

Teaching for Toleration in Liberal Democracy

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Introduction

My aim in this article is to determine which kind of education enables the perpetuation of both a reasonable diversity of ways of life and a form of liberal democracy that accommodates this diversity. If schools do not provide sufficient civic education, citizens may lose the ability to coexist peacefully and groups with particular life modes may start to oppress or homogenise others.¹ However, if schools provide a civic education that is too extensive, it may forcefully liberalise and destroy particular life modes—including their cultural values and morality that some argue liberal democracy depends on.²

The question of schooling already implies that education will be based on political liberalism and its focus on required shared political principles and skills. It precludes a comprehensive liberal education that instils a liberal worldview focused on individuality or autonomy, which many liberals advocate (see for example Levinson, 1999; Callan, 1997; Gutmann, 1995). However, political liberals themselves have responded to this question of schooling in different ways. Most agree that schools should teach a basic understanding of liberal democratic institutions, but disagree about the degree to which cultural, philosophical, and religious studies, as well as critical thinking skills, should be included in the state-mandated curriculum.³ Accordingly, there are three main positions in the debate about political liberal education. First, the general view, taken for example by John Rawls (2005), states that students should gain knowledge of democratic institutions, and implies that they also require a basic understanding of the different life modes of its citizens.⁴ Second, the activist view, represented by political liberals like Stephen Macedo, states that schools should provide a broader education about democracy and its virtues, as well as teach for a reconciliation rather than just understanding of different political perspectives (1995; 2000, pp. 3, 8, 6, 10-2, 167, 169, 276). Third, the minimalist view, endorsed by liberals such as William Galston, holds that schools should teach a working knowledge of democracy and the toleration that enables coexistence, but that fostering an appreciation or even understanding of other life modes is unnecessary (1991, pp. 119, 256; 1995, pp. 518-9, 521, 524-9; 2002, pp. 386-91; 2003, pp. 412-29; 2005, p. 4; 2006, pp. 329, 333-4).⁵

Despite their different positions on education, Rawls (2005, pp. 59, 194-5) indicates that toleration is an important component of political liberalism on which education should be based, and Macedo, Galston, and other scholars all argue that schools should teach toleration.⁶ However, none of them carefully considers the meaning of toleration in regard to education and what it requires in terms of schooling. Toleration is arguably the primary means to perpetuating liberal democracy and allowing for a diversity of (conflicting) life modes. Here I draw out a neglected but important aspect of the education debate by analysing the demands that toleration places on schooling.

My thesis is that schools must teach students a minimal cultural and religious framework and critical thinking in order for them to help define liberal democracy's limits of toleration as democratic citizens. I make this argument by showing the limited role of toleration in relations between citizens, and offering a theory about how citizens help to determine the limits of toleration by participating in the democratic process. My focus is on the ends rather than the means of education.

Toleration and the Relation between Citizens

Before demonstrating how the practice of toleration suggests that schools should teach students a minimal cultural and religious framework and critical thinking, I investigate the concept of toleration and its demands. I discuss and challenge the claim that toleration must be a reciprocal relation between equal parties. I argue that such a relation between citizens actually requires little toleration, as they must be taught simply to respect each other as fellow citizens without regard for each other's life modes. Subsequently, I show that a nonreciprocal and unequal relation between the democratic government and its citizens requires more schooling to foster toleration.

Toleration

BASIC DEFINITION OF TOLERATION

Toleration is associated with the attitude of tolerance. It is a counterintuitive process. To tolerate means to disagree with a belief or practice, but nevertheless to refrain from rejecting it. Rejecting a belief or practice thus goes beyond mere disagreement or disapproval. Rejection means to (seek to) prevent or eliminate the belief or practice. Normally, we accept what we believe is good and reject what we deem wrong, but in toleration we do not reject the wrong. For example, in a contemporary liberal democracy a tolerant Catholic fundamentally disagrees with Protestants about religious truth, but still refrains from converting, harming, or persecuting them. This disagreement is what defines toleration. If the Catholic were indifferent to, or even appreciative of, Protestants' beliefs and practices, it would not be toleration. Peter Jones (2010) indicates that in many cases such disapproval should be normal. Sometimes a person is shy or modest and says her beliefs are equal to others, but if she holds a belief that is incompatible with these others, she must naturally think hers is better and thus disapprove of the conflicting belief (Jones, 2010, p. 42; Forst, 2004, p. 315).

THE COMPLEXITY AND RELATIONS OF TOLERATION

Beyond this basic concept of toleration, the literature about its nuances is vast. Therefore, I limit myself to two further observations about toleration that will be crucial to education. First, the complexity involved in defining the limits of toleration suggests a need for knowledge and skills. Second, we must consider who should make judgments about toleration and thus be educated to do so.

To address the first point, the limits of toleration are not always clear and thus require knowledge of different life modes and critical thinking skills to be defined. This process of defining limits is especially demanding, as toleration has two boundaries rather than one boundary. The first boundary arises from the fact that we cannot accept or appreciate everything. If the Catholic believes in the Pope and Protestants do not, she cannot accept Protestants' beliefs. However, she can still tolerate these beliefs. Thus, there is a boundary between acceptance and toleration. The second boundary arises from the fact that we cannot tolerate everything that we do not accept: certain beliefs, or especially the practices that result from them, are simply wrong. As we have no moral or pragmatic reason to tolerate them nevertheless, we must reject them. A humanist may tolerate Islamic beliefs, but still deem an arguably related practice like female circumcision intolerable. Thus, toleration is not moral relativism (see also Barry, 2001, pp. 127-8, 131, 133, 142-4; Macedo, 1995, p. 485; Tamir, 2003, p. 508; Parekh, 1999, p. 163). By determining what is tolerable we simultaneously determine what should be rejected.

The lack of consensus on the boundaries of toleration has two implications for education. First, it means that individual citizens should be taught how to reason about what should and should not be tolerated. Second, these citizens should learn democratic participatory skills to discuss collectively the limits of toleration.

