

Education, extremism, and aversion to compromise

Hand, Michael

DOI:

[10.1111/edth.12582](https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12582)

License:

Creative Commons: Attribution (CC BY)

Document Version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Citation for published version (Harvard):

Hand, M 2023, 'Education, extremism, and aversion to compromise', *Educational Theory*, vol. 73, no. 3, pp. 341-354. <https://doi.org/10.1111/edth.12582>

[Link to publication on Research at Birmingham portal](#)

General rights

Unless a licence is specified above, all rights (including copyright and moral rights) in this document are retained by the authors and/or the copyright holders. The express permission of the copyright holder must be obtained for any use of this material other than for purposes permitted by law.

- Users may freely distribute the URL that is used to identify this publication.
- Users may download and/or print one copy of the publication from the University of Birmingham research portal for the purpose of private study or non-commercial research.
- User may use extracts from the document in line with the concept of 'fair dealing' under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (?)
- Users may not further distribute the material nor use it for the purposes of commercial gain.

Where a licence is displayed above, please note the terms and conditions of the licence govern your use of this document.

When citing, please reference the published version.

Take down policy

While the University of Birmingham exercises care and attention in making items available there are rare occasions when an item has been uploaded in error or has been deemed to be commercially or otherwise sensitive.

If you believe that this is the case for this document, please contact UBIRA@lists.bham.ac.uk providing details and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate.

EDUCATION, EXTREMISM, AND AVERSION TO COMPROMISE

Michael Hand

School of Education
University of Birmingham

ABSTRACT. Schools plausibly have a role to play in countering radicalization by taking steps to prevent the acquisition of extremist beliefs, dispositions, and attitudes. A core component of the extremist mindset is aversion to compromise. Michael Hand inquires here into the possibility, desirability, and means of educating against this attitude. He argues that aversion to compromise is demonstrably undesirable and readiness to compromise demonstrably desirable, so discursive teaching of these attitudes should guide pupils toward these verdicts. And he identifies three methods of formative teaching by which readiness to compromise can be cultivated in pupils.

KEY WORDS. extremism; Prevent duty; compromise; conative attitudes; discursive teaching; formative teaching

Schools in England are legally required to “have due regard to the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.”¹ To meet this requirement — usually referred to as the “Prevent duty” — schools are charged, first, with identifying and referring to the police “children at risk of radicalization” and, second, with providing learning opportunities that “build pupils’ resilience to radicalization.”² I will call these charges the *custodial* part and the *educational* part of the Prevent duty. The government defines “radicalization” as “the process by which a person comes to support terrorism and forms of extremism leading to terrorism” and “extremism” as “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values.”³ Among the educational measures recommended for building resilience to radicalization are “providing a safe environment for debating controversial issues,” equipping pupils to “understand and manage difficult situations,” teaching “effective ways of resisting pressures,” and cultivating “positive character traits.”⁴

There is much to worry about here. The custodial part of the Prevent duty casts teachers in the role of informants, undermining trust in teacher-pupil relationships and inhibiting open discussion in the classroom; the stipulated definition of extremism is strikingly inadequate; and the recommended resilience-building measures are excessively vague and diffuse. I say more about these worries elsewhere.⁵

1. UK Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015, 26.1, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/section/26/enacted>.

2. Department for Education, *The Prevent Duty: Departmental Advice for Schools and Child-care Providers* (2015), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439598/prevent-duty-departmental-advice-v6.pdf.

3. *Ibid.*, 4–5.

4. *Ibid.*, 8.

5. Michael Hand, “Education, Extremism, and Exemption from Basic Morality” (forthcoming).

But the idea that schools have a role to play in equipping children to resist the lure of extremism and terrorism is not obviously mistaken. Armed with a more adequate account of extremism, and a more precise and focused set of educational measures, it is plausible to think that teachers might indeed serve as agents of counter-radicalization.⁶ The educational part of the Prevent duty, appropriately refined, may be quite consistent with, and even implied by, the central educational aims of cultivating rational thought and action and preparing children for the demands of adult life.

