

Unsettling Pedagogy: Recognition, Vulnerability and the International

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Social and political theorists are becoming increasingly interested in the philosophy of education. Axel Honneth, for example, maintains that education is the 'twin sister' of democratic theory but notes that over the past century discourses of pedagogy have failed to occupy their rightful place at the centre of philosophy itself (Honneth 2013). Christopher Brooke and Elizabeth Frazer (2013) agree, arguing that disciplinary specialization has meant that education is not often prominent in contemporary discussions of political and social theory, despite inevitable overlapping concerns with educational philosophy and practice.

Much of the philosophical (re)turn to education¹ is self-consciously international in its concerns, with scholars pointing to mainstream education's capture by dominant capitalist ideology and ensuing global trends such as a valorization of managerial efficiency, standardized testing, disciplinary specialization and commodification of knowledge (Adorno 1998a; Adorno and Becker 1999; Bartlett 2006; Brooke and Frazer 2013; Sinha 2013). Discussions of education, philosophy and the international have been dominated by the cosmopolitan turn in education and its appeal to a universal vision of shared humanity based on ideals such as freedom, respect and reason. Cosmopolitan thinkers promote the cultivation of global citizens through the critical examination of our own societies' beliefs and practices as well as recognition of and rational exchange with other traditions. This literature is rooted in abstract rationality and promotes global justice through a forward-looking Enlightenment pedagogy marked by its adherence to universal moral values. However, it too easily elevates the notion of 'humanity', whilst failing to acknowledge our 'all too human' promotion of the very injustices that it seeks to address.

In this chapter, I propose an approach to pedagogy and the international underpinned by an agonistic conception of recognition. An agonistic conception of recognition struggles towards comprehension of one's self, one's relation with others and one's implication in structures of inequality and domination. Pedagogy informed by this understanding of recognition is uncomfortable and unsettling; it interrogates those aspects of ourselves and our society that promote continued misrecognition. I argue that contemporary modern societies are marked by a deeply rooted desire for security and invulnerability that has worked against recognition and this refusal of recognition has fostered pervasive ignorance and indifference. An education towards 'critical self-reflection' or 'protest and resistance' (Adorno 1998b: 193; Adorno and Becker 1999: 30–1) calls for recognition of and resistance to this collective blindness and coldness. A pedagogy infused by agonistic recognition is a radical pedagogy that promotes a counter-cultural embrace of ambiguity, vulnerability and love.

This chapter does two things. First, it speaks to ongoing debates about critical pedagogy and cosmopolitan education and, in particular, to debates about how education can engender emancipation in a world pervaded by unnecessary inequality, injustice and suffering. An education towards critical self-reflection profoundly challenges cosmopolitan education literature, advocating an uncomfortable and unsettling pedagogy in the place of rational exchange and distant empathy. It also counters the pervasive ignorance and coldness that permeate contemporary society, advocating a radical pedagogy marked by vulnerability, self-reflection and, particularly in early childhood education, love. Such pedagogy is doubly disruptive. It unsettles inwardly, with its call to confront our own implication in ongoing norms and structures that oppress; it also unsettles outwardly, with its provocative challenge to dominant cultural values of self-sufficiency, self-advancement and mastery.

Second, it speaks to continuing debates on recognition theory, advocating an agonistic conception of recognition that works towards understanding our own and others' vulnerability, interrogating our adoption of values that silence and our complicity in structures that oppress. This approach is alive to the revisability embedded in the very structure of the word 're-cognition', which implies the need to come to know again (and again), highlighting the uncertainty and contingency that attends any struggle for justice (Rose 1981: 71). It differs in emphasis from the conception of recognition promoted by thinkers such as Honneth, which is deeply rooted in social structures and seeks to 'fix' an affirmative and respectful relation to the other (Foster 2011; Honneth 2008; Schaap 2004). Against understandings of recognition that advocate giving

'more recognition' (Markell 2003: 180) to marginalized groups to address inequality and oppression, an agonistic conception of recognition turns its gaze inwards first, confronting the desires that foster misrecognition. It asks 'why' we so deeply fear recognition of ourselves, others and the systems in which we are embedded, interrogating the 'willful ignorance' (Tuana 2006) and profound indifference to others (Adorno 1998b) that underlie the rejection of coming to know. In so doing, agonistic recognition works towards the countercultural production of particular kinds of subjects whose social and political engagement is informed by an understanding of their own embeddedness in structures that privilege some and marginalize many.

The chapter is divided into three parts. In Part One, I outline the cosmopolitan turn in education, which is at the forefront of debates about education and the international. I argue that cosmopolitan education's prioritization of common humanity tends too much towards the outward-looking adoption of particular values deemed universal and emancipatory (dignity, understanding, tolerance, respect, reason) and fails to interrogate those aspects of our selves and our relations to others that work against emancipation.

In Part Two, I introduce the idea of 'an education towards critical self-reflection', which is underpinned by an agonistic understanding of recognition. A pedagogy that prioritizes self-reflection refuses to prescribe particular values but encourages attention to those aspects of our selves and our social world that foster indifference to others and ignorance of oppressive structures and practices. It is a collective endeavour that is acutely aware of human vulnerability and challenges entrenched norms of security and self-advancement.

