

Politics from a psychotherapist's perspective

Psychological and philosophical themes

Insecurity

From all my self-exploration and experience as a therapist over the years, it is clear to me that it is insecurity that creates our difficulties in living. By insecurity I mean our internalised fearful and defensive relationship to our lives, which take on a myriad forms, but which are at the root of our problems, whether personal, in relationships and families or in communities, institutions or society. It is insecurity that creates the resistances and blockages to growth, development and creativity, both personally and in all forms of relationship within society.

Insecurity exists as a consequence of needing to maintain our avoidance of unreconciled trauma (in its broadest meaning). Trauma may arise from the drip, drip, drip of criticism or neglect, from the deep generational attitudes generated by nineteenth century religious beliefs of "original sin", i.e. that children are born evil and have to be made good. From Wars, from grindingly harsh conditions of ingrained poverty or from innumerable forms of accident, neglect and abuse within all classes. Also, it seems that due to the complexity and length of our developmental journey from conception to adulthood very few of us are lucky enough to emerge without some level of developmental trauma. This is about deficits of unconditional love, of criticism, the lack of support, over-support, of misattunement of some sort that we suffered during the many stages of our development. Growing up is hard and we naturally resist the pain of it at various stages with anger, depression, tantrums and sulking along the way. It is almost impossible to negotiate all the complex developmental transitions in an ideal way. On top of this are all the specific accidental incidents of traumatic experiences that life throws at us.

Trauma is an experience that we can't deal with, that is too much to bear, so we have to bury and repress some of our feeling reactions to it. The adjustment we then make to our self in order to maintain the avoidance, is to split the connections between our heart, head and body. This enables us put those unbearable feelings into separate boxes that constantly requires effort to keep the lids closed. When this happens, as it so often does in childhood, it in turn causes us to avoid growing up and taking responsibility for ourselves emotionally, especially around those vulnerable and wounded areas of the self. We naturally want to avoid facing the pain and stay as we are. All of this is automatic, it is an unconscious process. It leads us to develop all sorts of compensatory defensive attitudes and behaviours which profoundly limit our relationship to our lives.

The consequence of avoiding the pain that trauma caused, is that we buried the un-reconciled hurt, distress, anger, fear, loss, etc. along with awareness of our instinctual fight, flight, freeze responses. All this inevitably gets deeply lodged into our bodies, as well as our feelings, and thinking. Obvious PTSD sufferers are simply those at the more extreme end of the scale, most of us are on the scale somewhere with our habits of avoidance and holding these un-reconciled aspects of ourselves out of awareness and this means we are always living in fear and conflict. It also means that we end up with a deep belief in our own inadequacy in some way. We are caught in "victim mode" which Jill Hall (1993) describes so well.

One common compensatory response to this, is narcissism, a polarising process where people go either into making themselves small, inadequate, ashamed, worthless, or they go into making themselves big, arrogant and grandiose. Many seesaw from one to the other. Other responses that often coming from earlier survival level adjustments are around unbearable levels of anxiety or

distress associated with the frozen energy of fight/flight/freeze responses. Apparently “out of character” or “over the top” panic, distress, anger or avoidance are tell-tale signs of this.

These are just some of the myriad of response styles which are all about deeply unreconciled trauma. Unreconciled because it has not yet been bearable. At one end of the scale are those suffering mental illness due to profound ruptures in care as babies and at the other end are those blessed with wonderful parenting and only minor difficulties. But most people, in my experience, have some level of trauma and subsequent insecurity which limits their lives and curtails their creativity and growth in some way. These experiences also sit on top of an almost genetically determined level of insecurity we all have from millennia of living with ever present threats to our very existence.

For many people it takes time to come to understand how they are formed by trauma and insecurity, for a long time we want to deny any problems we have living our lives. Even when people do start to look and face themselves, it is often not clear to begin with what the problems are, the difficulties can be seen as details that need sorting out, just as any other practical problem in our lives. They can be seen in terms of relationship difficulties, awkward habits or simply some idiosyncratic aspects of our personalities. With further investigation it can become clear that it is insecurity of some sort that is at the heart of it all. The signs are always the reactive movement away from openhearted genuine meeting, whether it is avoidance, dismissal, non-acknowledgement, withdrawal, rejection, anger, lying, aggression, judgement, blaming, etc. At some level, for the vast majority of us, this is a part of our daily lives.

We are also very good at putting on a front to hide our insecurity. There is huge pressure in our society to appear competent and the master of our own lives and this comes from people's unconscious repression of their own insecurity. From this flows the need to deny, blame or punish any expression of insecurity in ourselves and others. At times it is as though there is a giant conspiracy against this aspect of our existence being accepted for how it is, with everyone pretending to be 'fine' without any debilitating insecurity. Those of privilege and power are brilliant at hiding their insecurity, they so strongly believe in their superiority that their insecurity has become invisible to themselves and well hidden from others. But scratch the surface and it is there. It is there in selfishness and greediness.

