PART 4

**UNDERSTANDING SUBJECTIVE
DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL PROCESSES:
IDENTITY AND POLITICS**

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10. PSYCHOANALYSIS, FUNDAMENTALISM, CRITICAL THEORY AND THE UNCONSCIOUS

*Adult Education, Islamic Fundamentalism and the
Subjectivity of Omniscience*

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I explore the quality of our relationship to knowledge and to the other, and otherness, through a psychosocial and psychoanalytic lens. I suggest fundamentalism is a defensive orientation to experience, finding diverse expression in our contemporary world, although its various forms have much in common. Whether in the defensiveness of some academic thought, or Islamic fundamentalism, market/neo-classical or Marxism, it can be a defence against the anxiety of not knowing or being unable rationally to find complete answers. The defensiveness works at a primitive, or early, pre-intellectual and largely unconscious level. I draw on auto/biographical narrative research into Islamist groups, and the history of workers' education to illuminate the conflict between fundamentalism and a democratic education. The latter attempts to keep dialogue going, with diverse others, developmentally, despite various attacks on the process. The former to close dialogue and learning down. I draw on critical theory and notions of self/other recognition to explain this. Note is made that critical theory itself was concerned with certain fundamentalisms that stalked positivistic social science as well as strands of Marxism. Herein lie epistemological questions behind claims to exclusive truth, in contrast to perspectives emphasising knowing as a relational, uncertain dynamic, shaped in part by our internal world. The dynamic encompasses unconscious anxiety around not knowing and relying on others. The capacity to live in doubt and uncertainty and to recognise how much in fact we need others for self-knowledge, are crucial for richer epistemological experience, as well as for a democratic education and building social solidarities.

INTERROGATING ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM AND WORKERS' EDUCATION THROUGH A PSYCHOSOCIAL LENS

I have drawn on 'psychosocial' understandings, combining psychoanalysis and critical theory, as well as the work of John Dewey, to interrogate Islamic fundamentalist groups, and, comparatively, the history of workers' education in one particular city.

This to explore the struggles surrounding democratic education in diverse places and spaces, including in the academy itself. I examine processes of self-other recognition in contrast to paranoid-schizoid modes of functioning, in which unwanted parts of self, culture and thinking are split off and projected on to the other in largely unconscious ways. The world gets divided into good and bad, pure and impure, self and other, truth and apostasy. There is also the tendency towards omniscience, that we as individuals or whole groups have the truth and nothing but the truth and that our stories are sovereign. John Dewey (1969) makes a crucial distinction between such dynamics and processes of democratic education, in which, in the best of practice, there is openness to the other and the other of different ways of seeing. Experience in some groups, however, like those of racists or Islamic fundamentalism, is of closure towards otherness, and ultimately to the self and experience of those involved. It is further suggested that fundamentalism is quite ordinary, in that each of us, at times, when we feel out of our depth, can grab at ideas promising truth and nothing but the truth. Fundamentalism has found expression in social critique, including Marxism, in its claims to be able to fully penetrate reality and its compulsion to construct unified systems of knowledge. Psychoanalysis, alongside the work of critical theorists like Theodor Adorno and Axel Honneth, helps us move beyond fantasises of total knowledge into new and diverse subjective, intersubjective and symbolic democratic learning possibilities.

I use auto/biographical narrative enquiry and an interdisciplinary psychosocial imagination, to interrogate manifestations of fundamentalism in lives, as well as, contrarywise, to illuminate the spirit of more open forms of enquiry, as in the best of adult education. The former may represent, in its closure, the antithesis of democratic learning. To examine these processes, I draw on research into the rise of racism and fundamentalism, as well as the historical role of adult education, in what is now a post-industrial city in England (West, 2016, 2017a). I take the city as emblematic of wider processes in many similar communities across Europe and North America. Adult education once generated ‘resources of hope’, in Raymond Williams’ compelling phrase, for democratic experiment and self/other recognition, a social movement that is now much weakened (Williams, 1989; West, 2016).

The theoretical sweep of the chapter encompasses the interplay of culture and psyche, drawing on the work of Donald Winnicott as well as Honneth, and Adorno. John Dewey helps us consider the prerequisites for a radical, far-reaching understanding of ‘a cooperative contribution to social reproduction’, and what inhibits this. Honneth argues that the mature Dewey provides ‘an alternative in the end of work society’ where we can ‘no longer assume the form of a normatively inspired restructuring of the capitalist labour market’ (Honneth, 2007, p. 236). Honneth seeks to establish the role of self/other recognition in building social cooperation in a reframing of critical theory itself, beyond left Hegelianism and the illusion of a revolutionary proletariat. This is set alongside the pervasive and powerful dynamics of disrespect and, I add, unconscious defences against our anxiety in the face of the other. I include, drawing on Melanie Klein’s work (1975), collective as well as individual defences of splitting and projection on to the other what we most dislike in ourselves. Splitting

involves paranoid/schizoid modes of functioning: of self-idealisation while aspects of ourselves we most dislike, such as greed, neediness, laziness, misogyny, and the capacity for violence can be ejected into others. Maybe our cultures are also idealised while the culture of the other is demonised. But the demons most properly belong to us. I suggest that intimate biographical vulnerabilities, alongside social disrespect and exclusion, combine to create the powerful attraction of the Islamist group (or the racist gang) and of totalising ideas. We get seduced by narratives of certainty that seemingly offer compelling, omniscient fantasies. We can also feel recognised in a gang of our own where we have somewhere to call home, with superior stories to explain in, and against, a frightening world.