With respect to the need for a more adequate account of extremism, the recent publication of Quassim Cassam's *Extremism: A Philosophical Analysis* represents a great stride forward.⁷ Cassam maps, in painstaking and illuminating detail, the complex logical geography of the concept. He does not offer a definition, or a set of necessary and sufficient conditions; rather, he construes extremism as a family resemblance concept with ideological, methodological, and psychological dimensions. He proposes that the logical criteria of extremism include beliefs with certain kinds of ideological content; a readiness to resort, or incite others to resort, to violence; some familiar epistemic vices; and a range of associated preoccupations, emotions, attitudes, and thinking styles. I do not suggest that Cassam has said the last word on the matter, but I do think he has given us the most comprehensive and credible analysis of extremism to date. In what follows I assume his account is basically correct.

The next step is to consider what educators might sensibly and defensibly do to ensure that pupils do not become extremists. Here I see no alternative but to work through the features of extremism catalogued by Cassam and ask of each in turn whether its acquisition by pupils is something educators could and should prevent, and what might be involved in preventing it. To suppose that schools can make a meaningful contribution to counter-radicalization is not necessarily to suppose that schools can effectively counter every component of the extremist mindset. But it plainly *is* to suppose that the acquisition of *some* components can be forestalled by educational means. Investigating this supposition — that is, determining which

6. I follow the convention of using “counter-radicalization” and “deradicalization” to distinguish the enterprises of *preventing* and *reversing* radicalization. Counter-radicalizers act preemptively to fortify people against extremism; deradicalizers act remedially to help those already in its grip. I do not exclude the possibility that there are young people of school age who qualify as extremists and that schools have a role to play in supporting efforts to deradicalize them, but my focus here (and the explicit focus of the Prevent duty) is on the contribution schools can make to the enterprise of counter-radicalization.

7. Quassim Cassam, *Extremism: A Philosophical Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2021). This work will be cited in the text as *EPA* for all subsequent references.

features of extremism might be educationally countered and how — is a task of the first importance for educational theorists.⁸

My aim in the present article is to make a start on this task. I shall take just one component of the extremist mindset — aversion to compromise — and inquire into the possibility, desirability, and means of educating against it.

CASSAM AND MARGALIT ON AVERSION TO COMPROMISE

Aversion to compromise is one of four attitudes Cassam lists among the logical criteria of extremism (the others being indifference, intolerance, and anti-pluralism). He takes an attitude to be an “evaluative posture”: “to say that extremists deplore compromise is to make a point about their attitude or posture towards compromise: they are against it” (*EPA*, 90). Crucially, it is compromise *per se* to which extremists are characteristically averse, not just compromises of a particular kind:

Extremists aren't just uncompromising about the *wrong* things but uncompromising about *everything* in the political realm. ... [T]hey see all compromises as rotten, including ones that are made for the sake of peace. ... They would literally rather die or go to war than compromise. (*EPA*, 102–103)

In his discussion of this attitude, Cassam draws heavily on Avishai Margalit's *On Compromise and Rotten Compromises*.⁹ Margalit's principal aim in that book is to identify and describe a type of compromise to which we should all be averse: the *rotten* compromise. A rotten compromise is “an agreement to establish or maintain an inhuman regime, a regime of cruelty and humiliation, that is, a regime that does not treat humans as humans” (*CRC*, 1). A paradigmatic example of a rotten compromise is the 1938 Munich Agreement, whereby Sudetenland was ceded to Nazi Germany. Margalit argues, very plausibly, that “inhuman regimes erode the foundation of morality,” so no one should be prepared to make compromises that establish or maintain such regimes (*CRC*, 2). But he is at pains to emphasize that most compromises are not rotten. His “stern warnings against rotten compromises” are to be understood in the context of his “strong advocacy for compromises in general, and compromises for the sake of peace in particular” (*CRC*, 2).

Toward the end of his book, Margalit draws a distinction between the “liberal” and the “sectarian” attitude toward compromise. For the liberal, “the spirit of compromise is what should breathe life into politics” (*CRC*, 104). Margalit notes the conceptual proximity of compromise to tolerance: in each case there is a focus

8. There are, of course, other questions at the interface of education and extremism worthy of theoretical attention. One is the question of how schools might equip pupils to cope with the threat of violent extremism and the fear it induces (see Laura D'Olimpio, “Educating the Rational Emotions: An Affective Response to Extremism,” in this issue); another is the question of what schools might do to address the deeper social and economic drivers of extremism (see David Stevens, “Recasting ‘Fundamental British Values’: Education, Justice, and Preventing Violent Extremism,” in this issue).

