is not the case that our liberal public values are silent on the issue of homosexuality. As Hand rightly notes, “morally educated people can reasonably be expected to comply with rationally well-grounded moral principles, and the class of rationally well-grounded moral principles includes the public values of the liberal democratic state” (WSW, 224). If liberty and equality are among these public values, and I think they are, then a standard of morality in democratic societies should be grounded in those values. Dewey speaks to the enduring values of liberalism, emphasizing the importance of “liberty, the development of the inherent capacities of individuals made possible through liberty [reason being one such capacity], and the central role of free intelligence in inquiry, discussion and expression.”


18. A thorough review of these values is beyond the scope of this essay. However, in addition to the liberal values evident in my discussion of Dewey, I would tend to embrace the similar values espoused by John Rawls. For a brief account of these, see Dianne Gereluk, “The Democratic Imperative to Address Sexual Equality Rights in Schools,” in this issue.

immoral. Following from this, liberalism also supports the moral legitimacy of the sexual identities to be expressed.20

Thus, in comparison to Hand, I am making the stronger claim that liberalism is not just another “class of rationally well-grounded moral principles,” but is the class of such principles that both gives reason purchase (providing a groundwork for “good” reasons) and shapes how we reason (having been habituated by the principles). This is captured by Dewey when he writes,

Flux does not have to be created. But it does have to be directed. It has to be so controlled that it will move to some end in accordance with the principles of life, since life itself is development. Liberalism is committed to an end that is at once enduring and flexible: the liberation of individuals so that realization of their capacities may be the law of their life. It is committed to the use of freed intelligence as the method of directing change.21

But, again, “freed intelligence” is not reason from nowhere; it is embedded in liberal democracy and informed by sympathy and respect for the other members of society. The fact that intelligence or reason is political in the ways noted should not be read to suggest that we should abandon reason and lapse into relativism. It is to say that it is the rare individual who reasons as Hand suggests, especially as concerns questions of morals and values. It is the rare individual who, caught in faulty reasoning, simply concedes the question. Perhaps Walt Whitman captured the human epistemic condition in his poem *Song of Myself*: “Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself. I am large; I contain multitudes.”22

In light of these considerations, it seems appropriate to return to Dewey’s point — to which I alluded in the previous section — that the knowing invoked by the hitch should lead the subject to consistency among the habits that constitute the self. As regards views of homosexuality, it is certainly the case that religious convictions and democratic principles can be honored consistently.23 However, it may be the case that the best many individuals can hope for is a bifurcated epistemology. That is to say that, given the multifaceted nature of human subjectivity, individuals may “know” homosexuality in religiously oppressive and democratically liberatory ways simultaneously and can take democratic action accordingly.

This is, in fact, part and parcel of Dewey’s view of subjectivity discussed earlier. Reflecting on this view, Raf Vanderstraeten and Gert Biesta observe,

> It is important to note, that although agreement in action requires a sufficient coordination of individual perspectives, it does in no way require that these perspectives become identical.

20. For more on this point, see note 43.


23. This is not to suggest that the only challenges to the moral legitimacy of homosexuality find their roots in religion.
People remain to “live” in their own reality, although this reality has now been sufficiently transformed to make agreement in action possible.24 My argument is that liberalism is the basis of “a sufficient coordination of individual perspectives”; in other words, as noted previously, it provides the habits of mind around which our justifications should coalesce. Such agreement in action or coalescence strikes me as less plausible or, at least, less likely following the epistemic criterion.

I agree with Hand that the arguments against the moral legitimacy of homosexuality all fail his test of reason, that is, they betray a law of noncontradiction.25 Nevertheless, these are contradictions internal to a given argument set. The law of noncontradiction employed in this way, especially against religious conviction, simply sets people to avoiding or ignoring the contradiction. So, for example, when reason points to the many problems of invoking Leviticus, those who find homosexuality morally problematic on religious grounds may simply turn to Corinthians. When pushed there, or on the very few other Biblical passages that seem to confirm their original stance, opponents of homosexuality may find confirmation in the absoluteness of revelation.