In Part Three, I argue that an education towards critical self-reflection is attuned to the challenges presented by two particular characteristics of liberal democratic societies: ignorance and indifference. To do this, I discuss Nancy Tuana's concept of 'wilful ignorance' (2006), where the fear of coming to know one's complicity in injustice is too great to risk engaging in the activity of self and other recognition and so ignorance is chosen over comprehension. I also explore Theodor W. Adorno's notion of 'coldness' or indifference to others (Adorno 1998b), where the prioritization of self-interest results in the failure to care for those with whom one is not intimately connected. Pedagogy underpinned by an agonistic understanding of recognition works against ignorance and indifference and fosters the making (and re-making) of subjects able to embrace vulnerability, ambiguity and uncertainty. I finish by gesturing briefly towards an education inclined to critical self-reflection in the classroom. Recognition in this context goes beyond the cosmopolitan cultivation of world citizens who

recognize one another's common humanity and cultivate compassion for those previously unseen or ignored. It embraces a 'pedagogy of discomfort' (Boler 1999) that interrogates those structures and relations that foster misrecognition and cultivates instead vulnerability, self-reflection and love.

Cosmopolitan education and the international

In this section, I discuss cosmopolitan education, which is the prominent approach to thinking about pedagogy and the international. I focus in particular on Martha Nussbaum's influential account of cosmopolitan education, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education* (Nussbaum 1997). I do this for two reasons. First, Nussbaum's account of cultivating global citizens makes her a central interlocutor for thinkers writing about education and the international. Second, her work is alive to the importance of emotion and emphasizes our common vulnerability, both of which are central to the recognition-infused pedagogy this paper advocates. However, Nussbaum's project ultimately falls short of its emancipatory aims by failing to ask why misrecognition continues to abound or how we might be implicated in ongoing structures of oppression.

In *Cultivating Humanity*, Nussbaum makes a case for the central importance of cosmopolitan education in forming world citizens. For Nussbaum, 'world citizens' are bound by their recognition of and loyalty to a common humanity. She adopts a 'relaxed version' of the classical conception of world citizen, maintaining that 'however we order our varied loyalties, we should still be sure that we recognize the worth of human life wherever it occurs and see ourselves as bound by common human abilities and problems to people who lie at a great distance from us' (Nussbaum 1997: 9). The task of cultivating humanity requires the development and nurturing of three foundational abilities: first, Socratic self-examination, where reason and logic are used to question traditional beliefs; second, an ability to conceive of ourselves as world citizens, whose ties and obligations go beyond the local or shared common identities; and third, the ability to imagine what it might be like to be other than who we are, or 'narrative imagination' (Nussbaum 1997: 9–11).

The first capacity essential for cultivating humanity, Socratic self-examination, calls for a 'life of questioning' (Nussbaum 1997: 21), whereby conventional beliefs and established traditions are subject to rigorous examination as we learn to think for ourselves. Nussbaum (1997: 30) remarks that 'the only kind of education that

really deserves the name *liberalis*, or, as we might literally render it, “freelike”, is one that makes its pupils free, able to take charge of their own thought and to conduct a critical examination of their society’s norms and traditions’.

The second capacity, coming to think of ourselves as citizens of the world, entails learning to perceive ourselves not simply as members of particular groups but as human, first and foremost, ‘bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern’ (Nussbaum 1997: 10). Nussbaum emphasizes that we are all ‘fellow citizens in the community of reason’ (1997: 63) and that our engagement with one another ought to be marked by ‘critical scrutiny’ (1997: 60) and ‘rational exchange’ (1997: 65). Such engagement should be supported by a multicultural education that develops understanding of other ways of thinking and being by familiarizing students with histories, cultures, religions and languages other than their own (1997: 68).

The third capacity is ‘narrative imagination’, which supplements knowledge of other lives with imaginative engagement, primarily through reading literature. One of the abilities that such engagement produces is compassion, which is ‘the recognition that another person, in some ways similar to oneself, has suffered some significant pain or misfortune in a way for which that person is not, or not fully, to blame’ (Nussbaum 1997: 90–1). According to Nussbaum (1997: 91), compassion also involves some evaluation of the other’s misfortune by the onlooker, requiring ‘a highly complex set of moral abilities, including the ability to imagine what it is like to be in that person’s place (what we normally call *empathy*), and also the ability to stand back and ask whether the person’s own judgment has taken the full measure of what has happened’. These moral abilities are supplemented by a consciousness of our ‘common vulnerability’, since our ability to feel compassion depends upon us being able to imagine ourselves experiencing similar suffering.

Nussbaum’s vision of a cosmopolitan education, then, promotes the cultivation of global citizens who are rigorous in critically evaluating their own and others’ beliefs, committed to expanding their knowledge and experience of others’ lives, and imaginatively and compassionately alive to the emotions and suffering of others. In this way, she argues, cosmopolitan education can shape a humanity marked by greater respect, inclusivity and justice. However, although Nussbaum’s project is animated in part by an understanding of common vulnerability and acknowledges the centrality of emotions, it remains too close to the tradition of moral rationalism and its privileging of ‘useful knowledge’ (Beattie and Schick 2013; Geuss 2005: 3). The accumulation of knowledge about others’ lives is wielded to ‘solve’ ongoing problems of misrecognition

and injustice, by cultivating understanding and respect for other beliefs and traditions and by pointing to our common humanity and vulnerability.

Nussbaum's call for Socratic examination promotes the interrogation of beliefs, prioritizing rational argument and rational autonomy. The cultivation of global citizenship encourages the accumulation of knowledge of other cultures, languages and histories, knowledge wielded for the purpose of expanding the 'community of reason' (Nussbaum 1997: 63). And narrative imagination fosters identification with other lives through Aristotelian empathic engagement, claiming our common vulnerability means we can imagine 'what it is like to be in that person's place' (Nussbaum 1997: 91). However, the empathy Nussbaum promotes is a 'passive empathy' (Boler 1999: 158–61) based on pity, which mobilizes the fear that '[this] could happen to me' and makes *ourselves* and not others the primary object of concern (Boler 1999: 159). Boler (1999: 160) highlights the danger of the type of identification Nussbaum encourages, arguing that it is 'founded on a binary of self/other that situates the self/reader unproblematically as judge. This self is not required to identify with the oppressor, and not required to identify her complicity in structures of power relations mirrored by the text... to the extent that identification occurs in Nussbaum's model, this self feeds on a consumption of the other'. Despite calling for self-examination, learning and emotional engagement, then, Nussbaum's cosmopolitan education project fails to attend to our own implication in oppressive structures. Instead, it promotes an impoverished conception of recognition that accumulates knowledge about and superficially 'consumes' the other without reflecting critically on our own role in promoting continued misrecognition.