9. Avishai Margalit, *On Compromise and Rotten Compromises* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010). This work will be cited in the text as *CRC* for all subsequent references.

on “the one who makes the claim rather than the substance of the claim” (CRC, 104). Because the liberal is committed to recognition of the other, she stands ready to compromise with those whose purposes differ from her own, and to tolerate those whose actions she finds objectionable. “So compromise and tolerance are for the liberal mind two sides of the same coin, and the icon of the liberal should be minted on both sides” (CRC, 104).

By contrast, the sectarian has no interest in accommodating the other. She is single-mindedly dedicated to the furtherance of her own cause. Margalit writes:

Sectarianism is a mode of operation and a state of mind. The operation would rather split the party than split the difference. The state of mind is that of keeping your principled position uncompromised, come what may. Sectarianism is a disposition to view any compromise as a rotten compromise. ... There is more to the sectarian cast of mind than just a negative attitude to compromise. But in my view the refusal to compromise is its main feature. (CRC, 93)

Margalit’s sectarian is a close cousin of Cassam’s extremist. As Cassam observes, much of what Margalit says about sectarianism is equally applicable to extremism. The negative attitude to compromise that is, for Margalit, the “main feature” of “the sectarian cast of mind” is also a prominent and salient feature of the extremist mindset.

THE CONCEPT OF COMPROMISE

What precisely is a compromise? It is, I suggest, the resolution of a disagreement by the making of concessions. In the simplest case, two people who disagree about a course of action (say, whether to spend the day hiking in the hills or lying on the beach) resolve their disagreement by settling on a course of action that partially satisfies the preferences of each (say, hiking in the morning and sunbathing in the afternoon). The parties to the disagreement *split the difference* or *meet each other halfway*. Neither gets exactly what they want, but they both get something of what they want and they are able to move past the disagreement.

Not all compromises are of the difference-splitting variety. Daniel Weinstock draws a useful distinction between integrative and substitutive compromises.¹⁰ The compromise struck by the hiker and the sunbather is integrative because it combines elements of their initial preferences: both hiking and sunbathing are involved in the course of action they agree on. In a substitutive compromise, by contrast, the parties to the disagreement settle on a course of action quite different from their initial preferences. Weinstock’s example is of two friends looking for somewhere to eat, one of whom favors a steakhouse and the other a sushi bar. As the first friend dislikes fish and the second dislikes red meat, they compromise on a pizzeria. Pizza does not split the difference between steak and sushi: it is a substitute acceptable to both parties. While I think it is fair to say that compromises are usually, even paradigmatically, integrative, there are situations

10. Daniel Weinstock, “On the Possibility of Principled Moral Compromise,” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 16, no. 4 (2013): 537–556.

in which making a substitution is more sensible or more feasible than splitting the difference.

Sometimes there are more than two parties to a compromise: disagreements can involve numerous people with a variety of preferences. Sometimes the parties to a compromise are not individuals: disagreements can arise between families, businesses, communities, or countries. And sometimes the thing on which the parties compromise is not a course of action: disagreements can be about policies, contracts, rules, or boundaries. Compromises, then, come in many different shapes and sizes; but they always and necessarily involve the resolution of disagreement by the making of concessions.

Although we tend to think of compromise as an interpersonal phenomenon, it can be intrapersonal too. Indeed, most of us strike compromises with ourselves on a daily basis. Today I have promised myself I will write without interruption; but a slew of emails arrived in my inbox last night and I am worried I could miss something important if I do not attend to them. So I have an internal conflict. I will probably resolve it by compromising: by focusing on writing for most of the day, but leaving enough time this evening to scan my inbox and respond to anything urgent. Ordinary human lives are filled with intrapersonal compromises of this familiar, mundane kind.

In a world without disagreement, there would be no need for compromise. If our preferences and purposes were always perfectly aligned, both internally and externally, we could conduct our affairs without conflict or concession. But such a world is unimaginably different from our own. Internally, each of us has a multitude of desires, goals, and plans, some of them flatly incompatible, most just forced into competition by our limited stocks of time and energy. Externally, we have no choice but to engage in cooperative schemes with others whose interests, ends, and values differ markedly from our own. In the world we actually inhabit, disagreements are unavoidable and frequent, and compromises are usually our best bet for resolving them.