The best of adult education, on the other hand, was grounded in an ethic of equality, respect, trust, dialogue as well as intellectual diversity and openness to diverse ways of knowing. It generated processes of reflexive self-other recognition, including towards bigotry as well as awareness of the complexities of knowledge and a sensitivity towards difference. Although there were fundamentalist tendencies in workers' education too: some, if by no means all, of the autodidacts in the history of British popular education could be rigid and uncompromising in their views, fuelled by dissenting 'religious' beliefs. Their adoption of versions of Marxism was driven, as we will observe, by an intolerant defensiveness towards those who thought differently (West, 2017a). In recent writing, I focused on the history of workers' education in the city where I was born, in the light of growing racism and Islamic fundamentalism now. I suggest similar processes of dialogical, democratic education are urgently needed in struggling multicultural contexts (West, 2016, 2017a). I conclude the chapter by challenging the idea that rationality and conceptual knowledge can fully penetrate and comprehend the reality of the world. And, in the spirit of Adorno, that such omnipotent fantasy really requires time on a metaphorical psychoanalytic couch (West, 2017c).

Distress in the City

In 2008, I was very troubled by the rise of racism and fundamentalism in the 'post-industrial' city of my birth, Stoke-on-Trent, in the English Midlands. In 2008/9 the racist British National Party (BNP) was strengthening its presence in parts of the city and a mosque was pipe-bombed. It seemed that racists would form the majority on the Municipal Council by 2010 (West, 2016). There were incidents of racial violence and outbursts of Islamophobia. The economic base of the city had long since unravelled and its politics were in chronic crisis, with low levels of engagement in voting. The traditional employment base of the city – coal mining, iron and steel production and pottery – had either disappeared altogether or drastically declined. Long-term structural unemployment was endemic (West, 2016). The financial crisis, from 2008 onwards, and consequent austerity, including cuts in local government funding, added to the feelings of distress and neglect. Moreover, workers and adult education, once important in the city, was marginalised, although a body like the

Workers Educational Association (WEA) continued to do important things, albeit from a fragile resource base (West, 2016).

Historical geographer Matthew Rice (2010) has written that ‘maybe Stoke-on-Trent’, England’s twelfth biggest city, ‘is just one industrial city too many’ (p. 17). Yet this city was once home to vibrant pottery, mining, and iron and steel industries. Hundreds of thousands of plates, cups and saucers, all packed safely with straw in barrels or wooden baskets, were sent to food markets in India, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Canada, Australia, New Zealand and America. In 1925, 100,000 workers were employed in the pottery industry. By 2009 the figure was about 9000. Rice notes that wages were never high in Stoke, but cheap labour came to the area from places like Kashmir and the Punjab in Southern Asia in the 1960s. Low wages in Stoke equated of course to relatively high sources of income for migrant families. But when outsourcing gathered pace, many of the descendants of those whose grandparents had migrated were left in a jobless limbo. Having a job matters for cultural as well as economic reasons, particularly for young Asian men: to be the head of the family and support its members is a strong cultural as well as economic imperative. I use Stoke as a representative case study of tendencies across many other similar post-industrial communities in Europe, and in the rust belt towns of the United States. The distress, anger and bewilderment of many of those who live there can get translated into racist politics, and the call for saviours, or “strong” men, to put matters right, such as Donald Trump; in Britain, or especially England, this found expression in the ‘Brexit’ process, fuelled by fear of the other, whether the immigrant or the bureaucrats of Brussels. It was a rage against neglect, disrespect and even abandonment (with its primitive or early psychological connotations), with calls for a Trump-like father figure to put England first (West, 2017b).

Auto/Biographical Narrative Interviewing in a Clinical Style

I should explain the nature and purposes of my auto/biographical narrative research and the historical analysis. I interviewed over 50 diverse people, from white working class and Muslim communities, working in what I call a clinical style, informed by psychoanalysis. The stories people tell are always a reconstruction of events, afterthoughts, rather than the events themselves, while the powerful discourses of a culture and unconscious processes of wanting to please or appease circulate in stories. These may be seen by some academic commentators as of little relevance to any bigger picture of, for instance, democracy in crisis or the rise of fundamentalism – ‘fine meaningless detail’, as one historian graphically framed it (Fieldhouse, 1996). Yet, I suggest, we better understand the nuances of people being attracted to the BNP, or radicalized, or even the attractions of fundamentalist versions of Marxism, when viewed through the lens of auto/biographical narrative and historical enquiry. This is its especial power.