Agonistic recognition and vulnerability

Cosmopolitan education has a thoroughgoing international sensibility. Its central goal is to pursue global justice through the cultivation of global citizens, making others less strange through contact with alternative beliefs and customs and via imaginative engagement. In this sense, one could argue that cosmopolitan education promotes recognition, in that it fosters understanding and respect for others' identities. However, the critical engagement cosmopolitan education promotes tends too much towards the rationalist prescription of more, and better, knowledge of the other and fails to interrogate the roots of misrecognition. The form of recognition employed by this approach is an impoverished conception that fails to capture the ongoing struggle, ambiguity and vulnerability of a fuller, more properly Hegelian, conception of recognition.²

In this section, I argue that pedagogy infused by a fuller and more agonistic conception of recognition offers a provocative challenge to cosmopolitan education. Where cosmopolitan education pursues emancipation through the positive production of cosmopolitan citizens characterized by particular values (such as tolerance and respect), the agonistic approach I advocate refuses to 'preach love' (Adorno 1998b: 202), advocating instead 'an education towards critical self-reflection' (Adorno 1998b: 193). A recognition-infused pedagogy of this type offers a radical challenge to mainstream and cosmopolitan education and, more broadly, to dominant liberal capitalist norms. This challenge crosses borders: the failure of mainstream education is a global problem that extends not just across borders but also 'far beyond the boundaries of different political systems' (Adorno and Becker 1999: 25).

The understanding of recognition that informs my challenge to mainstream and cosmopolitan pedagogies is an agonistic conception of recognition as a struggle towards comprehension of one's self, one's relations with others and one's implication in violent structures and norms. It is not worked towards and achieved; it is an ongoing journey towards understanding that is captured in the very word itself, which implies an initial cognition followed by the need to re-cognize, or know again (Rose 1981: 71). My understanding of recognition is informed by Gillian Rose's reading of Hegelian 'speculative' recognition as a difficult and risky venture that insists on a dogged negotiation of the ordinary or '*what there is*' (Rose 1992: 87).³ She presents a 'radical Hegel' (Rose 1981: viii) whose emphasis on relationality presents a serious challenge to thinking in terms of abstract universals and calls instead for an ongoing project of comprehension that interrogates settled norms and practices.⁴

Like Rose, Tarik Kochi (2012: 138) emphasizes the *radical* project of Hegel's theory of recognition. He describes it as a 'theory of freedom' that presents a 'social world constantly in flux, caught in the movement of struggle, conflict, restlessness and contradiction' (Kochi 2012: 129). He continues:

Never immediately successful, recognition takes place as mis-recognition and has to be repeated again and again, settling at times in relative stability and then upset again. In this respect, the biological, symbolic and socially derived desires, passions and affects that push the ego in multiple directions are all channelled through what Hegel calls recognition – the cognitive acts of the ego that attempt to make sense of the world all the while struggling, being pushed about and undone by the operation and negativity which renders thought-determinations more determinate and highlights their inadequacy. (Kochi 2012: 134)

The dynamic process of recognition seeks to understand the world in which we reside; it seeks also to understand the ways we come to know and the desires that underpin the philosophical journey towards comprehension (Kochi 2012: 130). These desires are 'often self-interested, culturally contingent and manipulative' (Kochi 2012: 130) and include the pursuit of security and certainty. Deeply rooted in liberal capitalist society, these desires are incompatible with Hegel's 'radical project of mutual recognition', which requires that we give up our 'solipsistic tendencies toward self-certainty' (Kochi 2012: 138) as we embark on its difficult and uncertain terrain.

A radical project of Hegelian recognition, then, is closely attuned to human desire and vulnerability. It differs substantively from standard accounts of recognition in that it is not primarily about what we can do *for others* – the positive prescription of more recognition or more respect – but about what we have already done (and continue to do) to others and to ourselves, whereby the privilege of some comes at the expense of others. This agonistic conception of recognition interrogates the desires that underlie our location in structures that oppress, opening ourselves as well as others to scrutiny.

Roger Foster's incisive critique of Axel Honneth's transcendental account of recognition in *Reification* (Honneth 2008) highlights the 'static' nature of Honneth's concept of recognition, saying that it promotes a 'fixed and isolable affirmative relation to the other' (Foster 2011: 258). Honneth's account of recognition is rooted in social structure and social practice; he argues that affective or caring modes of social relations are 'primordial' and prior to any cognition (Honneth 2008). Foster contrasts this with Adorno's 'dynamic' concept of recognition,⁵ maintaining:

Recognition...is not an underlying stratum of interaction; it is a dynamic process set in motion by an essential ambiguity in what it reveals – not only about others, but also about ourselves. This is not a normative ambiguity about positive concern or respect; it is rather an existential ambiguity. At the same time that recognition humanizes us, by constituting us as members of the human community, it reveals us to ourselves as exposed, dependent, injurable, and mortal. (Foster 2011: 257)

The characterization of the politics of recognition as an ongoing and dynamic process is shared by Gillian Rose, who emphasizes the uncertainty and equivocation that accompanies the difficult journey towards comprehension.⁶ This fuller, more agonistic conception of recognition welcomes vulnerability and ambiguity in the place of self-sufficiency and certainty.