To address the second point, it is important to understand the relations of toleration in order to understand who tolerates whom and in what capacity, which also influences what citizens should be taught in schools. We should note three ideas here:

First, a prerequisite of any relation of toleration between a tolerator and the tolerated is that the tolerator must have the power to reject the life modes of those she is judging. If the tolerator has no choice but to put up with the other life modes, it is not toleration. Rejection in this context constitutes an action. Jones explains in more detail that 'when we tolerate, we refrain from preventing what we could prevent. In fact, toleration can take the form of (a) not making people do things they are unwilling to do, as well as (b) not preventing their doing what they wish to do. For example, religious toleration includes both (a) not making people comply with religious convictions that they do not embrace, as well as (b) not preventing their complying with the convictions they do embrace' (Jones, 2010, p. 43, also 40; see also *Lægaard, 2010, p. 23; Horton, 2011, p. 290*). Jones' statement thus affirms that toleration is not mere disapproval. Rather, toleration is the conscious act of refraining from rejecting a belief or practice despite disapproving of it and having the power to prevent it.

Second, this prerequisite of power largely explains why toleration was traditionally a vertical and asymmetrical relation in which a dominant group or state extended toleration to its subordinates (Forst, 2004, pp. 316-7; Heyd, 2008, pp. 171-94). For example, in previous centuries, monarchs in Europe determined which belief systems they tolerated within their territories. However, David Heyd (2008, pp. 171-94) and Ingrid Creppell (2008, pp. 315-59) argue that this relation is largely outdated and replaced by one of mutuality in which citizens or groups tolerate each other reciprocally on a horizontal level. This notion of the contemporary importance of horizontal toleration is supported by Jones, who adds more generally that ‘personal’ toleration between citizens is more prevalent than ‘political’ toleration between institutions and citizens. ‘Indeed, for most of us, real opportunities to be tolerant or intolerant present themselves more frequently in our ordinary day-to-day lives than in formal political contexts’, he stresses (Jones, 2010, p. 45).⁷ Jones, Heyd, and Creppell thus suggest that the vertical relation of toleration plays merely a minor role in contemporary liberal democracy—if any.

Third, this idea of a horizontal relation coincides with the argument that toleration must be reciprocal, as several scholars argue (Habermas, 2003, pp. 5, 7; Creppell, 2008, pp. 315-59; Forst, 2004, p. 317). For example, Forst states that ‘[t]olerant can only be called for towards those who are tolerant; it is a matter of simple reciprocity’. He references Pierre Bayle, John Locke, Rousseau, and Voltaire in support of this idea (Forst, 2004, p. 313). Thus, Forst suggests that both sides must tolerate each other, otherwise there can be no relation of toleration.

In sum, different scholars argue that a tolerator must have the power to reject the tolerated if she wishes; that horizontal toleration between individuals has largely replaced a vertical toleration between the state and its subjects; and that toleration must be reciprocal. I now challenge these last two ideas in two parts. In the remainder of this section, I demonstrate that the horizontal relation between citizens is determined more by respect than toleration. In the next section, I argue that the main relation of toleration in liberal democracy is actually still vertical and nonreciprocal, namely between the democratic state and its citizens. This conclusion about relations of toleration in society then suggests that schools must teach students political rather than interpersonal skills of toleration.

The Relation between Citizens

The foregoing discussion about toleration suggested two important points. First, despite the obviousness of certain tolerable and intolerable practices, determining the precise limits of toleration can be complex. Second, toleration in contemporary liberal democracy is primarily horizontal and reciprocal. The horizontal and reciprocal nature of toleration further suggests that toleration occurs primarily between citizens, who generally interact with many other citizens. The combination of these points then implies that citizens must often make complex evaluations of toleration in their daily

interactions with each other. For example, when a Protestant encounters veiled Muslims on the public bus or sees a gay couple holding hands in the city park, she would have to judge whether to tolerate the practices of wearing headscarves or showing homosexual affection. To make such judgments, citizens need knowledge about other life modes and the reasoning capacity to evaluate these appropriately, or so the argument would go. The conclusion then appears to be that schools must teach this knowledge and capacity primarily for the relations between citizens.

However, I contend that schools should teach this cultural knowledge and reasoning for the purpose of toleration, but that the reason is actually different. Namely, the relation between citizens requires little toleration in reality. Rather, citizens must gain the capacity to make judgments of toleration for their participation in the democratic political process. The relation between citizens does not require much toleration, because liberal democracies distinguish between citizens' public and private identities. In their public identities they simply need to learn to respect each other as fellow citizens. In addition, citizens do not have the power to reject practices of others that they interact with on a horizontal level.

RESPECT FOR PUBLIC IDENTITIES RATHER THAN TOLERATION OF PRIVATE IDENTITIES

Part of the reason why liberalism largely succeeds at accommodating a diversity of life modes, is precisely that it encourages citizens to separate their private from their public identity. This separation means that their different and sometimes mutually exclusive life modes do not come into direct confrontation, but that their public interaction is guided rather by a shared political identity. Or as Macedo states in his defence of political liberalism: '[t]he lives of liberal citizens are in a sense properly divided: we have a public and a private side, and the public (or political) side is guided by imperatives designed to make our shared life together civilized and respectful' (2000, p. 164, also 186-7; see also Mendus, 1988, pp. 4, 6-10; Vaughan, 2005, p. 402). Macedo's comment implies that citizens should treat each other based on their public commonality rather than their private differences. If we return once again to our example of the Catholic and Protestants, we see how they might interact more peacefully if they put aside their conflicting religious claims, and cooperate in public based on their common citizenship. Accordingly, Habermas suggests how such a liberal separation makes cooperation easier by avoiding a collision of religious beliefs: 'the normative expectation that we be able to live alongside those with different ethical life-styles and value-orientations is of a different nature than the assumption that we must accept the difference between religious truths or between contrary worldviews, in other words accept statements that contradict our own' (2003, p. 12). Thus, citizens can avoid a confrontation of conflicting beliefs by focusing on the need to coexist peacefully in the public realm.