For one thing, the general – or bigger – picture is always there in the particular, in the narrative resources people draw on to tell their stories. We are storied as

well as storytellers. Stories can constrain as well as liberate, as a bigger picture – of neo-liberal assumptions, say, or of the actions of the Western world – grip accounts. People can also internalize the negativities about ‘people like us’, whether emanating from the mouths and projections of politicians, policymakers or the mass media. Those targeted may be single parents struggling on minimal welfare benefits, as chronicled in my earlier work in other marginalized locations (Merrill & West, 2009). People can feel themselves to be the objects of society’s disdain, caught in the gaze of the judgemental other and constantly needing to justify themselves. Those on the margins easily internalize negative projections, or feelings that they are inadequate and personally to blame (West, 2007, 2009). There is evidence within wider cultural dynamics, as organised working-class power has waned, of shifts in the representation of working class life; from the begrudging respect of Alan Sillitoe’s classic film, *Saturday Night and Sunday morning*, to the television pornography of *Benefit Street*, where working class people are represented as morally feckless, narcissistic and downright lazy (West, 2017b). Those on the edge, living in marginalised communities, have also to learn to deal with many and varied authority figures day by day: the social worker, the job centre assessor, the head teacher, the health visitor and of course researchers. They can have well-rehearsed stories to tell, while ‘professionals’ like social workers, lawyers, and teachers can be the targets of especial disdain and even hatred. They can be experienced as agents of oppressive forces in the world, of hard, neo-liberal economics and the neglect of many communities (West, 2009, 2017b).

I suggest too that people are not simply aggregates of certain sociological, cultural or economic variables; or products of what we might call the social unconscious. They, we, are living beings with our own stories to tell of our lives, and of what it feels like to exist in specific conditions, or to experience disrespect on the street in particular ways. While much socio-cultural experience is similar, and overall patterns discernible, not everyone experiences the world ‘out-there’ in identical ways. Society, culture and economies are mediated through relationship, in families and communities. We are not all, as British cultural theorist Raymond Williams taught, to be reduced to a mass. In his writing on ‘culture as ordinary’ (Williams, 1989), Williams observed how the advertising men and women held the same essential, dehumanising view of the masses as the authoritarian left. Expensively educated people were ‘now in the service of the most brazen money-grabbing exploitation of the inexperience of ordinary people’ (Williams, 1989, p. 6). ‘The old cheapjack is still there in the market ... he thinks of his victims as a slow ignorant crowd. The new cheapjack is in offices with contemporary *décor*, using scraps of linguistics, psychology, and sociology to influence what he thinks of as the mass mind’ (Williams, 1989, p. 7). But Williams’ scorn was not confined to the marketing men and women. He was angry with those of his friends who talked about ignorant masses ... ‘one kind of Communist has always talked like this, and has got his answer ... at Budapest’ (in the 1956 Hungarian uprising). He insisted that Marxist interpretation of culture is not acceptable while it insists that people should think in prescribed ways. ‘It is stupid

and arrogant to suppose that any of these meanings (within cultures) can in any way be prescribed: they are made by living people, made and remade, in ways that we cannot know in advance'. The Marxist interpretation of culture, he argued, could never be accepted so long as it retained a directive element. This is the insistence that if you desire socialism, you must learn to write, think and learn in a prescribed way (Williams, 1989, p. 8). Williams' idea of the purpose of adult education was to create a culture of shared meanings, open to the influence of all, in relationship. The purpose of auto/biographical narrative enquiry is to create space to explore and think about the meanings people give to experience, and the emotional and unconscious dynamics involved, drawing on psychoanalytic insights as well as critical theory.

I suggest that the meanings embodied in narratives also have validity in their own terms, however difficult and distasteful these might be. The racist and fundamentalist requires our understanding, as a fellow, struggling, defended human subject. Understanding lives from the inside requires time and the cooperation of those involved, and some appreciation by them of the relevance of research. The point of enquiry is to illuminate the complexity of the choices people make, and the meanings they attach to them. Interpretation requires an interdisciplinary psychosocial, historical and educational imagination: of people as psychosocial agents, if often unconsciously, rather than marionettes on a predetermined sociological or for that matter psychoanalytic stage. People make, as well as are made by history, however distasteful the outcome might seem.

My research sought to illuminate some of the seductions and insecurities fuelling racism and fundamentalism on a white working-class estate, the place where I was born, and in areas of the city where Muslim people live. The 50 or so participants in the study were in the main 'ordinary' people: some were community activists and or ministers of religion. The sample in technical terms was opportunistic as well as purposeful – I asked officers of the City Council for names of people that might be helpful to my work and they in turn facilitated contact with others. As the research developed, the sampling became more theoretical, as I interviewed specific individuals who were attracted, say, to Islamism or racist gangs.