Standard conceptions of recognition also fail to attend sufficiently to the ongoing problem of misrecognition, to ‘our tendency to deny, repudiate, and refuse the voice of the other’ (Foster 2011: 256). Foster argues that *denial* is an insidious aspect of human relations and that this denial is twofold: we deny others a voice; we also deny our fear of recognition, which manifests itself in our ignorance of and indifference towards others. We refuse to embark on an agonistic journey towards recognition, which would require attending to our own desires and fears and to our own complicity in silencing and marginalizing others. A central focus of a radical politics of recognition, then, is ‘coming to terms with, working through, what leads us to want to refuse recognition... We refuse to recognize the other because of what the other is capable of revealing to us about ourselves’ (Foster 2011: 257).

Opening ourselves to such scrutiny calls for *vulnerability*; indeed, being willing to become vulnerable is a central part of recognition. Vulnerability implies an ‘openness to being affected and affecting in both positive and negative ways’ (Gilson 2011: 310). However, embracing vulnerability is profoundly countercultural: the persistently negative characterization of vulnerability as something to be shunned (Drichel 2013; Gilson 2011: 311) and the elevation of mastery as something to be pursued results in a widespread failure to acknowledge our own vulnerability and the ways in which we are complicit in fostering harm.⁷

In sum, a fuller, more agonistic conception of recognition takes desire and denial seriously, making visible the misrecognition they engender. A recognition-infused pedagogy disturbs settled conceptions of how we relate to ourselves and others, in part through a *reframing* of vulnerability as ambivalent, instead of seeing it as something necessarily to be avoided.⁸ It resists cultural pressures to relentlessly pursue self-advantage and certainty, calling instead for a radical acceptance of ambiguity (Rose 1996: 62; Schick 2012: 8–9, 49–51).⁹

Education towards critical self-reflection

An education towards critical self-reflection is underpinned by an agonistic conception of recognition that reveals as much about ourselves and our own desires and denials as it does about our relations with others. The project of recognition cannot co-exist with the desires for certainty, self-preservation and invulnerability so pervasive in modern society. In this section, I argue that one of the foremost tasks of an education towards critical self-reflection is to challenge the deeply rooted ignorance and indifference that spring from a fear of recognition.

Ignorance and indifference have become part of the fabric of modern life and any attempt to disrupt them will face ‘indescribable resistances’ (Adorno and Becker 1999: 32). Pedagogy informed by this conception of recognition challenges our extensive blindness and coldness, calling us to critical self-reflection and love.

Ignorance

One of the central tasks facing an education towards critical self-reflection is to challenge the ignorance that pervades modern societies. The ignorance I am concerned with is not primarily about positive social or cultural knowledge or ‘facts’; recognizing ourselves and others requires recognizing relationality. I argue that oppressive relations are often rooted in ‘willful ignorance’ (Gilson 2011: 313–4; Tuana 2006) that disregards the oppression of others and, importantly, one’s own role in facilitating that oppression. This understanding of ignorance focuses not just on relations with others, but also on relations with oneself and one’s own desires and denials.

Ignorance is inextricably linked with the desire for invulnerability and self-sufficiency and profoundly resists recognition. Erinn Gilson argues that invulnerability is a ‘form of ignorance’ and that failure to recognize one’s own vulnerability is a hallmark of capitalist societies underpinned by a particular kind of subjectivity: ‘that of the prototypical, arrogantly self-sufficient, independent, invulnerable master subject’ (Gilson 2011: 312). Ignorance, then, is underpinned by a fundamental denial of vulnerability. The invulnerability that is chosen instead is ‘a closure to a certain understanding of the nature of relations with others as well as to features of the self; it is a closure to change that alters the meaning of the self, the interpretations we have formed of ourselves’ (Gilson 2011: 319). The refusal to come to know aspects of one’s self as well as one’s relations with others is a refusal of recognition.

Drawing on Nancy Tuana’s epistemologies of ignorance, Gilson argues that the failure to recognize vulnerability is ‘willful ignorance’ (Gilson 2011: 313–4). For Tuana, wilful ignorance is ‘a systematic process of self-deception, a willful embrace of ignorance that infects those who are in positions of privilege, an active ignoring of the oppression of others and one’s role in that exploitation’ (Tuana 2006: 11). Wilful ignorance is ‘not *passive*’ (Tuana 2006: 10); it combines not knowing with a determination to remain uninformed. It is fed by a fear of what it would mean to know, of what it would mean if we *were* in fact complicit in the exploitation of others. Tuana references Elizabeth Spelman’s essay on race and ignorance, which argues that the failure of white Americans to recognize their role in fostering systematic

racism is not because of a 'simple lack of knowledge'. It is not simply that they do not know that black Americans continue to experience systematic oppression. White Americans hope that the 'facts' of ongoing oppression are untrue but fear that this is not the case; this fear gives rise to the active adoption of ignorance because 'the consequences of [these accusations of perpetuating systematic racism] being true are so high, *it is better to cultivate ignorance*' (Tuana 2006: 11).