Employing reason through a Deweyan frame, however, sets people to a renegotiation of their subjectivities — whether this process ultimately leads to consistency or bifurcation. This is because they are forced to deal with the other on democratic terms. The oppressive (heteronormative, in this case) discourses to which so many people have been habituated necessitate that they be exposed to a counterhegemonic discourse. But this must be done in a way that is likely to be effective. Of course, this can happen within and through religious discourse. But habituating children to religious discourse(s), even counterhegemonic ones, is not a legitimate role of the school.26 Habituating children to the ideals of liberalism, the dominant political discourse in most Western democracies, is legitimate.

The respect for liberty and the application of reason in that light is the method of democracy: “organized intelligence” that brings conflicting interests and claims “out into the open where their special claims can be seen and appraised.”27 For Hand, they should be appraised on the basis of good reason: noncontradiction. For Dewey, however, they should be judged “in the light of more inclusive


25. To my mind, Hand convincingly refutes the common arguments against homosexuality as they derive from scriptural authority, assertions regarding the proper biological function of sexual organs, and arguments from natural law.

26. Here I am speaking from a U.S.-centric position given the establishment clause of the United States Constitution.

interests than are represented by either of them separately." 28 This is not merely an epistemic claim but a political one as well since intelligence must be given direction, in this case by the public values of liberal democracy. 29 Thus, as suggested in my introduction, the range of reasons to include homosexuality in the curriculum as a noncontroversial topic is narrowed to the public values of liberalism. 30 However, the practice of liberty, including reason, cannot be regarded as individual right. It is, instead, a collective duty in engagement with others. Recognition of this forces a broadening of the pedagogical options.

**The Directive/Nondirective Binary: Problems and Consequences**

Hand’s notion of steering is an extension of what he calls directive moral education. On the one hand, if something is noncontroversial, it can be taught as settled fact wherein concerns about teacher bias are not raised. On the other hand, if something is controversial, it should be taught in a way that provides students opportunities to explore and defend or question competing views on the issue. Hand refers to these as directive (or “steering” in his contribution to this symposium) and nondirective teaching, respectively [see, for example, WSW]. According to Hand, what distinguishes directive from nondirective teaching “is not a pedagogical method or style, but the willingness of the teacher to endorse one view on a matter as the right one” (WSW, 213).

Directive moral education may not be “an exercise in the issuing and enforcing of commands,” as Hand argues, but neither is it merely “an exercise in the giving of advice and the promulgating of information,” as Hand also claims [WSW, 224]. In other words, despite his intent, Hand cannot distance himself from indoctrination or engineering compliance. Liberal values — including reason — are legitimately and already, to some degree, inculcated through directive moral education. This is because reason, rational deliberation, and the search for good reasons — Hand’s advice being to pursue these ideals — are, as I have argued, part and parcel of the collective notion of liberty. Thus, it is problematic to argue, on the one hand, that we teach students to be epistemically free, but in so doing that we are somehow not, on the other hand, engineering students’ compliance with the idea that such freedom should be sought. Furthermore, the curriculum and pedagogy involved in the notion of steering are steps toward engineering compliance with the idea of the moral legitimacy of homosexuality.

These points are missed in Hand’s argument because he creates a false binary between directive and nondirective moral education. From the broader view, the

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28. Ibid., 81.

29. Note that I cannot make the claim that an appeal to liberalism can overcome the fact that some people are simply oblivious to the fact that their positions betray fundamental principles of liberal democracy or don’t care that this is the case. Perhaps it is at this point that one must appeal to the law of noncontradiction. Still, reasonable people can disagree upon when a contradiction obtains.

30. Hand’s position on this point is that the issue could be rendered noncontroversial from any vantage point (religious, for example) as long as the principle of noncontradiction is met.
distinction between directive and nondirective teaching establishes a fictitious binary since the experience of schooling, regardless of pedagogy, is directive. Schools are, after all, state apparatuses designed to promote national cohesion, create a common culture, breed allegiance, reinforce dominant ideology, and so on. More importantly, the binary is false since, even as a teacher refrains from endorsing one view over another, the inclusion and impartial consideration of different sides of an issue would seem to legitimize all sides. Thus, along the lines of the concept of the hidden curriculum, the nondirective is, in fact, directive—Hand’s distinction notwithstanding. Furthermore, since reason is both an aim of political liberalism and habituated by it, teaching students to reason in a particular way is certainly directive even as its aim is to overcome directive education. Thus, the question is never whether schooling is indoctrinary, but toward what ends, and the pedagogical options are not quite so black and white, requiring a somewhat more expansive take.