Critics may object that it is difficult if not impossible in practice to distinguish between citizens' public and private sides (see also Vaughan, 2005, p. 402; Forst, 2004, p. 319; Horton, 2011, p. 299). After all, it may be difficult for the Catholic simply to disregard that her Protestant fellow-

citizens misunderstand humanity's relationship with God and even think that the saints that are so important to her are nothing but superstition. Here, the Catholic fails to separate her own Catholic beliefs from her public identity, as well as the Protestants' beliefs from their public identities. This is a valid objection and, indeed, separating public and private identities is difficult. However, the objection should not constitute a fatalistic conclusion. Given that this separation is difficult, we should not give up trying to foster mutual respect among citizens at least within their public identity. Rather, the objection should serve as an additional reason for schools to teach students the merits of minimal civil respect for others—regardless of their life modes. This endeavour is especially worthwhile, as it fosters cooperation and social stability. Besides, as I demonstrate below, citizens have little power to act on private differences in their horizontal relations. Thus, the state partly forces them to treat each other based on their public rather than private identities.

Once we separate public and private identities, we assign a basic respect to the public side of citizens that all members of society should honour (see also Dent, 1988, pp. 115-36; *Lægaard, 2010, p. 29*). Religious people must thus try to limit the influence of their private beliefs on their interaction with other citizens and respect these others based on their shared citizenship. And Macedo (1995, p. 487) stresses that 'evangelical atheists' and 'those who espouse totalistic versions of liberalism' must do the same and respect religious people publicly as citizens. Such respect differs from toleration, in that it is unconditional and does not require an evaluation of the other's life mode. Habermas and Jones explain this distinction. 'The right to equal respect, which everyone can demand in the life contexts in which his or her identity is formed as well as elsewhere, has nothing to do with the presumed excellence of his or her culture of origin, that is, with generally valued accomplishments', states Habermas (1994, p. 129). Jones elaborates that we can define this difference between unconditional respect and conditional appreciation or rejection in terms of status. Status involves no value judgment, but is assigned to every citizen automatically. He clarifies: '[r]espect, as used in "respect for persons", invokes an idea of status rather than merit. Thus, we may think that a person's beliefs and form of life are without *merit*, but our respect for her *status* as a person can provide a reason why we should tolerate her beliefs and form of life in spite of our negative appraisal of them and even though our negative appraisal is soundly based' (Jones, 2010, p. 45). This idea of status fits with the liberal idea of respecting individuals as autonomous agents who can make decisions about their own life modes in private (see also Raz, 1988, pp. 155-70). In fact, it is precisely because we respect each other's status as fellow-citizens, that we can make private decisions about our life mode in our capacity as respected citizens. In the above quotation, Jones does mention toleration, but it has become a secondary priority. The primary principle on which relations between citizens are based is respect for each others' status. We can still make judgments of toleration about others' private sides, but public order and democratic cooperation succeed without such judgments—so long as mutual respect is maintained.

CITIZENS LACK POWER TO REJECT PRACTICES

Even when a citizen evaluates others' practices to determine whether they should be accepted, tolerated, or rejected, she still has little power to act on a rejection. As demonstrated above, a person must have the power to reject a belief or practice before she can be said to have the ability to tolerate it. And in liberal democracy, the state has a monopoly on force and the means to punish intolerable practices. Therefore, the practice of toleration is even less significant in the relation between citizens. In this context, it is especially surprising that Jones (2010, p. 45) argues that toleration primarily occurs between citizens on a personal level. After all, Jones himself states that toleration requires power to reject disapproved practices (2010, p. 43).

Of course, similar to the above distinctions between public and private persons and between the status of a citizen and the merit of her life mode, this distinction between a powerful state and powerless citizens is not sharp. Some citizens do have certain power over others, such as a parent over a child or an employer over an employee. In addition, citizens still have minor means of rejecting others' life modes. For example, a citizen has the power of persuasion and can try to change others' beliefs or practices by convincing them of their wrongfulness. In addition, the mere expression of disapproval between citizens in the form of public opinion could influence what is tolerated or rejected between them (Jones, 2010, pp. 44-5). Related to this idea of public opinion is the ability of groups of citizens to ostracise individuals whose life mode they reject. Or stated in the example of the Catholic: she has power to try and persuade Protestants to correct their error of not believing in the Pope; she can form a group of Catholics and increase social pressure on Protestants through public opinion to motivate them to change their beliefs; or she can exclude Protestants from this group in an effort to show them the merits of changing their beliefs and gaining group entry. However, these powers of an individual citizen and her associated group remain limited. After all, the success of persuasion depends on whether the other party becomes convinced, and the power of social ostracism is limited by anti-discrimination laws.

In short, despite limited means of acting against different life modes, citizens have little power vis-à-vis their fellow citizens. Therefore, the responsibility to prevent or remove intolerable practices in society rests with the state rather than the individual citizen.

The main point here is that, because respect is the primary means to enabling peaceful coexistence between citizens and these citizens have little power to reject practices, toleration plays only a minor role in the horizontal relation between them. Therefore, schools need not teach students the cultural knowledge and skills to make complex evaluations of toleration for their engagement with others. However, I now demonstrate that schools should teach students the ability to make such evaluations, but for the purpose of democratic participation.

Defining the Limits of Toleration

Current Approaches

We saw that citizens have relatively little need for toleration among themselves. However, they must maintain common limits of toleration; otherwise they risk two scenarios.

The first would be an anarchical system of toleration in which each citizen defines her own limits of toleration, which are not reciprocal and therefore toleration soon fails. After all, if a Muslim tolerates a Catholic wearing a cross in a public workplace, but Muslims wearing headscarves to work is beyond the limit of toleration for the Catholic, the Muslim might soon become intolerant of the Catholic's practice. This anarchical system of toleration may cause a downward spiral of intolerance, in which citizens no longer tolerate other life modes and each merely tries to use power to promote her own practices.