Robbie Shilliam (2013b) also highlights the pervasive ignorance that shores up Western liberalism, arguing that it depends upon repression and displacement. Its underlying white supremacist psyche 'must consistently repress the memory of its own illiberalism, displace its culpable relationships to the non-Western/un-liberal worlds, and rationalize a fascististic obsession with the dominance of white, propertied hetero-male bodies via an abstract universality that it calls human rights' (Shilliam 2013b: 133). Shilliam argues that challenging the deep-seated ignorance and denial that sustains white supremacy requires a work of therapy that turns its gaze inwards in order to unsettle settled assumptions and uncover what has been repressed and forgotten. A therapeutic approach requires those who are embedded in and benefit from white supremacy to recognize their own culpability in creating and sustaining oppressive structures.¹⁰ Shilliam references Steve Biko's call for white liberals to 'realize that they themselves are oppressed if they are true liberals and therefore they must fight for their own freedom and not that of the nebulous "they" with whom they can hardly claim identification' (Biko 1979: 25; Shilliam 2013b: 139). Biko maintains the emotion oppressed peoples want from white liberals is not sympathy, but anger: 'anger about and for the debilitating effects that white supremacy had upon whites themselves' (Shilliam 2013b: 140). Shilliam describes the accountability a therapeutic approach demands as 'concretely ethical and relational'; it resists 'narrowly procedural' and 'abstractly universal' approaches as impoverished and lacking. Such an approach, then, offers a profound challenge to a cosmopolitan pedagogy: it calls for anger in the place of sympathy, self-critique in the place of identifying common values and vulnerability in the place of self-certainty.

Indifference

I have argued that one of the tasks of a radical pedagogy with recognition at its core is to work against the 'willful ignorance' that sustains structures and relations of oppression. Radical pedagogy must also work against indifference towards others. Like ignorance, indifference is buttressed by desires for certainty and security and works against agonistic recognition's call for vulnerability and

relationality. In what follows, I consider Adorno's notion of coldness, and argue that indifference towards others cannot be addressed with the straightforward prescription of warmth or love. Instead, it starts with the difficult task of recognizing our own lack of love and the pervasive societal coldness it reflects.

In his reflections on 'Education after Auschwitz', Adorno argues that coldness – a fundamental indifference to others – facilitated the *Shoah*: 'if people were not profoundly indifferent toward whatever happens to everyone else except for a few to whom they are closely bound and, if possible, by tangible interest, then Auschwitz would not have been possible, people would not have accepted it' (Adorno 1998b: 201). For Adorno, the coldness that facilitated Auschwitz is inextricably linked with the pervasive prioritization of self-interest and self-advantage (Adorno 1998b: 201).¹¹ A tenacious conformity to the status quo, in which atomized individuals act to maximize perceived 'business interest' (Adorno 1998b: 201), goes hand in hand with a 'lack of love' (Adorno 1998b: 202). Quite simply, then, coldness engenders a withdrawal from others.

Adorno maintains that withdrawal from human relationality is so deeply rooted in contemporary society that people 'withdraw their love from other people initially, before it can even unfold' (Adorno 1998b: 201–2). We do not actively choose to be cold; the lack of love that characterizes coldness is 'a lack belonging to *all* people without exception' (Adorno 1998b: 202) in liberal democratic societies. As Simon Mussell notes, coldness is both 'imposed upon individual subjects by social forces' and 'reproduced internally by each subject' in order to survive the capitalist status quo (Mussell 2013: 60). Indeed, 'it has become socially necessary to remain as indifferent as possible' (Mussell 2013: 58): in Adorno's words, 'without such coldness one could not live' (Adorno 1998c: 274).¹²

For Adorno, then, a profound indifference towards others was the condition of possibility that facilitated Auschwitz. This failure to care for others, to love, goes hand in hand with a failure to come to know and value ourselves as relational, vulnerable subjects. The elevation of self-preservation as a primary goal is driven by a deep-set desire to feel safe or protected. However, in exchanging a feeling of helplessness for one of protection, we are shutting down a crucial part of what it is to be a moral human being (Drichel 2013: 12–13). The skewed perception of vulnerability as facilitating only the negative possibility of harm and violence suppresses the transformative potential for love and care. Instead, it facilitates coldness, a refusal to love.

Although coldness is fundamentally a failure to love, Adorno argues that to 'preach love' in response would be 'futile', in part because we *all* suffer from a 'lack of love' (Adorno 1998b: 202).¹³ The positive prescription of

respect, tolerance and understanding based on common humanity cannot create community or challenge a culture of profound individualism and self-sufficiency. Instead, Adorno argues for a journey towards understanding: 'If anything can help against coldness as the condition for disaster, then it is the insight into the conditions that determine it and the attempt to combat those conditions, initially in the domain of the individual. . . . The first thing is to bring coldness to the consciousness of itself' (Adorno 1998b: 202). Adorno maintains that the profound indifference to others that permeates society is so pervasive and deeply rooted that we are unaware of it – ignorant – and that the place to start in the fight against indifference is with a fight against ignorance. He argues that we should begin with an attempt to 'bring coldness to the consciousness of itself' (Adorno 1998b: 202). At the centre of Adorno's hopes for 'Education after Auschwitz', then, is a struggle towards recognition of those ways in which the insidiousness of coldness has permeated our being and shaped the way we engage with others and with our wider society.