To this end, Thomas Kelly outlines four perspectives on the teacher’s role in discussing controversial issues. These perspectives reveal and resist the directive/nondirective binary. They are (1) exclusive neutrality, (2) exclusive partiality, (3) neutral impartiality, and (4) committed impartiality. Even though Kelly assumes a taken-for-granted understanding of “controversial,” which Hand rejects, Kelly’s perspectives, in combination with the Deweyan processes already discussed, shed some practical light on how to approach the teaching of homosexuality. Drawing from Kelly, I define these positions up front and then discuss their implications for the directive/nondirective binary as well as how they inform the approach of “positive systematic inclusion,” which requires the positive portrayal of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer and questioning [LGBTQ] people in school curricula.

1. **Exclusive neutrality** prohibits the introduction of issues that are controversial in the broader community. From this perspective, homosexuality would not be raised as a legitimate topic of discussion by the teacher or in the curriculum. Students who raised the issue would simply be directed to ask their parents.

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31. I should note that while I refer here to public schools, I would argue that all schools [public, private, home, and so on] have many of these purposes in common. Private religious schools breed allegiance among [read: indoctrinate] children to particular religious values; homeschools will emphasize the values of the parents; and so on.

32. This argument necessarily leads to discussion of neutrality. The kind of neutrality alluded to here often leads to hostile environments for LGBTQ youth [as Cris Mayo discusses in “Unsettled Relations: Schools, Gay Marriage, and Educating for Sexuality,” in this issue].


2. **Exclusive partiality** is the only perspective that can be considered wholly directive, requiring the presentation of a particular view as correct and preferable on a controversial issue in order to induce its acceptance among students. In its more authoritarian forms, exclusive partiality would seek to undermine, dismiss, or ignore presentations of other points of view. The curriculum and the teacher would assume advocacy positions. Of course, exclusive partiality could pursue advocacy from either side of the issue, for example, advocating gay marriage or advocating “traditional family values.”

3. **Neutral impartiality** requires a curriculum that presents the strongest arguments on all sides of an issue toward the promotion of “an atmosphere where complexity of understanding, tolerance for ambiguity, and responsiveness to constructive criticism are extended” and where dissent can be expressed “without ridicule, coercion or censure.” Neutral and impartial teachers are precluded from stating their own positions on homosexuality, be they positive or negative.

4. **Committed impartiality** requires a curriculum like that of neutral impartiality. However, teachers are directed to state rather than conceal their own views on an issue while still ensuring a fair hearing of competing perspectives.

**Exclusive Neutrality**

With reference to homosexuality, exclusive neutrality would seem to be synonymous with Richard Friend’s notion of systematic exclusion: “the process whereby positive role models, messages, and images about gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are publicly silenced in schools.” It is important to point out, however, that exclusive neutrality does not follow the pedagogy indicated in steering; it is nondirective. With this, the fundamental problem with the directive/nondirective binary is further revealed: the heteronormative curricular silencing of an entire community is quite directive.

Although it has a place in terms of teacher endorsement (which I specify in the conclusion), exclusive neutrality in relation to curricular content is indefensible. For Hand, homosexuality is not epistemically controversial; for me, it is not politically controversial and must be included in a normalized way, as “morally legitimate or unproblematic.” Further, I agree with Kelly that exclusive neutrality rests on the naive idea that schools and the teaching that takes place within them can and should be value-free and depoliticized while also providing meaningful civic education and promoting democratic deliberation.

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37. Hand, “Should We Teach Homosexuality as a Controversial Issue?,” 70.
and participation. Students’ reason and their democratic deliberation cannot be engaged when the hitch is not present.

**Exclusive Partiality**

I don’t think Hand has in mind the more authoritarian forms of exclusive partiality in his notion of steering as “guiding participants, by means of strategic prompts, questions, and interjections, toward a predetermined conclusion.”\(^{38}\) But steering is akin to exclusive partiality. In terms of curricular content, I agree that exclusive partiality should be embraced. Hand points out that some political criterionists wrongly reject directive moral education because they simply misunderstand what it involves: they view it as being about either coercion or inculcation. Since both represent an intrusion on the liberty of citizens, both must be restrained in the name of the public values of the state.