Proof of all this is in how so many of us are addicts in some form, whether to food or substances or behaviours, with our wondrous variety of hang-ups, reactive no-go areas and compulsions, to the defeatedness of depression or the panic of anxiety. Patterns of trauma and insecurity are often passed down from one generation to the other, we tend to treat others as we have been treated. It is wonderful though, how with each new generation, many are able to break some of these chains.

It is clear to me that so many of society's problems come from insecurity. We need to understand that it is this that drives all the negative tendencies of people. No one is born bad! Selfishness, laziness, greediness, anger and aggression, small mindedness, meanness, making the other or self bad, are all forms of defensiveness in the face of hard to bear insecurity. It is insecurity that makes people uncreative and un-productive because it demands so much of their energy and attention. Relatively secure people enjoy a much more creative and constructive relationship to their lives and generally contribute more to society.

Understanding the huge impact that insecurity has on so many people, and therefore on how it is behind so many of society's 'problems', is I think, essential for the politics of building a better society. The task therefore is to heal insecurity and this is a process that requires the combination of support and challenge. Support, from growing awareness and understanding, from compassion and being supported. Challenge is always present, it comes from the 'existential' realities of life, it is the hard edged aspect of our need to face and take responsibility for ourselves and our choices, and the realities

of life. Growing up is hard to do and it seems that life has an amazing talent for repeatedly and persistently rubbing our noses in our problems.

All the qualities we want within our society of greater equality, more meaningful community, greater openness, freedom, compassion, inclusivity, creativity, etc., etc., can only come through the healing of insecurity on the personal, communal and institutional levels. In each we need developmentally orientated approaches in order to facilitate such change. This means acknowledging insecurity as the driving force behind all the negative aspects of ourselves and our attempts to control society through power, elitism, bureaucracy and dogmatism. It means understanding that it is through these two processes of developing awareness (support) and facing the reality of ourselves (challenge) that we have the possibilities of freeing ourselves. This is the work of accepting the very human reality of ourselves, of growing through the middle of our insecurities with compassion, rather than hanging onto habitual patterns of avoidance with all its strategies of defence and attack.

We heal insecurity through slowly opening to it, facing it and making it into our ally. This makes us more compassionate to ourselves and towards the world, it allows our hearts to open by *allowing in* the suffering we could not previously face. We cannot 'do' change directly through willpower, it does not work, we have to deeply face and attend to the motivations behind our behaviour.

Our underlying human nature

It is the miracle of our human nature that we have the always active process of our sub/un-conscious wisdom trying to help us heal and work towards our freedom. Without this we would be hopelessly lost. With it, given half a chance, we do heal and develop because that is what we deeply want for ourselves and others. This 'direction' is towards the place where insecurity does not impose its consequences, where "do unto others as you would be done by" is naturally felt and expressed, where there is of love and compassion, understanding and acceptance as well as self-responsibility. It is a place where we live more in the here and now, dealing practically and creatively with life as best we can. It is not easily come by, but as insecurity is faced and healed, it is what we open to naturally. This is what corresponds to our deeper human nature, what emerges from the profound innate wisdom of human beings when de-cluttered from all the compensatory compulsiveness that flows from our insecure ways of being. Our hearts are then less afraid and more able to open to Love. Our heads are freer from the constant chatter of self-justification and our bodies less tense and more connected to the energy of life. Deep down the human self wants to be free.

We all have this profoundly wise force towards psychological health within us, just as we do on the physical level. What blocks this force flowing is that we had to shut down part of our feelings due to trauma. It is the wonder of therapy that helping those feelings back into awareness, understanding and facing them, allows us to heal, thereby allowing our growth and development to naturally progress. It is the 'data' from those shut away feelings that the wisdom of the self needs in order to heal and re-find its creativity. It is this dual process of "waking up" (developing our self-awareness and understanding) and "growing up" (taking responsibility for ourselves) that we develop. (Wilber)

Whilst the process of therapy naturally focuses on our relationship to our feelings (heart), it is also important that "waking up" and "growing up" takes place in our head and body. We need to be working towards taking responsibility for understanding ourselves and the world we live in, to make sure that our philosophy is not just an expression and justification of our victim-ness. We need to deepen our connection to our body, in terms of attending to its needs, tensions and sensation, again taking responsibility for it. It is head, heart and body, all increasingly free and communicating with each other, that represents our optimal functioning, enabling us to 'be' more ourselves, as well as to

'do' more freely with fewer unaware compensatory compulsions, from insecurity. Slowly we can find our power and freedom to be our deeper selves and stop projecting our deficits onto the world.