Simon Mussell argues that the risky endeavour of becoming aware of coldness is made more difficult by the apparent warmth of contemporary societal culture: 'recognition of the pervasiveness of coldness is socially repressed by an equally persistent culture of (false) warmth, perpetual connectedness and familiarity' (Mussell 2013: 60).¹⁴ By refusing false consolation, Adorno's (cold) critique of coldness draws our attention to 'the symptom that society would prefer to conceal or explain away as nothing more complex than a subjective pathology' (Mussell 2013: 61). Adorno's insistence on peeling back the layers of 'false warmth' (Mussell 2013: 60) in order to reveal the profound indifference to others it conceals goes hand in hand with a refusal to 'preach love' (Adorno 1998b: 202), correct misinformation or cultivate ideals such as 'freedom and humanity' (Adorno 1986: 128–9). Instead, Mussell maintains, Adorno 'works within and through the dialectic of coldness' (Mussell 2013: 59), marrying his critique of coldness with a 'coldness of critique' that challenges the capitalist status quo (Mussell 2013: 60). The core purpose of Adorno's social theory goes beyond diagnosis and critique of existing social order; instead, it seeks to 'tarry with the negative, recognising the coldness within ourselves the better to break through and sublimate it' (Mussell 2013: 63). Adorno asserts that 'what is conscious can never bring with it as much fatefulness as what remains unconscious, half-conscious, or preconscious' (Adorno 1986: 126). This emphasis on the negative, on coming to know our coldness – its genesis and its effects – is profoundly hopeful because it 'refuses to recalibrate its coordinates to fit in with the limited horizons of the present' (Mussell 2013: 63).

According to Adorno, then, the prioritization of self-interest and a deeply rooted indifference towards those to whom we are not intimately connected facilitated the horrors of Auschwitz. Without the socially sanctioned pursuit of self-advantage, Auschwitz would not have taken place. In this sense, Adorno argues with cosmopolitan critics that we ought to enlarge our scope of moral-political concern. However, although he highlights the devastation that stems from a profound indifference towards others, his response is emphatically not the formal prescription of love or care. Love, for Adorno, cannot be called into being by prescribing eternal values or following injunctions to respect, tolerate or cultivate an understanding of others. Instead, love ‘resists formalization’; it draws attention to the sensuous particularity and materiality of others as a counter to ‘overwhelming tendencies of abstraction, exclusion, and alienation’ (Waggoner 2010: 111). As we have already discussed, Adorno is clear that countering indifference starts by becoming aware of our own coldness. However, he also maintains that it can be countered through the cultivation of loving relationships, particularly in the context of early childhood education. I explore both responses further in what follows.

Towards an education for critical self-reflection

I have argued that ignorance and indifference work against recognition and against emancipation. Societal valorization of security, certainty and self-sufficiency has led to the denigration of vulnerability, ambiguity and love. Cosmopolitan education’s cultivation of global citizens fails to address these pervasive societal failings: the accumulation of useful knowledge about other cultures and beliefs and the exercise of empathy at a distance both fail to attend to our *own* implication in structures and practices that marginalize and oppress. In what follows, I argue that a recognition-infused pedagogy can address pervasive ignorance and indifference. I consider Adorno’s reflections on education after Auschwitz and Megan Boler’s ‘pedagogy of discomfort’, arguing that they offer a starting point on a journey towards unsettling pedagogy with a radical politics of recognition.

Adorno himself took pedagogy very seriously – he was a committed public educator¹⁵ – and his writings on education offer a profound challenge to status quo understandings of pedagogy. He points to two cornerstones of education after Auschwitz: ‘general enlightenment’, which highlights the motives that facilitated the horrors of Auschwitz, and children’s education, with particular

emphasis on early childhood education (Adorno 1998b: 194). Adorno maintains that there is little point in appealing to 'eternal values' or in stressing oppressed others' 'positive qualities' (Adorno 1998b: 192); these techniques fail to address the mechanisms and motives that facilitate violence. Instead, he argues, 'the only education that has any sense at all is an education toward critical self-reflection' (Adorno 1998b: 193).

Adorno's (negative) reflections on education offer an important challenge to pedagogic approaches that prescribe positive prescriptions for emancipatory change, such as those put forward by Nussbaum (1997). He advocates 'making education an education for protest and resistance', beginning with the attempt to 'open people's minds to the fact that they are constantly being deceived, because the mechanism of tutelage has been raised to the status of a universal *mundus vult decipi*: the world wants to be deceived' (Adorno and Becker 1999: 30–1).¹⁶ In advocating this 'general enlightenment', he advocates a 'turn to the subject' whereby subjects work towards comprehension of those 'mechanisms' that allowed Auschwitz to take place and, through this increased awareness, reduce the likelihood of its recurrence (Adorno 1998b: 193).

Brian O'Connor (2012: 16) argues that Adorno's programme of education fosters autonomy and resistance: 'Education is now to be the business of enabling individuals to recognize within themselves, and thereafter to take an oppositional attitude to, those norms which have carried non-reflective, non-self-critical individuals – perhaps even themselves – into collective blindness.' Foremost among those norms are the prioritization of self-advantage and coldness or indifference to others. An education for resistance, or 'knocking things down' (Adorno and Becker 1999: 31), encourages students to question these norms and practices rather than to 'swallow and accept everything' (Adorno and Becker 1999: 30). Critical self-reflection brings these norms to consciousness, which is an important act of resistance; it highlights our own complicity in structures and attitudes that oppress.

Early childhood education is the other forum in which Adorno maintains societal coldness might be countered. He states that '[t]he pathos of the school today, its moral import, is that in the midst of the status quo, it alone has the ability, if it is conscious of it, to work directly toward the debarbarization of humanity' (Adorno 1998a: 190). We have seen that Adorno has a profound antipathy towards 'preaching love', emphatically rejecting as counterproductive and superficial the active prescription of cosmopolitan values such as humanity, freedom, respect and tolerance. In the context of education, Adorno rejects the idea of formally cultivating understanding of the other by emphasizing positive