Compromise is not, of course, the only way of resolving disagreements. Other options are persuasion and coercion. If I disagree with my six-year-old son about whether or not he should go to bed, I may try to persuade him by rational argument ("if you don't go to bed now, you'll be tired at school tomorrow"), or resort to coercion ("bed, now, or there'll be no screen time for the rest of the week"), and both options may seem preferable to compromising with him. And, as Margalit argues, there are at least some disagreements it would be morally objectionable to resolve by means of compromise. Meeting others halfway is not *always* the best bet or the right thing to do. But, at least when disagreeing with others who are not young children or moral monsters, and whose preferences are broadly reasonable, the possibility of striking a compromise will normally be worth exploring.

Importantly, compromising does not involve changing one's mind about the optimal course of action, or abandoning preferences and purposes that misalign with those of others. When people compromise, they agree on a course of action

that each regards as suboptimal, and typically they will continue to regard it as suboptimal for the duration of their agreement. The hiker and the sunbather would each have preferred to spend the whole day on their favored activity and their preferences are not changed by their agreement to spend half the day on each. Here the proximity of compromise to tolerance is particularly apparent: when I tolerate conduct I find objectionable, I do not thereby cease to find it objectionable; and when I compromise on a course of action I consider suboptimal, I do not thereby cease to consider it suboptimal. This is not to deny that parties to a compromise *can* change their minds: no doubt it is sometimes the case that compromise policies turn out to be so successful that they seem superior, in retrospect, to any of the policies originally proposed. The point is simply that no such change of mind is implied by the concept of compromise.

THE ATTITUDE OF AVERSION TO COMPROMISE

Let us now return to the idea of aversion to compromise. Cassam's classification of aversion to compromise as an attitude seems right, but I am inclined to think that more needs to be said. There are, after all, different kinds of attitude. So what kind are we dealing with here?

I propose that aversion to compromise should be construed as a *conative attitude*. Conative attitudes are attitudes of the will: they consist in stable dispositions to act, or to refrain from acting, in particular ways. Aversion to compromise, then, is a stable disposition to refrain from compromising; that is, a disinclination to compromise. To be compromise-averse is to have a steady preference for resolving disagreements by means other than compromise, or for letting disagreements persist rather than compromising to resolve them.

Conative attitudes are to be distinguished from affective attitudes, which are attitudes of the heart. Affective attitudes are stable dispositions to experience certain feelings or emotions in relation to particular objects. Fear of mice is an affective attitude; so is love of chocolate. While fear of mice and love of chocolate are associated with some characteristic kinds of behavior (screaming, running away, jumping on chairs in the former case; eating more than is sensible or comfortable in the latter), there is not usually a steady preference for acting in these ways. And even where such preferences are formed, they are secondary to the relevant emotions.

I do not mean to deny that compromise-averse people will often experience negative emotions when invited to make compromises, or when reflecting on compromises made by others. Characteristically, perhaps, the former will elicit indignation and the latter disgust. What I am suggesting is that these characteristic emotional responses are not at the core of aversion to compromise, and are not necessary to it. What is necessary is a state of the will, an active disinclination to compromise, which disinclination may or may not be accompanied by feelings of indignation or disgust.

It is possible to accept the coherence of this account but to doubt that anyone actually has a stable disposition to refrain from compromising. It might be suggested, for example, that aversion to compromise is always situation-specific or restricted to particular domains. A person quite unwilling to compromise on matters relating to her religious beliefs or political convictions may be perfectly accommodating when it comes to choosing leisure activities or selecting restaurants. The thought here is that compromises are so diverse in their sizes and shapes, costs and stakes, that aversion to compromise *per se* is psychologically implausible. But this thought excessively downplays the salient features that compromises have in common. Compromises always, by definition, involve making concessions with a view to resolving disagreements. It is psychologically quite intelligible, and quite commonplace, for people to be generally resistant, or generally open, to moderating their demands, to meeting others halfway, to accepting the costs of keeping the peace. We are all acquainted with people we should not hesitate to describe as uncompromising, intolerant, intransigent, or uncooperative. To be sure, conative attitudes *can* be domain-specific, and some people are averse to compromising on only a subset of their preferences; but conative attitudes can also be global, and there is no shortage of people with an aversion to compromise *per se*.