Winnicott, Honneth and Dewey helped me make sense of the many stories. Axel Honneth (2009) refers to Freud's anthropological idea of how we are born prematurely in comparison with other mammals and depend absolutely on the other for survival and well-being; and on feelings of being loved as a basis for human flourishing (Honneth, 2009; Winnicott, 1971). Honneth writes of Freud's great anthropological insight in recognising the psycho-biological fact that humans are carried by the mother for much less time than other mammals. From this experience of 'premature birth', the human is heavily dependent on a protective environment from the beginning. Anticipating Winnicott, Freud (1953/1974, p. 278) speaks of the young child's need for the other; for love, in short, a term Freud rarely employed. Anxiety and fear of abandonment and associated vulnerability are laid down in memory in feeling, which can be re-evoked in later stages of a life when seemingly alone, vulnerable or despairing about the condition of self, families and communities.

Axel Honneth (1995, 2007, 2009) also interrogates the role of groups in generating a second category of recognition, which he calls self-respect. This is when people feel accepted and that they belong, with rights and responsibilities, as in the good adult education group. Self-esteem provides Honneth's third category of recognition. It happens when individuals feel recognized because they are seen to contribute to a group's wider well-being and development (Honneth, 2007, 2009). But processes of recognition can be aborted, as the other is experienced, consciously and unconsciously, as a problem to be expunged in processes of psychic splitting, idealisation and paranoia. The anxieties evoked, in Kleinian terms, induce paranoid/schizoid modes of functioning, which, to repeat, are self-protective strategies in which destructive feelings are projected onto the external world and the other. The world and the other become in turn invested with persecutory powers. Splitting, after all, is an attempt to protect the self or group from difficult feelings and thoughts, by expelling them (Klein, 1975; Frosh, 1991).

Islamic Fundamentalism in the City

The people of South Asian origin who settled in Stoke came from places like Kashmir, Pakistan and Bangladesh. They make up about 50 per cent of the city's ethnic minority population and in 2011 numbered just over 9000 (Burnett, 2011). Some of these people talked about constant experiences of disrespect and everyday experiences of Islamophobia: among taxi drivers, for instance, told frequently to 'fuck off home' by white clients. The sense of everyday disrespect was amplified by stories of actual physical violence: an Asian man was killed, and others injured as well as mosques damaged. Such experiences of disrespect evoke insecurity, vulnerability and defensiveness – paranoia even – and may reinforce the tendency for people to congregate among their own in particular areas. Disrespect also ignites the feeling that other people's behaviour is wrong, grounded in some normative ideal of justice violated.

Islamic fundamentalism has attracted young people in specific mosques. Small numbers, but they exist. The Islamist and would-be Jihadist groups offer the three types of self-recognition, described above: self-confidence, respect and esteem, but this is followed by scapegoating narratives, and splitting and the stereotyping of difference. The perception of others becomes a self-motivated distortion and idealization of self and one's culture: the pursuit of material wealth or pleasure, for instance, or the sexualisation of women and a capacity for racism and violence are projected onto the other of the white working-class estate.

Culturally, in Muslim areas of the city, it quickly became clear that relationships between the generations have suffered, as male initiation rituals between fathers and sons, in the workplace, are lost. Some imams in specific mosques were recruited from the villages from which people had migrated in the last century, as a way of staying in touch with lost communities. The trouble was that these imams could be poorly educated, barely able to speak English with any fluency. Second, third and fourth

generation Muslims, educated in English schools, could treat them with contempt, not least for a lack of Islamic scholarship. Narratives of the ‘Christian’ neglect of white Muslims in the Bosnian conflict, in contrast to the ‘Christian’ (that is Russian Orthodox) support for the ‘Christian’ Serbs, were relatively compelling, filling some of the existential as well as intergenerational vacuum. In the 1990s actions by the West, standing back as Muslims were slaughtered, as at Srebrenica, were essentially seen to be anti-Islamic acts rather than racist, given that these Muslims were white. Certain young people inwardly digested stories of Muslim humiliation, and of older generations failing to speak out, and of collective trauma, and the need to fight back in ways parents and grandparents had failed to. The political became deeply personal, as well as cultural, fuelled by the toxicity of Islamophobia as well as intergenerational and familial fracture.

A community leader I call Aasif, (the names used are pseudonyms) talked about these issues:

... you had groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir taking advantage of the situation in Bosnia ... with what’s happening with the Muslims ... arms not being allowed to get to the Muslims to defend themselves where Russia is providing the Christian Serbs; it was a them-against-us kind of debate with groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir ... talking about the male Muslim section of Muslim community at that time; the youth, low education achievement, low aspiration ... no job opportunity ... perfect audience ... you can recruit easy ... It’s nothing to do with the colour of your skin; this is not racism; this is a target on the Muslim community because these Muslims are white ... I can remember some of these Hizb ut-Tahrir members who in the early ’90s, pulling the youth away from the parents as well.