qualities, for example. However, although he resists the prescription of love, he encourages the cultivating of loving relationships in the classroom. That is, he makes a distinction between *what* students are taught and *how* students are taught. In the context of early childhood education, he maintains, the presence of teachers who love is transformative: children who are loved are in turn better able to love and to resist the coldness that pervades modernity. Indeed, Adorno warns that teachers who are unable to love should not teach. Unloving teachers foster suffering in the classroom; they also pass on their inability to love to their students and in this way perpetuate the coldness that facilitated Auschwitz (Adorno 1998d: 28). O'Connor notes that children who are educated under loving and critically aware conditions 'may develop a capacity for autonomy which is not compromised by the institutional practices of an intellectual theory' (O'Connor 2012: 20). He goes on to argue that as 'individuals without coldness' they will be guided by love, 'responding freely to the self-evidently morally repugnant, rather than by a need for institutional recognition' (O'Connor 2012: 20). In the context of educating young children, cultivating loving relationships in the classroom is particularly important. Love continues to be important beyond childhood, however; the work of becoming vulnerable and learning to recognize oneself and others is a work of love.¹⁷ Such an education is emphatically not the tutelage identified by Kant as fostering immaturity and cowardice – instead, it is an education for maturity that invites critical self-reflection and love and, as such, is willing to become vulnerable and discomfited.

Megan Boler's 'pedagogy of discomfort' complements and extends Adorno's education for critical self-reflection. As I noted above, Boler criticizes Nussbaum's cosmopolitan education for advocating 'passive empathy' that acknowledges the suffering of others but 'produces no action towards justice' (Boler 1999: 161). Passive empathy 'situates the powerful Western eye/I as the judging subject, never called upon to cast her gaze at her own reflection' (Boler 1999: 161). Like Adorno, then, Boler emphasizes the need for critical self-reflection, bringing to consciousness our embeddedness in systems of power and privilege that marginalize and oppress. Central to this approach is recognition of 'the deeply embedded emotional dimensions that frame and shape daily habits, routines, and unconscious complicity with hegemony' (Boler 2004: 121). It draws attention to our location in systems of inequality and domination 'in which privilege, such as white and male privilege, comes at the expense of the freedom of others' (Boler 2004: 128). Analysis of these systems must be accompanied by a personal journey of political risk, which entails 'willingness to engage in the difficult work of possibly allowing one's worldviews to be shattered' and 'willingness to be fully

alive in the process of constant change and becoming' (Boler 2004: 128). Boler highlights the need for a pedagogy of discomfort to be enlivened by a conception of 'critical hope', which is manifested in a determination to work towards justice even though we do not know the outcome in advance (Boler 2004: 129).

A pedagogy of discomfort, then, attends to those desires that underlie misrecognition, making us aware of our denial of other voices and the accompanying denial of the fear that underpins our refusal of recognition (Foster 2011: 256–7). Informed by an agonistic conception of recognition, Boler's pedagogical approach requires letting go of attachment to certainty and self-preservation and welcoming vulnerability and ambiguity in their stead (Boler 2004: 129). It does not call students on a solitary journey; it is a *collective* endeavour that depends on 'interpersonal relationships shaped in a political context' (Boler 2004: 130). Relationships between students and between students and teachers are central in the process of radically re-evaluating one's place in the world.¹⁸ The critical reflection entailed by this unsettling pedagogy is not one of 'individualized self-reflection'; it involves a journey of collective witnessing, whereby one's re-evaluation of one's self and one's place in the world is 'always understood in relation to others, and in relation to personal and cultural histories and material condition' (Boler 1999: 176–8).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that although cosmopolitan education encourages recognition of others, its influence is limited by its rootedness in a tradition of moral rationalism. Cosmopolitan education seeks to address injustice and inequality through the accumulation of knowledge about other languages, cultures and beliefs, and through empathic engagement that references our common vulnerability. In doing so, it cultivates global citizens marked by their knowledge of and respect for others. However, cosmopolitan education promotes an impoverished form of recognition that accords others 'more recognition' but fails to examine our own complicity in creating and sustaining those social and political structures that perpetuate misrecognition.

Contra cosmopolitan education's confident production of knowledgeable and empathic subjects, I advocate an unsettling pedagogy that requires a 'turn to the subject' (Adorno 1998b: 193), underpinned by an agonistic conception of recognition. Instead of formalizing values or prescribing care, this approach draws attention to the desires and fears that prompt us to refuse recognition,

challenging the wilful ignorance and indifference that buttress liberal capitalism. It is profoundly countercultural: it rejects the valorization of the invulnerable, self-certain and self-serving master subject and welcomes in her place the vulnerable subject willing to turn her gaze inwards and embark on the uncomfortable journey of coming to know her implication in social and political structures that oppress.¹⁹

Notes

- 1 See also the forthcoming collection of essays on education by prominent philosophers, critical theorists and psychoanalysts (Bartlett, Clemens and White 2015).
- 2 See also Tarik Kochi's contribution to this volume, which advocates a return to the 'dynamism, radicalism and philosophical potential' of earlier Hegel-recognition scholarship instead of the reductionist account prevalent in liberal recognition theory.
- 3 See also Lloyd (2009: 144).
- 4 See also Schaap's (2004) discussion of agonistic reconciliation, which highlights the risk that attends any struggle for recognition. He argues that recognition 'may as easily divide as it may reconcile' (Schaap 2004: 525) and that 'it appears both untenable and yet necessary' (Schaap 2004: 537): untenable because of the way it appropriates and 'over-determines' the other (Schaap 2004: 531–4), and necessary because otherwise we are left indifferent to the other. An agonistic account of reconciliation is alive to the fragility of the nascent 'we' that reconciliatory politics attempts to create, proposing a model 'that would affirm the non-identity of the other while forestalling the moment of positive recognition' (Schaap 2004: 525). Such an approach unsettles those binaries (self and other, victim and perpetrator, friend and enemy) that pervade recognition politics, embracing ambiguity and ongoing possibility in their stead.
- 5 Although Adorno does not use the concept of recognition explicitly in his social theory or writings on education, his work captures important aspects of a speculative or fuller understanding of recognition. See Foster (2011) for an excellent discussion of the concept of recognition in Adorno's social theory.
- 6 Rose maintains 'certainty does not empower, it subjugates – for only thinking which has the ability to tolerate uncertainty is powerful, that is, non-violent' (Rose 1993: 4).
- 7 A dogged determination to present the self as invulnerable is pervasive in global politics; powerful states are marked by the promotion of their national Selves as self-certain and secure. Brent J. Steele (2010: 12) maintains that states employ

aesthetic practices to portray themselves differently to what they really are, to obscure their fundamental vulnerability and insecurity. He argues that while these practices help to 'veil the operation of power', they ultimately engender further insecurities.