This is the view of Jan Steutel and Ben Spiecker, who argue that

If we consider all forms of sexual morality to be private [as Steutel and Spiecker do], we necessarily assume that the state does not have the right to promote or favour such a kind of morality, neither by introducing coercive measures or holding out the prospects of rewards, nor by taking steps to ensure that the relevant moral concerns are inculcated or cultivated.\(^{39}\) Clearly, this position requires a nondirective approach. Yet committed impartiality is ruled out — even though it is nondirective in curricular content — since it allows teachers, representatives of the state, to express their position. Doing so should be seen fairly straightforwardly as a form of inculcation. It also pushes toward coercion to the extent that students could presume rewards from agreeing with their teacher.

Steutel and Spiecker’s position might also lead to the pursuit of neutral impartiality, but only if one buys the false binary. For neutral impartiality, by its very inclusion of both sides of an argument as legitimate, necessarily becomes inculcating, or at least breeds a moral skepticism acceptable to neither side of the debate. As soon as the falsity of the binary is recognized, political criterionists of this sort are forced into exclusive neutrality. Yet exclusive neutrality, as I just argued, is also unacceptable given the directive nature of silence.

Thus, Steutel and Spiecker’s position is fatally flawed educationally. This is because liberalism does not require the kind of restraint they claim, presumably in the name of neutrality. Liberalism, in fact, requires the inclusion of homosexuality and the portrayal of homosexual relationships in the curriculum just as heterosexuality is included. Otherwise, the liberal requirements of both neutrality and recognition are rendered shams.\(^{40}\) Furthermore, I am not concerned

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38. See Hand, “Framing Classroom Discussion of Same-Sex Marriage,” 499.


40. Neutrality in this vein might take the form of civic-minded neutrality suggested by Mayo in “Unsettled Relations.” For a defense of recognition, see Petrovic, “Moral Democratic Education and
that this might be viewed as coercion or inculcation since, as already observed, the inculcation of democratic values is a legitimate purpose of schooling. As Rawls clarifies, we may aim for neutrality but there can be no neutrality of effect. For by the very aiming for neutrality, the effect is sought and achieved to some degree, as are the other principles of democracy that rest on neutrality.

**Neutral Impartiality**

Steering would follow pedagogically from neutral impartiality. On the one hand, this is the position of Alexander McKay, a political criterionist who, like Steutel and Spiecker, “contends that sex educators have no business taking sides.” But I take it also to be related to steering since exchange without ridicule and an airing of all sides would be the only effective means of engaging students’ reason, not having them shut down, even as they are being steered toward a correct conclusion. This aspect of neutral impartiality should certainly be practiced.

Nevertheless, in terms of curricular content, as opposed to student participation and questioning, neutral impartiality would require treating homosexual acts as controversial, as if there were “good reasons” on both sides of the issue: in this sense it precludes steering. Thus, it also prohibits teachers from endorsing the moral legitimacy of homosexual acts, as required by directive moral education. As a result, it violates the basic tenets of positive systematic inclusion required by liberalism to recognize gay and lesbian people.

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41. Rawls, *Justice as Fairness*.


43. For a more detailed discussion of positive systematic inclusion, see Petrovic, “Moral Democratic Education and Homosexuality.” This point raises an important distinction that must be addressed: I do not quarrel with Hand’s general division of the two camps of political criterionists — one holding that liberal political values require defending the moral legitimacy of heterosexual acts, and the other holding that such moral legitimacy is not entailed in the public values — and agree that the first group is mistaken in their approach. However, Hand concludes that, if pressed, “we are obliged to side with those who defend the controversiality of homosexuality. If the only moral principles we are entitled to promote in schools are those entailed by the public values of the liberal democratic state, then the moral status of *homosexual acts* must surely be taught as a controversial issue” (“Should We Teach Homosexuality as a Controversial Issue?,” 73, emphasis added). But Hand ignores an important difference in the way that I frame the issue compared to other political criterionists, such as McKay and Steutel and Spiecker. Indeed, as McKay frames it, homosexuality is surely controversial, not because it is not entailed by public values but because the teaching of sexual acts is controversial by any criterion, at least when grade level is taken into consideration. Thus, my framing — in terms of LGBTQ people and not acts — helps to avoid this controversy, given that the invocation of sex is the red herring typically raised by heterosexists in order to bolster arguments as to how inappropriate the inclusion of homosexuality in the K–12 curriculum would be. “This is nonsense,” I have argued elsewhere. “We do not portray heterosexual ‘mommies and daddies’ inappropriately [e.g., having sex on the kitchen
Committed Impartiality