From this perspective, Bosnia was a trauma, in which scales fell from collective eyes: it led to increased politicization and provided a mythic rationale for fundamentalism (Varvin, 2012). Groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir (or Liberation Party) – التحرير حزب, in the Arabic – exploited these feelings. Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international pan-Islamic political organization commonly associated with the goal of all Muslim countries unifying into one Islamic caliphate, ruled by sharia law. Hizb ut-Tahrir was founded in 1952 as part of a movement to create a new elite among Muslim youth. The writings of the group’s founder, Shaikh Taqi al-Dine al-Nabahani, lay down detailed descriptions for a restored caliphate (Ruthven, 2012). A young person like Raafe, for example, schooled in England, and radicalised in prison, ridiculed some of the established authorities in the Mosques and embraced Hizb ut-Tahrir.

Raafe

Another community leader, Aatif, told me about the weaknesses of mosque management and of imams and how Raafe and others exploited this. I was told that

Raafe was an individual 'who had a very troubled upbringing' and had been sent to prison:

Raafe didn't have a very good relationship with his father ended up in crime was sent down to prison ... Came out of prison and he was within a few weeks, he was, he had transformed into somebody who was a practising Muslim now to hear him ... later on when we realized he was part of Hizb ut-Tahrir, but at that point to see somebody change so dramatically was wow, he made a real positive change ... you couldn't explain to your parents why you wanted to ... your parents who came in the early '60s ... came when they were young ... so very little ... religious ... education ... so they didn't have ... opportunity to question the imams and learn something; so they couldn't pass that religious knowledge on to the youth, to their children; so the parents relied upon the mosques to offer that ... so that's where the communication barrier helped groups like Hizb ut-Tahrir. We can offer you Islamic information in your language, that's what attracted a lot of people in Stoke-on-Trent on topical issues.

Radicalization transformed the lives of some individuals, providing meaning, purpose and self-recognition. The portrait of Raafe, I should mention, derives from several narratives pieced together, rather than directly from the person concerned. But there were patterns in the various stories to help piece together a biographical account. Raafe's transformation almost certainly depended on feeling understood, listened to and respected by radical groups in prison. Recognition was at the heart of this, combined with a radical purpose: 'we understand how you feel, we feel the same way; we have thoughts to help you'. Various people told me that Raafe was an active member of a radical group when he left prison. He ran youth discussion groups in certain mosques. Self-recognition works at an imaginal and narrative as well as interpersonal and group level; by imaginative projective identification with heroes and causes from the past, that speak to present needs, however perversely. Narratives that offer meaning and divine purpose in lives, in the company of past as well as present Islamic martyrs.

The pedagogy of radicalization exploits the vacuums and meaninglessness in specific lives, giving people a potential place in history. It involves stories and appeals to action, rather than textual hermeneutics. Narratives of twelfth-century victories supported a call for jihad now, one requiring toughness and heroism. Jihad, or struggle, becomes constructed as a heavy responsibility that requires brutality to demoralise a more powerful opponent. The victory of the Muslim armies, against the Crusaders, led by the King of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, in the twelfth century's Battle of Hattin, is interpreted as the outcome of a protracted process of small-scale, hard hitting attacks in various locations. Past struggles are reinterpreted in the light of the present in the struggle against the new and powerful crusaders of the West and its client states. Heroism and martyrdom are called for in what is a very different pedagogical process from rational, textual analysis of the Qur'an. Muslim clerics

may speak in the language of theory, the jihadi groups act through stories and doing (Hassan & Weiss, 2015; West, 2016).

Thus, Islamophobia and everyday disrespect, when mixed with national politics, foreign policy adventures and intergenerational fracture within Muslim communities, draws individuals towards Islamism. Powerful forms of recognition are provided, which operate at a primitive emotional, as well as group and narrative level. Individuals feel understood and find purpose, meaning and legitimacy in the world. Recognition gives meaning to fractured lives. But in the closed fundamentalist group, the process is impregnated with misrecognition, and with dialogical and narrative closure. Ironically, there is alienation from self and experience too. The capacity to engage openly and reflexivity with experience, in all its messiness, is frozen: debate, dialogue, enquiry and self/other recognition, on which wider social solidarities and cooperation depend, are stifled.

Workers' Education: Building Dialogue across Difference

Workers' education once thrived in the city and provides a model of how self/other dynamics can strengthen rather than fracture across difference. The first ever workers' university tutorial class took place in Stoke in 1908, when 30 or so worker students met each Friday evening, over a period of years, with their tutor, R.H. Tawney, a subsequently distinguished economic historian, representing the University of Oxford. The classes were free from prescribed curricula, and its members could explore issues in their working lives from the perspectives of history, politics, economics and literature. Fortnightly essays were required, and the standard of some of these was high, although by no means all (West, 1972; Goldman, 1995). There were no formal examinations or qualifications due to a desire to eliminate competition and vocationalism from the classroom (West, 1972; Rose, 2010).