The second would be a situation of moral relativism in which even harmful practices are tolerated.⁸ Here, the Muslim or Catholic might judge that she cannot legitimately evaluate other life modes from within her belief, or that the best strategy for perpetuating her life mode is to refrain from criticising others—to 'live and let live'.

As the first scenario results in widespread intolerance and the second in moral relativism, citizens need shared limits of toleration.⁹

The idea of shared limits suggests that people must agree on what constitutes reasonable disagreement. Therefore, these limits are reciprocal.¹⁰ For example, they might agree to allow all religious symbols in schools, but disallow practices that interfere with school time such as prayer—or ban symbols altogether. To make toleration work and avoid intolerance or moral relativism, citizens must reciprocally honour this agreement. Thus, they need common limits of toleration that all respect reciprocally. But this poses a problem: how are these limits determined if not through horizontal interactions?

Scholars rarely answer this question directly. They often discuss the boundaries of toleration, but few specify how these boundaries are actually drawn. The best descriptions of drawing these boundaries are found in what I term the 'justification approach' and the 'evaluation approach'.

The justification approach is represented by Rainer Forst. According to this approach, the limits of toleration depend on the higher principle of public justification. To apply this principle, it distinguishes vertical toleration—the 'permission conception of toleration'—from horizontal toleration—the 'respect conception'. In the permission conception, the majority defines the limits of toleration arbitrarily and therefore these limits are unjust. In contrast, in the respect conception, citizens create mutually acceptable limits of toleration by reciprocally refraining from shaping these

limits according to their personal life modes. Hence the limits of toleration are publicly justifiable. The reciprocity of this model provides the political justice on which toleration is based (Forst, 2004, 314-8).

The evaluation approach is advocated by Bhikhu Parekh. In contrast to the justification approach, its account of how the limits of toleration are defined is more realistic in that it assumes that power relations in society are unequal. It states that society should decide which practices to tolerate based on its 'operative public values'. These values are defined in society's constitution, its laws, and the 'civic relations' between its people. The values evolved historically and continue to change through public dialogue. Unlike the public justification principle, the operative public values 'articulate a specific conception of the good life' (Parekh, 1999, pp. 168-75). Important to note is that the evaluation approach implies that toleration is still predominantly a vertical relation of power in which an authority extends toleration to the practices of subordinates. Even though the approach indicates that the operative public values are partly defined in constitutional and regular laws, it does not indicate how these laws emerged.

I have critiqued these approaches in more detail elsewhere, arguing that they respectively understate and overstate the influence of citizens' life modes in determining the common limits of toleration; that the idea of toleration as restraint of power is too limited in the justification approach; and that both approaches remain too abstract (*Anonymous for peer review*, 2012). Yet most important to note here is that neither the justification nor evaluation approach demonstrates how the limits of toleration are primarily defined in liberal democracy—through democratic legislation. Politicians may use abstract models for inspiration, but ultimately politics is a process of debate, negotiation, compromise, and voting. And as society's limits of toleration are predominantly defined through its different kinds of laws, the process of determining these limits is marked by democratic negotiation in which politicians advocate, or are at least influenced by, the life modes of themselves and of their constituents. Citizens hold opinions largely based on their life modes, and elect the representatives who legislate. In contemporary liberal democracy, this legislation largely defines the limits of toleration. It is also this democratic process that continuously (re)defines the laws that represent a dominant part of the operative public values of the evaluation approach. However, neither the justification nor evaluation approach discusses that individual citizens have democratic power to influence indirectly decisions concerning the limits of toleration. Therefore, neither of them considers what knowledge or skills these citizens must have and connects toleration to education.

Finally, the purpose of these *abstract* approaches differs from ours. We seek to find out how individual citizens practise toleration *concretely* in order to understand the education they require. The justification and evaluation approaches are largely *normative* descriptions of how the limits of toleration should be determined. By contrast, we first seek a more *descriptive* understanding of how those limits are determined and how citizens are involved in this process, before we consider how schools should *normatively educate* citizens to support a tolerant liberal democracy. After all, if we used merely normative theories that describe a perfectly tolerant society, there might be little need for

civic education. Yet part of the problem that we are trying to solve with education is that liberal democracy is not perfectly tolerant and that the common limits of toleration are disputed. Consequently, I supplement the above approaches with a more concrete understanding of toleration through democratic politics below.

Defining the Limits of Toleration through Democratic Politics

So far, we discovered that a sense of justice and toleration and the evaluation of cultural and religious practices must be important elements in the process of defining the limits of toleration. However, we still do not know what particular role citizens play in this process and therefore we cannot yet conclude what their civic education should entail. Consequently, we must consider how the limits of toleration are determined concretely—through democratic politics. Namely, in contrast to what the scholars mentioned earlier contend about the transition from vertical to horizontal toleration, we still have an important vertical relation of toleration in modern democracy—between the democratic state and its citizens (Creppell, 2008, pp. 315-59; Heyd, 2008, pp. 171-94). This vertical relation is even more important than the horizontal relation between citizens, as the state continuously (re)defines the limits of toleration and has the power to sanction transgressors. The state (re)defines these limits through the laws that it creates. As the democratic state represents its citizens, these citizens also play a role in determining the extent of its toleration. It may seem logical that the ongoing modification of the limits of toleration largely occurs through the democratic legislative process, but earlier we saw that this view is not as prevalent or clear in the toleration literature as we might expect. Therefore, I investigate democratic politics and the role of citizens in determining the scope of toleration here, so that we can conclude what schools must teach citizens for their role in this process.