- 8 Simone Drichel (2013) argues that vulnerability presents us with the possibility of wounding, but it also carries with it the possibility of care, of love. By failing to engage with our helplessness, our vulnerability, but instead rushing towards a place of safety, we are 'fleeing from and defending against the very relationality that, to be sure, is always a potential source of pain and wounding, but that is also the condition of possibility for pleasure and satisfaction, and ultimately for ethical life' (Drichel 2013: 13). By acknowledging and tarrying with vulnerability and reacquainting ourselves with our fundamental relationality, in contrast, 'what we learn is to be able to remain – anxiously, uncomfortably, but sticking it out nonetheless – in the space of vulnerability's "ambivalent potentiality"' (Drichel 2013: 23).
- 9 My critique of standard recognition theory has much in common with Patchen Markell's (2003) critique in *Bound by Recognition*. Markell argues that conventional recognition itself engenders further misrecognition by failing to address the roots of misrecognition. He maintains that it 'gives short shrift to the underlying forms of desire and motivation that sustain and are sustained by unjust social arrangements, thereby ignoring both the possibility that demeaning images of others are epiphenomenal – that they are supported by structures of desire that are not in the first instance *about* others – and, more troublingly, the possibility that even affirmative images of others could be consistent with, or serve as vehicles of, injustice' (Markell 2003: 5). Markell (2003: 7) advocates instead what he terms a politics of *acknowledgement* that 'demands that each of us bear our share of the burden and risk involved in the uncertain, open-ended, sometimes maddening and sometimes joyously surprising activity of living and interacting with other people'. I argue that a fuller, more agonistic conception of recognition is able to capture those aspects of Markell's politics of acknowledgement that are lacking in standard conception of recognition: that is, attention to the desires that underpin misrecognition and an embrace of vulnerability, ambiguity and political risk.
- 10 See Shilliam (2013b) for a detailed discussion of what such therapy might look like in practice. He discusses anti-racism workshops run in Aotearoa New Zealand churches for Pakeha (white New Zealanders) in the early 1980s that provided an unsettling corrective to dominant narratives of colonialism.
- 11 'Education after Auschwitz' (Adorno 1998b) was written in 1966 and emerges from Adorno's agonized reflections on the horrific suffering and death experienced by millions deemed other in Nazi Germany and his struggle to understand how and why this took place. Although Adorno's remarks must be understood as emerging

- from a particular historical context, his argument about the coldness of the modern subject applies to contemporary society as well, with its continued valorization of self-sufficiency, self-certainty and self-advantage.
- 12 Adorno remarks that coldness is particularly apparent in people who ‘fetishize technology’ (Adorno 1998b: 200). In what seems like an eerily prescient reflection on present day technology and alienation, Adorno argues that the contemporary absorption in ‘machines as such’ (Adorno 1998b: 201), is ‘exaggerated, irrational, pathogenic’ and that it produces ‘[thoroughly cold] people who cannot love’ (Adorno 1998b: 200).
 - 13 See also Volker Heins’ (2012a: 78–9) discussion of Adorno’s prophetic style and his antipathy towards ‘preaching’.
 - 14 See also Adorno’s discussion of the false warmth of the Nazi regime: ‘For countless people, alienation’s chill seemed to be eliminated by the warmth – however manipulated and imposed – of togetherness’ (Adorno 1986: 121)
 - 15 See, for example, Volker Heins’ (2012a: 73) discussion of ‘Adorno as Educator’, where he points out that between 1950 and 1969, he ‘gave almost 300 radio talks, plus about the same number of public talks’. See also the discussion in Goehr (2005).
 - 16 By ‘tutelage’, Adorno refers to Kant’s well-known statement that ‘Enlightenment is man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage’ (Kant 1991), drawing on Kant’s conception of ‘tutelage’ as a deeply problematic but pervasive form of education that fosters ‘immaturity and irresponsibility’ and the failure to use one’s own judgement due to laziness or cowardice.
 - 17 My use of love, here, is influenced by the writings of Gillian Rose, for whom love is ‘risky engagement’ (Rose 1995: 71) and ‘involves negotiating boundaries between oneself and others, knowing that we will get love wrong, yet continuing to do “love’s work”’ (Lloyd 2007: 699). See, for example, Gillian Rose’s (1995) phenomenology of love in her philosophical memoir, *Love’s Work*, and Vincent Lloyd’s (2011, 2008, 2007) discussion of the place of love in Rose’s writings.
 - 18 For a discussion of ‘teaching as a form of lovingkindness’ and the ethics and practicalities of inviting and guiding students on a discomforting journey, see Boler (2004: 130).
 - 19 I am grateful to Amanda Russell Beattie, Patrick Hayden, Kim Huynh, Greta Fowler Snyder, Brent J. Steele and Ben Thirkell-White for their helpful comments, advice and encouragement, and to Jess Balu for her invaluable research assistance.