Interestingly, the Marxist Social Democratic Federation formed the nucleus of the first group of students, who were potters, miners, clerks, shop assistants and school teachers. Many came from non-conformist religious backgrounds: from families, in short, that could encourage them to think for themselves. The Social Democratic Federation was formed in 1884 under the leadership of Henry Hyndman who was the son of a businessman and became a journalist as well as political agitator. The Federation was strongly opposed to the British Liberal Party of the time, and its programme was progressive, calling for a 48-hour working week, the abolition of child labour, compulsory free secular education, equality for women and the nationalization of the means of production, distribution and exchange by a democratic state. But some members of the SDF, according to historian Stuart Macintyre (1980) held an extremely 'mechanical version of the materialist conception of history' in which the whole of human life 'was controlled by economic forces independent of human volition' (p. 17). Education, politics and consciousness were mere epiphenomena of the techniques and relations of production. The students could become very rigid in their economic doctrines (ibid.). That rigidity played out,

on occasions, in the tutorial classes (West, 2017a). We can interpret this as another manifestation of fundamentalism – of having the truth and nothing but the truth, forged in a community of true believers. Psychoanalytically, once again, this can be regarded as a defense against complexity and the anxiety of not knowing. Tawney himself was aware that the same spirit of non-conformity that drove some of the worker students could narrow viewpoints and bring a tendency to over-proselytize that made it difficult to dialogue and take on board different perspectives (Goldman, 1995).

Jonathan Rose's historical work has rescued Tawney and workers' education from what had become the great condescension of posterity (Rose, 2010; West, 2017a). Rose has drawn on diverse forms of life writing to chronicle the importance of relationship and recognition in workers' education: between tutors and students, among students, but also in relation to the symbolic world in challenging bigotry and fascism. Such education offered working-class people avenues into leadership roles in local and national politics and served to radicalize and motivate them in personal as well as political ways. Surveys of students showed that most were taking part in trade union activity, cooperative societies, local authorities, religious and political bodies. They were building both a workers' education as well as a broader social democratic movement.

The classes themselves created space to question and challenge racism and other forms of bigotry. In one telling account, Nancy Dobrin, born in 1914, wrote that the study of literature had revolutionary consequences for her. She grew up in a home where learning was not valued, where there was either 'a row or an order'. She read little but later joined a WEA class and read avidly, although she admitted that she went to the class partly in search of a man. Nancy became a writer herself. She described working for a German Jew during the Second World War, wondering what on earth he was doing there and why couldn't people like him go home. Later, in another class, she met her future husband, a German Jewish refugee who described himself as a Christian Communist. This was a relationship formed in the spaces of workers' education, where literature – from Lawrence, Tolstoy and James Joyce – enabled her to question her own bigotry. Such experiences shaped in turn her relationships with her children and family and impelled her to question aspects of their schooling. Agency can take many forms: in the everyday, in families and on the wider democratic stage (Dobrin, 1980).

In certain respects, Nancy's story resembles those of later adult students, such as Brenda, in my own research among non-traditional adult students at university in the 1990s (West, 1996). Brenda found recognition of self and experience in relationship with certain tutors and students as well as in literature. Brenda could relate to fictional characters, such as an abused but resilient woman in a novel by Maupassant. The character, so to speak, became part of Brenda's internal object relational world through processes of projective identification – finding aspects of self in the fictional or actual other – and imaginatively experiencing their lives and internalizing some of their strength and resilience. These dynamics can be

incorporated into a more developed and nuanced theory of recognition, embracing the imaginal and the symbolic, actively engaging emotion as well as mind. Like Nancy, Brenda learned to play with ideas and feel valued for it. Nancy learned, like many other adult students, a more democratic sensibility in the tutorial classes and later, which they describe in their own words (West, 1996; Dobrin, 1980; Rose, 2010, pp. 274–275).

Dogmatism and Its Roots

But dogmatism existed in the tutorial classes. It is interesting that some worker students admired tutors like Tawney, who remained steadfast as well as respectful even when harangued by a fundamentalist student. Leftist fundamentalists sometimes from the Social Democratic Federation and later the Communist Party, though not exclusively so, would quote texts like *Das Capital* with religious fervour. The other students admired how Tawney remained respectful in the face of agitation. One recalled a particular Marxist – the SDF could dominate the first tutorial classes – challenging point after point by reference to classic Marxist texts. Tawney took it in his stride but insisted that there were other points of view. The student accused the tutor of hopping around from twig to twig, like a bird, and a sense of bad temper pervaded the room. Tawney insisted that everyone, including his challenger, take tea together afterwards and tell stories, read poetry and sing songs. This enabled the group to re-establish some shared humanity and fraternity (Rose, 2010, p. 266). The local secretary of the SDF became so alarmed at the effect of the classes that he instructed his members to leave for fear of ideological contamination. They refused, because they were excited at being able to interrogate ideas in a liberal way, from different standpoints (Goldman, 2013).