At this point, it may seem that there is little toleration to salvage with democratic politics. After all, we established that liberal democracy requires a form of reciprocal toleration to avoid moral relativism or a downward spiral of increasing intolerance. Subsequently, we seemed to lose this reciprocity by largely abandoning the idea of horizontal toleration between citizens. The justification approach briefly appeared to save reciprocity with its idea that citizens should reciprocally refrain from imposing their life mode in public. But then we mostly abandoned this reciprocity as well. However, we still have one form of reciprocity left. Namely, citizens must reciprocally respect the laws that define the limits of toleration in society. This idea sounds similar to that of the justification approach, but the difference is that these laws are determined through debate and negotiation in democratic politics—rather than a thought experiment in which all parties consent to laws without invoking their life modes. The reciprocal standard of toleration that we are left with is thus not reciprocally just in its origin: it is not determined neutrally, but through a combination of unequal influences of different life modes. It is merely reciprocally just in that it applies to all citizens equally.

Democratic representatives create a law and enforce it with authority. Yet once the law is enacted, all citizens must respect the limit of toleration that it sets. Consequently, the law prevents moral relativism or a downward spiral of intolerance.

We now have to answer two important questions in the next two sections. First, how does a representative democracy define the limits of toleration through its laws? Second, how are citizens involved in the process of creating tolerant laws, and do they need particular knowledge and skills for this involvement?

The Legal Limits of Toleration

In liberal democracy, representatives, acting on behalf of citizens, largely determine the limits of toleration through state laws. Earlier we saw that the limits of toleration are also enforced through methods such as public opinion and social ostracism, but toleration is primarily about what the state accepts and does not accept. It expresses this acceptance or rejection through laws, which sanction certain practices and prohibit others. Such prohibition is enforced through legal prosecution, penalties, and imprisonment. The legal limits of toleration do not always correspond exactly with the practices that representatives deem rejectable: sometimes intolerant practices are legally tolerated for other moral or pragmatic reasons.¹¹ Finally, I note that laws only indicate what a democratic state—often a type of majority or coalition of legislators that represent citizens—deems rejectable rather than unobjectionable or tolerable. Laws thus only indicate the outer boundary of toleration between the zones of tolerable and rejectable practices; not the inner boundary between tolerable and unobjectionable practices. Within the sphere of legalised practices, individual citizens can thus choose whether to approve or disapprove of particular practices—but the law indicates which practices almost all of them agree are rejectable. Following this elementary outline of the process of democratically determining the limits of toleration, I now examine in which situations laws affect the limits of toleration.

When representatives legislate, they define the limits of toleration both directly and indirectly in different situations. These situations interrelate, but we can divide them into three broad categories.

In the first situation, representatives directly express the opinion that the state should reject particular practices that most citizens deem intolerable. For example, representatives might want the state to prohibit female circumcision or forced marriages, simply because they think these cultural practices are intolerable. They therefore create a law that states that female circumcision is illegal, which means that the practice is no longer tolerated. Here, representatives modify the limits of toleration proactively. Some representatives will judge practices in this category to violate the harm principle (so long as a person does not harm anyone, she should be free to think or do as she wishes) (Mill, 2002, pp. 11-3; see also Raz, 1988, pp. 155-70; Parekh, 1999, p. 165). Therefore, they might

argue that the practices should not even be up for consideration, but should simply fall under the prohibition of practices that violate constitutional rights.

In the second situation, a shift in the limits of toleration may result from a reinterpretation of these constitutional rights. The constitution plays a primary role in the definition of the limits of toleration, as it provides citizens with individual rights that no cultural or religious practices may infringe. For example, parents may not invoke religious reasons to prevent their child from receiving life-saving medication, because it would violate the child's individual rights. More generally, the basic rights of life and freedom of conscience prevent practices such as ritual sacrifice of human life and the forceful conversion of people who do not share one's beliefs. Thus, constitutional individual rights place a basic limit on the toleration of cultural and religious practices. However, constitutional rights are only generic formulations that representatives and judges must interpret. Such reinterpretation may be sparked by an event. For example, a debate about the constitutional rights to freedom of speech and conscience emerged when an imam in the Netherlands called homosexuality a disease at a Friday worship at a mosque. Many citizens and politicians argued that the imam was violating the principle of non-discrimination. However, critics objected that the imam merely *expressed his belief*, which is protected from state intervention through the freedom of conscience and freedom of speech. However, in expressing his belief at the Friday worship, he arguably incited others to engage in the *practice* of discriminating against homosexuals. Consequently, there was a public discussion about the extent of the constitutional freedoms of speech and religion, as well as anti-discrimination laws—and thus the extent of toleration (NRC, 2004). Such debates among citizens can lead to democratic protests, petitions, and the election of democratic parties that advocate certain positions on the issue (we return to the question of citizen participation in the next section). If these parties are elected, they might then tighten or extend laws that specify the application of the above constitutional rights, which in turn redefines the limits of toleration.

However, the interpretation of constitutional rights is notoriously controversial. For example, Jones emphasises that the meaning of what constitutes religion differs among citizens. Religious citizens may have a different understanding of the meaning and scope of religion, and therefore the application of laws about religion, from non-believers. Jones (2010) indicates that 'even if all parties to the conflict agree that mutual toleration is their best option, their disagreement may still infect their thinking about what the limits of that toleration should be. Consider the case of religious faith. Both believers and non-believers may readily accept that each should be free to live according to their own faith or lack of faith, but they may still disagree about what that requires precisely' (p. 46). He elaborates that defining common boundaries of toleration is difficult, since they are the point of contention to begin with: 'a difference that one person sees as merely cultural may be a matter of religious truth for another' (Jones, 2010, p. 52).¹² If Jones is correct that citizens interpret the meaning of concepts like religion differently, it will indeed be difficult to find commonly accepted interpretations of constitutional law and thus the limits of toleration.