Committed impartiality should be rejected in terms of how it shapes curricular content for the same reason as neutral impartiality. Like neutral impartiality, however, committed impartiality resembles steering in the sense of providing a fair, nonthreatening hearing of all sides of the argument. From the perspective of “steering,” committed impartiality would be deemed defensible on these grounds as long as the fair hearing of views results in the conclusion that views alternative to that of the teacher are wrong, not based on good reason. Of course, this assumes that the teacher’s view is “correct,” that is, the teacher endorses homosexuality. In this way, I have suggested that steering is also related to exclusive partiality.

Given that we cannot guarantee that teachers operate from a normative rationality of the Handian kind, I have argued elsewhere that preservice teachers who disagree with the moral legitimacy of homosexuality should be, in the name of liberal democracy (somewhat paradoxically), precluded from licensure or, as practicing teachers, censored from stating their positions.44 But I am not quite as concerned as Hand about teacher endorsement. I am more concerned that teachers be censored, for the ideal of positive systematic inclusion, as distinct from Friend’s description of systematic inclusion, requires the positive portrayal of LGBTQ people and the normalization of same-sex relationships in the curriculum. Thus, despite the fact that teachers themselves may not be engaging in directive education, as described by Hand, the hidden curriculum — by Hand’s measure, nondirective — is certainly directive.

Conclusion: A Consequentialist Way Forward

Hand’s position is that as soon as it is recognized that a question is epistemically noncontroversial, directive teaching, including teacher endorsement, must take place. But what if this is not recognized? What if a teacher or parent believes his or her reasons to be pretty good ones, even as Hand might disagree? Beyond emphasizing that the person’s reasons are bad ones, it is not clear what recourse Hand has. This then requires us to determine other grounds upon which the reasonable or the rational should turn — namely liberalism — and to ask to what extent those public values are enhanced.

The pursuit of Dewey’s practical intelligence provides students the opportunity not only to draw from but also to embrace their own intellectual

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44. John E. Petrovic, “The Democratic Sieve in Teacher Education: Confronting Heterosexism,” Educational Foundations 12, no. 1 (1998): 43–56. I have also suggested that such need for censorship might be related to the age/grade of the students, with older students being expected to be able to engage in civil debate with a teacher (and vice versa).
experience, reconsider their habits of thought, and resolve hitches in ways that remain true to their own subjective positions while engaging with the “other” in progressive (specifically, liberal) ways. Does the directive approach to teaching moral questions permit this? What are the pedagogical and curricular requirements for such to take place?

The notion of having the ideas of some individuals and groups continuously and forcibly placed before other individuals and groups who might think differently cannot mean that the latter do not respond to those ideas, even as they might be changed by the transaction. For this is the method of intelligence that has the primary characteristic of “remaking of the old through union with the new” as opposed to replacing the old with the new.45 Certainly it would be a liberal paradox to suggest that the answer to dealing with antiliberal positions presented by students is to silence their expression instead of engaging with them. The latter is, therefore, a pedagogical component of steering. But might students continue to cleave to “unreasonable” positions? What guidance does steering provide teachers in terms of how they engage such responses? Must teachers be coerced into defending positions they find objectionable? What are the political consequences?

The application of practical intelligence requires consideration of the consequences of educational policies and practices. Here we might consider thick and thin versions of steering and consider the consequences at two levels, at least. A thick approach dismisses received or common-parlance understandings of “controversial.” It also requires “the willingness of the teacher to endorse one view on a matter as the right one” (WSW, 213). While Hand never explains what “endorsement” itself means or requires, I think it is reasonable to understand this as following the requirement of committed impartiality that a teacher explicitly tell students that he or she views homosexuality as morally legitimate. Would explicit acceptance ultimately be required of students as well? It is interesting that Hand contends that political criterionists misunderstand directive moral education as coercive. Surely teachers are positively coerced in the approach Hand recommends. That is to say, they are forced to take affirmative action.