Interestingly, there is a contemporary re-evaluation of Tawney's contribution to theorizing the role and practice of inclusive university education and in building a more effective political democracy and social solidarities (Holford, 2015; Goldman, 2013; West, 2017a). Tawney emphasized the moral and spiritual in human betterment, which could be embodied in the tutorial classes in ways inspiring ideas of fellowship and service. The aim of the tutorial classes was to make university education available to all people in their own localities: quite different to today's assumptions about the purpose of higher education for individual social mobility. Tawney was committed to a liberal and humane view of education for everyone, where citizens could acquire civic virtues and understanding in the struggle to create forms of social cooperation and mutual understanding. Holford (2015) suggests that Tawney offers a localist critique of the current emphasis on developing global skills and mobility. Communities should not be privileged or discounted because of their wealth or poverty and universities can be active agents in communities via, for instance, adult education. Moreover, Tawney represents a more constructivist view of knowledge: the classes were classes, not lectures, and ideas were explored and developed in discussion. The processes of education were democratic – students

engaged in research and discovery by using original source material like historical documents, rather than being the passive recipients of received wisdom. I suggest too that Tawney was especially good at containing the many anxieties of worker students, by keeping the dialogue going, despite assaults made upon it and by recognising, in authentic ways, diverse contributions. This of course mirrors the containing functions of the psychoanalytic process itself: creating good enough space where it is possible to digest difficult ideas. Containment is not confined to psychoanalysis but can be part of educational experiences, as people negotiate who they are, have been and might be, always and inevitably accompanied by anxiety, in the transitional space of an adult class (West, 1996).

We can better appreciate the dynamics of classes like these, derived from the testimonies of the worker/students themselves, and drawing on a developed theory of recognition. We can build nuanced understanding of the importance of dialogue, of play, and of self/other recognition and of subjectification processes encompassing the interplay of inner and outer worlds. Nancy and Brenda projected and then introjected aspects of self and experience into their imaginative life, that enabled them to better recognise and engage with others. They learned more of what we can call a democratic sensibility, or cosmopolitan 'subjectification', which they describe in their own words (West, 1996; Dobrin, 1980; Rose, 2010, pp. 274–275; Bainbridge & West, 2012). The reality of these 'object relations' dynamics in adult education cannot be proved in an absolute sense: but their utility in illuminating change processes is convincing. Workers' education, I suggest, once afforded forms of recognition for ordinary people, in which they felt accepted, listened to, respected as well as treated as equals with the right to be heard and fully participate. This creates mature and capable people with stories to tell and ideas to offer, and a capacity for reciprocity.

Conclusion, Fundamentalism Recognition and the Psychosocial

Fundamentalism or the fundamentalist instinct, I suggest, takes many forms, and is really quite ordinary, which includes absolutist conceptual thinking within leftist modes of thought. Critical theorists such as Adorno (1973) challenged progressives to consider the failure of left Hegelian philosophical thought and its false predictions of inevitable proletarian revolution. Adorno thought the failure – including the resilience of capitalism and the rise of Nazism – posed a philosophical and epistemological crisis for them and for a positivist social science, including Marxism, that ignored the subjectivity of the observer. Adorno insisted that the crisis, in the spirit of psychoanalysis, de-centred the rational subject in relation to her objects of enquiry and the dynamics between them. Defensive, unconscious drives and pre-intellectual dynamics impregnated our subjectivity and relationships and thus our philosophical engagement with the world. Conceptual knowledge, as psychoanalysis has taught, is insufficient when building insight into self/object dynamics. We must examine our desires and potential illusions in and beyond our supposed rationality: the origins of perception lie in part in early or pre-intellectual

experience, including the potential defences of grandiosity and omniscience, forged in early dependence on others. Adorno, drawing on Freud and Nietzsche, recognised a tendency to invest in certain kinds of thinking in order to repress other thoughts, in early experience and in childhood cathexes, with their panoply of fears, longings and loss. Interestingly Adorno thought the subject's loss of omniscience and the illusion that reality could be fully and rationally penetrated, rendered the search for unified systems of conceptual knowledge impossible. But this could then liberate the subject to engage with subjective feelings and the senses, leading to enhanced sensitivity towards what is non-identical, to diverse ways of seeing, and the domain of the other. There is considerable democratic as well as inter-subjective potential as well as relief in challenging the grandiose, omniscient rationalist fantasy that we and our philosophical schemas can and must fully represent reality.