In the third situation, the limits of toleration are affected indirectly through more ‘neutral’ laws that seek to regulate uncontroversial aspects of society. Let us consider two examples of this indirect impact. First, the Dutch state recently intended to regulate against animal cruelty and therefore considered prohibiting certain slaughter methods. However, Muslims and Jews require their animals to be slaughtered in certain traditional ways. Consequently, the regulation would have had an indirect adverse effect on the practices of Muslim and Jewish citizens and therefore they successfully protested against the law (Soeters, 2011). In this case, a state law might have had the effect of decreasing state toleration of two religions by prohibiting—and thus placing beyond the limits of toleration—their religious practices of slaughter. Second, we can think of the American state of Wisconsin, which created a law that children must attend school at least until the age of sixteen. The law meant to ensure that all citizens would achieve a basic level of education. However, Amish parents challenged it successfully, claiming that schooling beyond grade eight would hinder their practice of instilling the Amish life mode in their children.¹³ Thus, here the state had placed a cultural practice beyond the limits of toleration through an education law that prevented the exercise of that practice.

In addition to these cases, there are situations in which the state does mean to limit religious practices through laws, but these laws inadvertently disadvantage certain believers over others. For example, the French principle of *laïcité*, the strict separation of religion and state, mandates that public schools must be free from religious symbols. However, the Christian faith does not require its adherents to wear such symbols, whereas Islam arguably requires girls to wear headscarves. In the case of conservative Muslim families, the effect is that they do not allow their daughters to attend public school. Thus, the law significantly affects certain Muslim citizens by disallowing their practice of wearing headscarves in public school. Despite the state’s lack of intention to hinder practices of particular citizens, sometimes it might have no option but to make a law that hinders or rejects such practices. And in doing so, the state no longer tolerates these practices. Thus, if there is no option but to create a law that has adverse effects on a life mode, the state by necessity infringes on particular practices. Here we can think of the example of polygamous marriage: if the state legalises polygamous marriage, it accommodates certain Mormons, but voids the institution of marriage for conservative Protestants (for whom the essence of marriage is that it is a union between one man and one woman). Or if it prohibits polygamous marriage, it accommodates Protestants but makes impossible the Mormon practice of polygamous marriage. Thus, all four cases show that even ‘neutral’ laws can affect the scope of toleration in liberal democracy.

In short, in a liberal democracy, elected representatives define the scope of tolerated practices in three (overlapping) situations. First, they intentionally reject intolerable practices. Second, they define laws that specify more particularly constitutional rights and freedoms. Third, they enact ‘neutral laws’ for the everyday functioning of society that indirectly affect whether or not cultural practices are tolerated. Let us now consider to what extent citizens are involved in this democratic process of defining the limits of toleration and thus what schools should educate them for.

The Required Role and Knowledge of Citizens

So far, we have seen that in the vertical relation of toleration between the state and its citizens, representatives largely define the limits of toleration through laws. These representatives do not have free reign in enacting laws. They are limited by the constitution and its precedent. This precedent is determined by judges, who also modify the scope of toleration by adjudicating on court cases that involve, for example, the freedom of conscience or religion.

However, citizens also play a role in this process of determining the limits of toleration. That is, democracy is government by the people, even if it functions indirectly through representatives and judges. Citizens are responsible for electing representatives and holding them accountable. In addition, they can influence decisions that representatives make with respect to toleration through protests, writing petitions, writing opinion pieces, and organising themselves into lobbies. Finally, citizens can take to court cases involving questions of toleration. Overall, citizens play a limited but important role in shaping the limits of toleration. But do they require particular knowledge for their political participation? Let us consider this question in two parts. First, do citizens require particular knowledge to form opinions on which practices the state should tolerate? Second, do they need certain knowledge to translate their opinions into electing representatives and expressing their views politically?

In response to the first question about forming political opinions, it might be argued that citizens could just endorse the political position that their life mode prescribes. However, many citizens do not have a coherent life mode and thus hold conflicting beliefs. In addition, life modes do not prescribe positions on all issues. For example, the Protestant church might tell its members that it is against their faith to endorse same sex marriage, but will not have an opinion about whether Jews should be allowed to slaughter animals in a certain way.

Subsequently, it might be contended that, since legal toleration is about practices, neither citizens nor their representatives require knowledge about beliefs associated with those practices. This reasoning comes back to the harm principle: the state must simply allow practices that cause no harm, but prohibit ones that do—regardless of the associated religious or cultural meaning. In the case of clear harm, this is largely true. Murdering citizens should be prohibited, regardless of cultural or religious motivations a murderer might have.

However, we saw that often the meaning of harm is controversial. In determining whether a practice is harmful, it sometimes helps to consider its religious or cultural motivation. For example, the Muslim demand that girls wear headscarves in schools may seem oppressive when compared to the treatment of boys. However, some argue that within the girls' cultural framework it is in fact liberating. It is religiously meaningful to the girls and actually improves their equality vis-à-vis boys, as they are no longer judged by appearance. Such an argument may not persuade other citizens, but it

could still influence their opinion and the details of laws on religious symbols in schools. Thus, the meaning behind practices offers an initial argument that citizens require knowledge of other life modes when they form political opinions.

The evaluation approach offers another reason why knowledge of others' beliefs should matter for the interpretation of their practices. It states that, for citizens with particular beliefs, certain practices are obligatory and therefore we cannot expect them to abandon them as easily as other citizens could. Parekh compares these beliefs to laws themselves: 'cultural practices are part of a way of life, have a normative authority and are generally regarded as binding by the members of the community concerned. In this respect they are somewhat like the laws of a country. We may disapprove of a law and yet obey it out of respect for the authority enacting it or for the way of life of which it is a part. Cultural practices cannot therefore be judged exclusively in terms of their content' (1999, p. 163). Parekh thus concludes that we should judge a practice differently based on its obligatory nature within a life mode. He provides the example of Rastafarians and 'AmerIndians', for whom a certain use of drugs is a 'requirement of their way of life', and 'white adolescents' for whom it is 'a self-chosen action' (Parekh, 1999, p. 163). Again, the fact that life modes prescribe practices does not mean that the state should allow these practices. But it is important that citizens at least know what life modes actually demand of others before forming a political opinion about their practices.