If aversion to compromise is the negative conative attitude toward compromise, the corresponding positive conative attitude is *readiness to compromise*. A person is ready to compromise when she has a steady preference for resolving disagreements rather than letting them persist, and for resolving them by means of compromise. Her preference is not so strong that she will compromise at all costs: readiness to compromise is quite compatible with an unwillingness to make rotten compromises, and with an openness to other ways of resolving disagreements where appropriate. But the compromise-ready person goes into disagreements with both an expectation that compromises are likely to be necessary and an inclination to make them.

If this is right, I think the most promising way to prevent pupils from acquiring an aversion to compromise is to cultivate in them a readiness to compromise. The key to countering the negative conative attitude is to foster its positive counterpart. Plausibly, the young people least vulnerable to extremist efforts to persuade them of the evils of compromise are those whose education has convinced them of its merits.

EDUCATING ATTITUDES

At this point, something needs to be said about the enterprise of educating attitudes. I contend that teaching in this domain is of two basic kinds: *discursive* and *formative*. By discursive teaching of attitudes, I mean engaging pupils in discussion and reflection on the nature and justification of attitudes. The aim here is to develop knowledge and understanding. By formative teaching of attitudes, I mean bringing it about that pupils actually *have* certain attitudes, by cultivating in them the relevant conative or affective dispositions.

Any and all attitudes may be taught discursively. Whether an attitude is admirable, reprehensible, or neither has no bearing on its eligibility for discussion in the classroom. It is important that pupils come to understand why some attitudes are desirable (e.g., aversion to smoking), others undesirable (e.g., dislike of people from other countries), and still others neither desirable nor undesirable (e.g., love of chocolate). They need to understand, too, that there are attitudes about whose desirability people reasonably disagree. Aversion to risk, for example, is a conative attitude considered by some to be prudent and responsible and by others to stand in the way of progress and prosperity. It is educationally worthwhile to give pupils opportunities to discuss and reflect on attitudes in each of these justificatory categories.

By contrast, only those attitudes that are robustly justified, attitudes whose desirability is beyond reasonable doubt, may be taught formatively. To cultivate conative and affective dispositions in pupils is, in a significant way, to mold their identities. Educators are not at liberty to mold pupils' identities as they please. But in the case of attitudes that are demonstrably desirable, and with the proviso that their desirability is in fact demonstrated to pupils, the cultivation of conative and affective dispositions is educationally appropriate. Schools have a mandate to foster in pupils an aversion to smoking, for example, because the evidence for the harmfulness of smoking is incontrovertible, and on the condition that this evidence is presented to pupils alongside more direct measures to shape their preferences.

Both discursive and formative teaching is needed because attitudes do not automatically fall into line with beliefs about their justification. It is quite common for people to believe that aversion to smoking is a desirable attitude without having anything like a stable disposition to refrain from smoking. Similarly, recognizing that dislike of people from other countries is an undesirable attitude is not itself a cure for xenophobia. There is, to be sure, *some* connection between my attitudes and my beliefs about their justification: my judgment that an attitude has merit certainly helps to sustain it, and my judgment that an attitude is worthless makes it easier to dispel. But the connection is not nearly strong enough for educators to be able to dispense with formative teaching. To bring it about that pupils *have* desirable attitudes, as distinct from just recognizing their desirability, teachers must take steps to cultivate them directly.

Although any and all attitudes may be taught discursively, the aim of such teaching will depend on the justificatory status of the attitude under discussion. If the attitude is demonstrably desirable or undesirable, the aim of discursive teaching will be *directive*: that is, the teacher will seek to guide or steer discussion toward correct assessment of the attitude. If the attitude is one about whose desirability people reasonably disagree, the aim of discursive teaching will be *nondirective*: that is, the teacher will seek to keep open the question of correct assessment, encouraging pupils to form their own considered views on the matter. In this respect, discursive teaching of attitudes is no different from discursive teaching of any other subject matter. Education is governed by an epistemic

imperative to teach things as true or false, justified or unjustified, when their truth-value or justificatory status is known, and to refrain from teaching things as true or false, justified or unjustified, when their truth-value or justificatory status is unknown.

The upshot of this brief discussion is that attitudes fall into three justificatory categories and the attitudes in each category should be taught in different ways:

- demonstrably desirable attitudes should be taught both discursively, with the directive aim of persuading pupils that they are desirable, and formatively, with the aim of cultivating the attitudes themselves;
- demonstrably undesirable attitudes should be taught discursively, with the directive aim of persuading pupils that they are undesirable;
- attitudes of uncertain desirability should be taught discursively, with the nondirective aim of enabling pupils to form their own considered views.