In a different vein, the research into radicalisation processes and workers' education enables us to refine Honneth's normative concept of recognition. It encompasses, as Honneth suggests, self-recognition at an intimate emotional, relational, group but also, we can add, at a narrative, unconscious and imaginal level too. These processes take us beyond words or discursive understanding. Primitive, emotional forms of communication, in a tutor's warm response or encouragement, enable people to feel understood, cared for, loved even as well as legitimate; or their opposites, when dismissed and disparaged. Embodied, memory in feeling, as Klein (1975) called it, 'speaks' louder than words in these moments. Raafe felt cared for in prison, his struggles and troubles were understood and new narrative resources, or myths, were available to make sense of a whole. All of which enabled him, however delusionally, to work with other alienated young Muslims, to care for them in a way that he was cared for and to offer an all-encompassing narrative truth. Those young people no doubt felt recognised in turn by someone they admired, because he spoke to their concerns (and with an authority, it should be noted, grounded in actual visits to the Middle East). Raafe built narrative connections, over time, between their anxieties and those of Muslims in the past. Such narratives explained the suffering of Islam and the need for heroic struggle against crusaders, then and now. The dynamics, however perverted, provide existential meaning and the promise, for some, of entry into Paradise. Fundamentalist dynamics like these, I suggest, are not 'other'. When we feel out of our depth, vulnerable, exposed and or excluded, we can grab at stories that apparently offer total solutions, an answer to everything, including our deepest anxieties. This applies in academic life as much as formal religion, in, for instance, the continuing adherence to neo-classical economic theories in many university economics departments, despite their failure to explain how and why people acted as they did in the 2008 financial crash. The omnipotent fantasy has been that rational, mainly mathematical theories explained everything of how economies worked, grounded in a myth of the rational, calculating homo economic subject. People can continue to cling to such Zombie economics, as a largely unacknowledged defence against their anxieties, doubts and fears that they do not really know or that others might know better (West, 2017c).

John Dewey (1969) especially enables us to differentiate between the narrative and self/other closure of the Islamist group and the openness of democratic adult education. Dewey observed that the good citizen requires democratic association to realize what she might be: she finds herself by participating in family life, the economy and various artistic, cultural and political activities, in which there is free give and take with diverse others. This fosters feelings of being understood and creates meaning and purpose in the company of others. Dewey suggests that good and intelligent solutions for society, and diverse groups, depend on relatively open, inclusive and democratic types of association. In scientific research, for instance, the more scientists freely introduce their own hypotheses, beliefs and intuitions, the better the eventual outcome. Dewey applied these ideas to social learning: intelligent solutions are the result of the degree to which all those involved participate fully without constraint and with equal rights. It is only when openly publicly debating issues, in inclusive (and I might add self-reflexive) ways, that societies really thrive (Honneth, 2007, pp. 218–239). Honneth concludes that Dewey's normative idea of healthy dialogical democratic society was grounded in a psychosocial ideal of cooperation, rather than politics or communicative competence; in an openness to complex experience which challenges how we think, feel and act. Dewey offers the case of a 'robber band' as one example of closure to otherness and ultimately to truth. Honneth uses the example of a Nazi band of brothers to make the same point. The process involves collective as well as individual defence mechanisms while it is difficult to prize apart the socio-cultural from the personal unconscious. We should grasp the importance of both, in dynamic relationship, when considering the normative qualities of good enough education.

We are left with a problem of how to live in doubt and uncertainty, beyond rationalist illusion, whether as critical theorists, historians, biographers, economists, or adult students. Maybe we need to cultivate subjective negative capability, echoing the poet John Keats and Adorno's framing of his project as negative dialectics. Some tutorial class students learned negative capability rather well. Keats thought that negative capability was the quality at work when a person can live in uncertainties, or mysteries and doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason. The language is not immediately clear, it is more suggestive and idiosyncratic. Obviously, the word 'negative' is not being used pejoratively but to communicate a notion that a person's potential can be defined via recognition of what he or she does not possess. Essential to literary achievement, Keats argues, is a certain passivity, a willingness to let what is mysterious or doubtful remain just that (Hebron, 2017). It might be better to break off from a relentless search for knowledge or complete conceptual truths and contemplate instead 'a fine verisimilitude' or the spirit of truth seeking; open to what we do not know, and our doubts, in the company of others. The fundamentalist seeks to annihilate these under the banner of certainty. We should recognise our uncertainties and the anxieties these bring; and our need for diverse others, including someone like Tawney, for cultivating better, more reflexive and inclusive knowledge

of self and the world. Psychoanalysis, combined with critical theory, foregrounds the quality of our relationship to knowledge and experience: how in every one of us, as learners, academics or analysts, there remains the perpetual struggle between grabbing at the allusions of certainty – conceptual or otherwise – or recognizing a shared fallibility and need for others in the personal, relational and epistemological experiment called democratic adult education.

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