At the community level, regardless of Hand’s dismissal of common-parlance understandings of controversial, his thick approach is likely to be controversial in this way. This is important because some educational leaders will have a hard time defending it to their communities and, as a consequence, Hand’s project will be summarily dismissed. At the individual level of the teacher and parents, dismissing valued judgments (be they religious, political, or completely idiosyncratic) as unreasonable may have a similar effect: hardening people against further consideration of the issue. Again, Hand may object that steering is not about dismissing other reasons; it is, instead, about arguing them away, as reflected partly in the pedagogy necessary to impartiality. This continues to beg the question regarding the ultimate goal of steering for students. Furthermore, steering in no

45. Dewey, Liberalism and Social Action, 56 (emphasis added).
way addresses our liberal commitments to teachers who may disagree — who are, as noted, positively coerced.

My position, on the other hand, requires negative coercion while not precluding affirmative action. In other words, even as teachers may be required to follow a curriculum of positive systematic inclusion, negative coercion requires them to refrain from stating their personal positions against homosexuality while not requiring them to explicitly endorse it. From a consequentialist perspective this is superior, for teachers are much more likely to be able to embrace a curriculum based on freedom and equality of persons if they are not required to personally endorse views contrary to their religious or other beliefs.46 For example, elsewhere Jerry Rosiek and I have discussed the thinking of a participant in our study who expressed belief in “what the Bible says about homosexuality” and who then went on to engage the liberal hitch as follows:

Even though I disagree with homosexuality, I still believe in equal rights and privileges for all people. This includes equal representation in schools. I think students should be exposed to all types of people. They should be able to see their family structure represented in the curriculum, whatever that family structure may be.47

In other words, providing heterosexist teachers some space within which to negotiate the “hitch” can be an effective avenue to antiheterosexist classrooms overall.

Furthermore, this is more consistent with promoting engagement with the other and bringing the multitudinous positions that comprise subjectivity in alignment with the ideals of liberty. In the end, a Deweyan approach to teaching about homosexuality requires the following:

- **Exclusive partiality in terms of the curricular content:** Positive systematic inclusion is required in the curricular representations given that the moral legitimacy of homosexuality is, in fact, entailed in public, liberal political values.

- **Neutral impartiality in terms of student engagement:** Students should be encouraged to present and struggle with arguments — whether or not these stem from a heteronormative rationality — raised by their peers.

46. On the one hand, it could still be seen as coercion to require teachers to engage a curriculum that seemingly “promotes” something they disagree with. As the subsequent illustration indicates, however, teachers tend to agree with liberal values and negotiate that hitch (see Petrovic and Rosiek, “Disrupting the Heteronormative Subjectivities of Christian Pre-Service Teachers”). Furthermore, that example also illustrates an interesting way in which a principle of propinquity tends to apply in moral reasoning. To clarify, consider Michael Sandel’s classic example regarding utilitarianism: a student is on a runaway trolley heading toward five workers who are bound to be killed unless the student steers the trolley onto another track on which there is only one worker. The overwhelming majority of students agree that the moral thing to do would be to steer the trolley toward the single worker. When Sandel changes the situation such that the student, now standing on a bridge, can push a very fat man over the railing in front of the trolley to stop it, the students overwhelmingly agree that this would be immoral, even though the same utilitarian principle is in place.

Either exclusive neutrality or committed impartiality in terms of teacher response/endorsement: This is dependent upon a variety of factors, including student age/grade, social context, and teacher subjectivity. As regards the last, recall that positive systematic inclusion permits affirmative action (endorsement by teachers who are comfortable doing so) but prohibits the positive coercion of teachers.

Proceeding in this way helps to support the overarching purpose of Hand’s directive moral education while recognizing the import of Dewey’s notion of practical intelligence. It provides flexibility in figuring out what works as regards the achievement of our antiheterosexist aim. Is this “inculcation”? Yes. But it is not clear to me why Hand is so adamant in defending his position against such accusations. For it is the case that his pedagogy not only teaches a skill set, but it also simultaneously inculcates both a particular public value and a normative rationality. Reasoning through liberalism as the foundation of directive moral education leads to the view that homosexuality is morally legitimate as an extension of personhood. Furthermore, the pedagogical approach that it primes simultaneously promotes the normative reason that Hand seeks while acknowledging other ways of knowing. Both masters — the epistemic and the political — are served.