DISCUSSING ATTITUDES TO COMPROMISE

It is clear, I think, that aversion to compromise qualifies as a demonstrably undesirable attitude. As noted above, a world without need of compromise is a world unimaginably different from our own. Because our preferences and purposes are frequently misaligned, both internally and externally, compromise is a central feature of our intrapersonal and interpersonal lives. To be saddled with an aversion to compromise, with a stable disposition to refrain from compromising, is to be significantly handicapped in the pursuit of one's goals and the conduct of one's relationships. It is also to be an impediment to the success of cooperative schemes, which rely on the readiness of participants to resolve disagreements by making concessions.

It is equally clear, and for the same reasons, that readiness to compromise qualifies as a demonstrably desirable attitude. Unless we are ready to compromise, we have no effective means of managing our own competing desires, goals, and plans, or of sustaining cooperation with others whose interests, ends and values differ from our own. Without the attitude of readiness to compromise, we are disastrously ill-equipped for the demands of personal, social, political, and professional life.

Discursive teaching of these two attitudes should therefore be directive. Aversion to compromise should be taught with the aim of demonstrating its undesirability and readiness to compromise with the aim of demonstrating its desirability. Pupils should be encouraged to reflect on the many and varied situations in which compromises can be struck, and on the differing fortunes of people (actual and fictional) who are and are not prepared to compromise. They should be given opportunities to talk about occasions on which they themselves have compromised or refused to compromise, and about the consequences of their choices. They should be furnished with enough experiential data (first, second, and

third-hand) to be able to weigh up the relative merits of positive and negative conative attitudes to compromise, and to see that being compromise-ready has vastly more going for it than being compromise-averse.

Note that directive teaching need not be didactic. That is to say, teaching with a view to persuading pupils of something need not take the form of instruction or exposition. It certainly *can* take that form, and there is no objection of educational principle to teachers standing before the class and expounding the good reasons for readiness to compromise. In practice, however, didactic teaching of this kind is unlikely to be effective in enabling students to feel the force of those reasons and to make connections with their own inclinations and experiences. Non-didactic teaching, in which the role of the teacher is to facilitate inquiry, discussion, and reflection, is a far more promising approach to discursive teaching of attitudes, and fully compatible with the directive aim of guiding pupils to a correct understanding.

Note, too, that directive teaching need not, and most certainly should not, be in any way underhand or manipulative. There should be no concealing of evidence, distorting of facts, or suppression of counterexamples. In particular, the existence of rotten compromises should be faced fairly and squarely: there are some disagreements we ought not to resolve by making concessions because any concession would serve to “maintain an inhuman regime” and thereby “erode the foundation of morality” (*CRC*, 2). Even in the case of disagreements it is permissible to resolve by making concessions, there is almost always more than one compromise available, and some possible compromises are much worse (less fair, less circumspect, less attentive to the preferences and purposes of the parties involved) than others. None of this should be hidden from pupils — indeed, if they are to become competent compromisers, it is crucial that they can distinguish between good compromises and bad ones. Bringing it about that pupils understand why aversion to compromise is undesirable and readiness to compromise desirable requires only that they are acquainted with a wide enough range of cases to see that, when preferences and purposes clash, the option of compromising is nearly always worth exploring and usually the best bet.

Where in the school curriculum might discussion of attitudes to compromise take place? Two obvious places are history lessons and literature lessons. Political history offers a rich panoply of compromises struck between warring nations, parties, factions, and individuals, some of them rotten, many of them defensible and effective. And literary texts are filled with characters negotiating conflicting desires, interests, and values, both internally and externally, with varying degrees of success. Teachers of history and literature would rarely have to stray from their designated periods or set texts to build discussion of compromise into their schemes of work.

In England, there are two other school subjects that afford clear opportunities for discursive teaching of attitudes to compromise: citizenship and relationships education. Neither the program of study for citizenship nor the statutory guidance for relationships education explicitly mentions compromise, but the focus in these

two subjects on managing relationships, negotiating differences, and resolving disagreements makes them especially conducive to reflection on the pros and cons of compromising.