In addition to the alleged possibility of separating beliefs and practices, it may seem that citizens still need not learn about other life modes proactively. Namely, once a life mode is threatened by a law, its adherents will publicly advocate the importance of their practices in an effort to save them from prohibition. After all, in a democracy that depends on public debate through the freedom of speech, citizens can pronounce the needs of their life modes. Thus, others need not know about these modes before a controversial issue arises. Again, this is partly true. In fact, because citizens simply cannot know everything about other life modes, they actually depend on information that adherents to those modes provide.

In response to the second question about expressing views politically, we find an answer similar to the first. Namely, citizens require some political and cultural knowledge to elect and assess representatives. In liberal democracies in which judges are also elected, as for example in twenty-three US states, citizens must even assess the qualities of judges. Citizens must evaluate the claims that political parties and their candidates make during political campaigns and while in office. They do not require extensive knowledge of a political party. Rather, to elect a party and hold it accountable, they can rely mostly on information that political parties and the media provide.¹⁴

Overall, citizens do not inherently require a deep knowledge of different life modes and their practices. Generally, they can form opinions about cultural practices and political parties over time. And once they have knowledge and an opinion of larger moral issues such as abortion or same sex marriage, they can vote for a political party that supports their view—or stage a protest to voice their opinion if there are no parties representing their view. Subsequently, they will have an entire election

cycle to reconsider their opinions and the weight that particular issues carry for them. After all, political candidates and parties advocate a diversity of issues which do not line up precisely with citizens' opinions. Therefore, in addition to assessing claims about cultural practices, citizens need to weigh the importance of these issues vis-à-vis social, economic, and other concerns. Only rarely are citizens expected to express suddenly their opinion about a specific issue of toleration. For example, in 2009, Swiss citizens were asked to vote in a referendum on the question of whether Muslims should be allowed to construct minarets as part of their mosques. Swiss citizens thus received information about the issue from different politicians and the media, formed an opinion, and cast a vote (they voted in favour of a prohibition) (BBC News, 2009).

Having analysed the formation and expression of political opinions with respect to toleration, we can now draw a conclusion on how toleration affects the educational requirements of liberal democracy. However, at this point, critics might make two objections. First, citizens do not require the knowledge about life modes and political parties stated above, because they are not obliged to take into account any consideration of toleration. Second, even if citizens should take toleration into consideration, we have just seen that adherents of life modes, politicians, and the media can provide the information that citizens need in order to do so and therefore there is no need for schooling. *Descriptively*, these objections are partially valid. However, *normatively*, we are trying to discover how to maintain a *tolerant* liberal democracy. In other words: we do not merely want to know how citizens receive biased information in daily life and voice political opinions that might factually influence the limits of toleration. Rather, we want to know how we maintain a society in which citizens make *critical evaluations* about the limits of toleration and representatives based on a *desire to tolerate* reasonable—and only reasonable—practices.

Conclusion

In this article I set out to determine which kind of education enables the perpetuation of a reasonable diversity of life modes and the form of liberal democracy that accommodates these modes.

We saw that political liberals argue for a minimal civic education that provides procedural knowledge of the liberal democratic system, while leaving cultural and religious groups enough room to teach coherently their beliefs and practices to their children. However, these liberals disagree about the extent to which schools should teach about different life modes and the ability to reflect on them. I broadly distinguished between three positions: (1) the general view as represented by Rawls; (2) the activist view as illustrated by Macedo; and (3) the minimalist view as defended by Galston. I noted that, despite their different positions, these authors mention the need for teaching toleration without analysing its particular implications in regard to schooling. As toleration is arguably the primary

means to perpetuating liberal democracy and accommodating its diversity, I investigated the educational demands of toleration. I analysed the concept of toleration and stated that, in contrast to what Heyd, Creppell, and Jones argue, toleration is not practised primarily between citizens. Citizens mostly treat each other based on the idea of mutual respect. However, citizens require common limits of toleration; otherwise they might fall into a downward spiral of intolerance or a situation of moral relativism in which even harmful practices are tolerated. Consequently, I indicated that the best descriptions of how the boundaries of toleration are drawn are offered by the justification approach and evaluation approach, and supplemented these approaches with a theory about how democratic politics defines the limits of toleration. I concluded that contemporary liberal democracies still have an important vertical relation of toleration between the democratic state and its citizens—and that these citizens must sometimes contribute to the process of defining the limits of toleration through state laws. We now return to the theoretical education debate.

Throughout this article, we have seen that toleration requires civic education that is more demanding than the minimalist political liberal education, but less demanding than the activist education. The minimalist position is correct in that a liberal democracy that seeks to accommodate diversity can only mandate schools to teach toleration. Yet teaching toleration requires more curricular engagement with different life modes and critical reflection than Galston acknowledges. In addition, it requires teaching respect for democratic institutions, because citizens need to be able to participate in the democratic process of determining the limits of toleration, which also affect their own practices. These demands suggest that the general and activist positions fit better with teaching toleration. However, the activist position is too demanding, because toleration does not require a broad liberal institutional effort to foster more appreciation and cooperation between citizens with different life modes. Nor does toleration require a transformation of their values or mandated common schooling. After all, if liberal democracy intends to accommodate its diversity of (conflicting) life modes through toleration, it cannot expect students to develop a more positive recognition of beliefs and practices that conflict with their own, or to transform their beliefs so that they will agree more with others.¹⁵

Overall, the schooling required for toleration approximates the general position. It corresponds to Rawls' contention that schools must teach students how to participate in the democratic process and—according to Callan and Costa's persuasive interpretation of this position—expose them to different life modes. The exposure to life modes that the general position advocates is primarily based on the idea that different citizens must learn to cooperate and reciprocate horizontally. In contrast, schooling for toleration includes this minimal exposure to enable citizens to interpret political information and make judgments about vertical toleration between the state and its citizens. However, despite its slightly different reasons, teaching for toleration largely supports the general position in the political liberal education debate.