Here are the stated aims of relationships education at the primary level:

The focus in primary school should be on teaching the fundamental building blocks and characteristics of positive relationships. ... From the beginning of primary school, building on early education, pupils should be taught how to take turns, how to treat each other with kindness, consideration and respect. ... Respect for others should be taught in an age-appropriate way, in terms of understanding one's own and others' boundaries in play, in negotiations about space, toys, books, resources and so on.¹¹

Talking with young children about the importance of taking turns and sharing space just *is* talking with them about the benefits of compromise. To help a five-year-old understand that the toy she wants to play with is wanted by another child too, that their immediate wants cannot both be satisfied, and that they can avoid conflict by each temporarily suspending their claim on the toy while the other plays with it, is already to begin the process of demonstrating the desirability of readiness to compromise.

And here is an extract from the citizenship program of study:

Pupils should be taught:

- a. to research, discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events;
- b. why and how rules and laws are made and enforced, why different rules are needed in different situations and how to take part in making and changing rules; ...
- c. that there are different kinds of responsibilities, rights and duties at home, at school and in the community, and that these can sometimes conflict with each other; ...
- d. to resolve differences by looking at alternatives, making decisions and explaining choices.¹²

Classroom conversations about issues that divide society, about processes of collective decision-making, about tensions between rights and responsibilities, and about differences of political opinion, can hardly avoid the questions of whether and when it makes sense to compromise. Where relationships education invites exploration of disagreements and how to resolve them at the personal level, citizenship invites it at the political level. Training pupils' critical gaze on attitudes to political compromise is therefore integral to the work of the citizenship teacher.

FORMING READINESS TO COMPROMISE

Finally, if readiness to compromise is a demonstrably desirable attitude, and educators are justified in teaching it formatively as well as discursively, some

11. Department for Education, *Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education* (2019), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1090195/Relationships_Education_RSE_and_Health_Education.pdf.

12. Department for Education, *Citizenship Programmes of Study: Key Stages 1 and 2* (2015), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/402173/Programme_of_Study_KS1_and_2.pdf.

attention is needed to the methods of formative teaching. Alongside rationally persuading pupils that they *should* be ready to compromise, what steps might teachers take to bring it about that they actually *are* ready to compromise, that they have a steady preference for resolving disagreements by the making of concessions?

By far the most important and effective method of cultivating positive conative attitudes is to ensure that pupils have regular and successful first-hand experience of the relevant kind of action. So if pupils are to acquire a stable disposition to compromise, they must be given frequent opportunities to resolve disagreements by compromising. The more disagreements they successfully resolve in this way, the more they will be inclined to make compromise their go-to strategy for dealing with conflict. The making of concessions is, by nature, somewhat painful; but repeated experience of successful compromise builds a positive association between concession-making and conflict-resolution, so the cost of conceding feels like a price worth paying.

Disagreements arise spontaneously in the course of everyday life in schools, so there is no shortage of naturally occurring opportunities for pupils to compromise. What may go against the grain for some teachers, though, is giving pupils the time and space to resolve disagreements for themselves. Spontaneous classroom disagreements frequently disrupt the flow of educational activity, so there is a standing temptation for teachers to terminate them by means of authoritative intervention — for example, by separating the parties to the conflict, or by delivering a binding verdict in favor of one party. Sometimes, of course, this is exactly the right thing to do; but if classroom disagreements are *always* terminated by the teacher, the best opportunities for giving pupils successful experience of compromise are lost. At least some of the spontaneously arising disagreements in school should be allowed to play themselves out, with pupils afforded the freedom to propose and experiment with different compromise arrangements. If they are to acquire a stable disposition to compromise, pupils must have agency in resolving their own disagreements; resolutions imposed by teachers, even where they strike a judicious balance among competing preferences, have little formative effect on readiness to compromise.

In addition to capitalizing on naturally occurring disagreements, teachers can and should manufacture disagreements among pupils, specifically with a view to facilitating positive experiences of compromise. One way to do this is by asking pupils to work in groups on loosely specified projects, where initial disagreement among group members is more or less inevitable. For example, groups of pupils on a science project might be tasked with designing and building a self-propelled vehicle, where both the type of vehicle and the method of propulsion are left unspecified. Here, group members are bound to disagree in the first instance, so have no choice but to negotiate and compromise with one another. Another way to manufacture disagreement in the classroom is by asking pupils to play opposing roles or defend rival views in mock parliaments, cabinets, negotiations, or trials. One of the lessons I remember most vividly from my own secondary

education involved our being cast as secretaries of state for defense, justice, transport, business, education, culture, health, social security, and international development and tasked with agreeing a national budget. Although we were only playing roles and had no direct personal investment in the areas of public spending we were asked to champion, the enormity of the problem, and the absolute indispensability of compromise to reaching any kind of solution, made a lasting impression on us.