Nevertheless, critics may object that once civic education includes even minimal exposure to different life modes and critical thinking, it may lead to the *de facto* transformation of students' values

that Macedo advocates or even the critical attitude towards their own life mode that comprehensive liberals endorse. Such critical self-reflection harms the efforts of groups to perpetuate their life modes.¹⁶ However, this slippery slope need not exist. It seems plausible enough that students can learn a basic knowledge of other life modes without scrutinising their own.¹⁷ Besides, they do not need to learn to see other life modes as alternative truths or choices for themselves, but rather as beliefs and practices that matter greatly to fellow citizens and therefore might deserve to be tolerated.

I conclude that schools should teach minimal cultural and religious understanding and critical thinking to enable citizens to participate in the democratic process of defining the limits of toleration in society. A consideration of toleration neither exempts schools from teaching a diversity of life modes and critical thinking, nor mandates them to teach these extensively. Citizens must gain minimal background knowledge of other life modes and the reflective skills to evaluate whether cultural or religious practices should be accepted, tolerated, or rejected. They should learn to make such evaluations not primarily among themselves, but in helping to define the limits of toleration in society through their participation in the democratic process.

This conclusion has important ramifications. The educational requirements of toleration indicate the balancing point that liberal democracy must maintain if it seeks to accommodate diversity. A broader civic education would hurt the ability of groups with particular life modes to perpetuate those life modes. A more minimal civic education might endanger the perpetuation of liberal democracy itself, as citizens with different life modes would lack a respect for democracy and liberal rights and the ability to coexist peacefully.

Looking ahead, we must now conduct empirical research to find the most appropriate manner to satisfy the educational demands of toleration. I provided an idea of the required content of civic education, but only an analysis of best practices will show us how best to institute it.

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¹ The term 'life mode' is similar to the concepts of 'comprehensive doctrine' and 'conception of the good' that Rawls (2005) uses. However, I prefer life mode, as it encompasses not only the variety of doctrines, religions, and cultures, but also their related practices, that we find in pluralist societies and can cause division and the need for (legal) accommodation of diversity.

² For the argument that liberal democracy implicitly depends on particular cultural values and morals, see Galston (1991, p. 9), Walzer (1994, pp. 4-21). For another discussion of this argument, see also Forst (2004, pp. 319-20).

³ Although it seems relatively uncontroversial among liberals to have schools teach at least some minimal knowledge of other beliefs, Stolzenberg (1993, pp. 583, 585) indicates that fundamentalist Christians 'have asserted that the teaching of diverse viewpoints in a tolerant and objective mode threatens the survival of their culture', and have even argued that it violates their right to free exercise of religion. For the scholarly argument that civic education requires little or no exposure to different life modes, see for example Burt (2003, p. 203).

⁴ Based on Rawls' belief that just democratic and judicial institutions tend to instill democratic principles and allegiance in citizens, Costa (2004, pp. 5-6) argues that Rawls relies on a more minimal civic education than other political liberals. However, despite Rawls' lack of clear educational guidelines, Costa (2004, p. 9) and Callan (1997, pp. 26-39) infer from his political liberalism that schooling should include an exposure to different life modes, otherwise children cannot learn to reciprocate and cooperate civically as Rawls desires.

⁵ I use Rawls, Macedo, and Galston as models for the three positions, because they are the most cited scholars in the debate according to an analysis of the scholarship on citizenship education in Fernández and Sundström (2011, p. 379).

⁶ For other scholars arguing for the need to teach toleration, see for example Shorten (2010, pp. 57-72), Weinstock (2004, p. 114). Even The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that '[e]ducation...shall promote...tolerance' (United Nations General Assembly, n.d.). For the argument that political liberal education should primarily focus on teaching students that they have the 'right to exit' from their cultural and religious groups (rather than on toleration), see also Lester (2006, pp. 612-35).

⁷ For the argument that 'group identity' might be replaced by more individualism in post modernity, which supports the idea that there will be more horizontal toleration between individuals rather than vertical toleration between dominant groups and subordinate groups, see also Orlie (1999, p. 141).

⁸ For the argument about moral relativism that '[t]oleratation ceases to be good when it embraces conduct or states of affairs that lie beyond the tolerable', see Jones (2010, p. 47). Barry (2001, pp. 131-3) argues that Kukathas' account of toleration in fact constitutes such 'moral anarchy'.

⁹ For an argument about the need for such common limits of toleration, see also Habermas (2003, pp. 5-6).

¹⁰ For discussions about the need for reciprocity in toleration and the idea of 'reasonable disagreement', see Habermas (2003, pp. 5-6), Jones (2010, pp. 48, 52), and Macedo (2000, p. 171).

¹¹ For more about other moral and pragmatic reasons to refrain from prohibiting a practice legally, see Forst (2004, pp. 321-2), Jones (2010, p. 40), and Heyd (1996, pp. 3-4).

¹² For more about the subjectivity and incommensurability of cultural norms and definitions, see also Williams and Waldron (2008, p. 13).

¹³ For the theoretical debate about the Amish court case *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, see also Gutmann (1995, pp. 565-76) and Galston (1995).

¹⁴ For an argument about which knowledge and characteristics a citizen in a liberal democracy must have to elect representatives, see also Barry (2001, pp. 212-3).

¹⁵ The issue of teaching recognition rather than respect or toleration constitutes another ongoing debate among theorists. See for example Jones (2010), *Lægaard* (2010; 2008, pp. 291-314), Horton (2011, pp. 290-303), Taylor (1994), Wolf (1994, p. 78), Fullinwider (2003, pp. 487-500), and Habermas (1994).

¹⁶ For an explanation of this slippery slope argument, see also Kymlicka (1995, pp. 107-30, 152-72; 2002, pp. 208-83, Gutmann (1995, p. 573), Vaughan (2005, p. 404).

¹⁷ For the argument that minimal exposure to other life modes and minimal critical thinking skills need not lead to a critical stance towards one's own life mode, see also Appiah (2003, p. 72) and Heyd (1996, p. 15).