Providing opportunities for pupils to resolve disagreements for themselves is not without risk. Sometimes pupils' attempts to strike compromises will founder. They will find their classmates unwilling to meet them halfway, or there will be no course of action they can all agree on, or the course of action they agree on will turn out to be an ineffective solution to the problem in hand. Just as repeated experience of successful compromise tends to build the desired conative attitude, so repeated experience of unsuccessful compromise tends to undermine it. There is therefore a delicate pedagogical balance to be struck between, on the one hand, giving pupils time and space to resolve disagreements for themselves and, on the other, monitoring and intervening in their negotiations to keep them on track. Teachers should be ready to act as mediators in disputes, not to shut them down or impose resolutions, but to assist pupils in managing their emotions, formulating their preferences, and finding their way to mutually acceptable compromises. There are still no guarantees, but where manufactured disagreements are carefully designed and teacher mediation is attentive and supportive, it is reasonable to expect that pupils will experience markedly more success than failure in their efforts to compromise.

Although regular and successful first-hand experience of compromise is the key to formative teaching of readiness to compromise, there are subsidiary methods that also have a contribution to make. One is *rewarding* compromise. Especially with younger children, deploying the familiar range of extrinsic rewards — from encouraging smiles and words of praise to house points, merit badges and gold stickers — is a useful way of reinforcing positive associations with compromise. The ultimate goal, of course, is for pupils to experience compromise as its own reward, for the resolution of disagreement to be the benefit that makes them want to keep compromising; but en route to that goal there is scope for supplementing intrinsic rewards with extrinsic ones.

Another subsidiary method is *modelling* compromise. Children learn by doing, but they also learn by watching. One way for teachers to encourage a readiness to compromise is to set a good example, to show that they themselves resolve disagreements by the making of concessions. They should set this example in their negotiations with other teachers, with non-teaching staff, and with parents; but above all they should set it in their negotiations with pupils. Again, I do not mean to deny that there are situations in which teachers must exercise their authority and close down pupil dissent rather than constructively engage with it. But sometimes it is entirely appropriate for teachers to recognize the legitimacy of pupil dissent, to acknowledge tensions between their own pedagogical plans

and the reasonable preferences of their pupils, and to open a door to the possibility of compromise. If, on a gloriously sunny day, pupils long to be outdoors but the planned lesson ties them to the classroom, and if there is other worthwhile learning that could be facilitated in the playground, the teacher might at least consider postponing the planned lesson to accommodate her pupils' understandable preference.

No doubt there are other methods too. But the three I have mentioned — facilitating regular and successful experience of compromise, rewarding compromise, and modelling compromise — suffice to show that formative teaching of readiness to compromise is a viable educational undertaking. I hope they also make clear how cultivating in pupils a positive conative attitude to compromise differs from, and complements, rationally persuading them of its desirability.

CONCLUSION

Encouraging the attitude of readiness to compromise is only one part of the larger enterprise of building resistance to radicalization. But it is a significant part. For Margalit, "a negative attitude to compromise" is the "main feature" of "the sectarian cast of mind" (*CRC*, 93); for Cassam, "hostility to compromise" is among "the strongest candidates for the status of core elements of the extremist mindset" (*EPA*, 112). So if there are things educators can permissibly and practically do to foster in pupils a steady preference for resolving disagreements by means of compromise, and a sound understanding of the justification for that preference, they should feature prominently in any program of education against extremism.

The burden of my argument has been to show that there are. I have argued that aversion to compromise is a demonstrably undesirable attitude and readiness to compromise a demonstrably desirable one, that discursive teaching of these attitudes should therefore be directive, and that the existing school curriculum offers ample scope for such teaching. And I have identified three methods by which readiness to compromise can be directly cultivated in pupils: the facilitation of regular and successful experience of compromise, the rewarding of compromise, and the modeling of compromise.