This potential is about living ever closer to the here and now, which is towards the profound letting go of the ego that is called "enlightenment". We can only fully "let go" when the ego (the defensive aspect of ourselves) has more or less healed, because then we are able to finally grow up and mature before the ego can simply "fall like a ripe fruit". The ego cannot let go of itself, we cannot 'do' enlightenment, it has to just 'happen'. Then the wider uncluttered self remains, but free of all those ego concerns, free of fear, free of compulsive insecurity with its separateness and selfishness.

Premature attempts at enlightenment through spiritual work is referred to as "spiritual bypass", which is just another unconscious attempt to avoid facing the wounds of the self. This shows up in all forms of evangelism / fundamentalism.

Obviously there are as many paths as there are people. Not everyone needs therapy, and by no means everyone who enters therapy is interested in enlightenment. But I do think that anyone embarking on the "road less travelled", on this "pilgrim's progress", would benefit from the examination of their feelings and motivations that therapy provides. Everyone needs to grow up, which necessarily means facing suffering and, in the end of course, facing death. Life has no meaning without death, and I would argue, suffering. Human beings are unique in this respect, that if we face and bear our suffering we can transcend it. There is a profound transformation of the self that happens when suffering is accepted, however awful it is. When we are able to face our suffering we are once again able to love ourselves, and therefore love the other and the world. On an everyday level this is something that many parents know about, because looking after children responsibly involves having to sacrifice many of our own needs / wants and we grow up through that process. Facing and bearing suffering leads to freedom from the fear of it. It is the fear of not being able to bear our suffering that keeps us trapped in our egoic world and thus separate from Love, and Consciousness, and Being.

Those of us coming from deep insecurity obviously need therapy, and could be seen as having a lot further to travel on the road to enlightenment. But every stick has two ends. The hard work of healing this insecurity, of necessarily facing such deep suffering (trauma), provides an invaluable 'apprenticeship' in working towards 'enlightenment'. Therapy also demands a deep and honest examination of our motivations which supports living ever closer to the unknown, towards embodying "living in question" in an ever changing and ultimately unknowable universe. I.e. ever closer to living ever more open in the here and now. Ever closer to silence with its freedom from the incessant chatter of our insecure minds and ever closer to Consciousness as well as Love.

Everyone acting from insecurity needs support, rich or poor, but people also need to become responsible for themselves and their actions. There has to be the freedom to choose, the issue here is about "free will", which is surely central to human nature and therefore to any political stance and view on how we then structure society. How much 'free will' do we have? Not much, it is true. But there is always a little bit and this is central to what it is to be a human being. Without it we are total automatons. Society must leave space for choice, we have to allow for, and live with the tension and un-controllable-ness that "free will" brings, whilst simultaneously imposing boundaries as wisely as possible to mitigate the worst destructive consequences of insecurity.

We have to live with this fundamental paradox in human nature between support and challenge. We can't take responsibility for what we are unaware of and we can't become aware of what we refuse to take responsibility for. We can't 'be' without doing and we can't 'do' without being. We need the intertwining of both, each reinforcing the other in the developmental spiral of our becoming, embracing our dual nature, both human and God.

We are both spirit and matter and for both these sides of us there are different laws that define their development. With the “god” side of our nature there is the ever present invitation towards the possibility of letting go into being, here and now, into the vast interconnectedness of life. The experience of the great teachers of the world, and of those who manage to come to terms with death, point to the possibility of transcending our ego, our ‘materiality’, our choices, our ‘will’. Here, life is without limit, Love, Consciousness and Being seem to be a part of the quantum timelessness and limitlessness of the universe.

Our world of materiality is the same world of existential responsibility and choice and doing that we have to face before we can let go of it. The vast majority of us are left having to live with the irreconcilable tensions and contradictions that come from this dual aspect of our nature.

Blame

The other important consequence of insecurity when looking at our society is blaming, be it ourselves or the other. Both are denials of insecurity and therefore of self-responsibility. Blaming is always a projection of that which we have not been able to face in ourselves. This is why there is such a strong blame culture in societies and why there is such violence in countries riven by trauma.

The political right, usually those with wealth / power (and especially those privately educated in boarding schools from an early age), tend to blame, dismiss and judge their own and other’s grief (self-pity), loss, distress and trauma, by saying “get on with it ... don’t be a sissy”. They blame the weak for being weak. The left also dismiss their insecurity by saying “don’t be a sissy” but here the blame is aimed at those in power. The left often identify with being victims and the right with denying they are the victims, whereas both are avoiding the reality of their victim-ness, their insecurity.

We have to separate blame from responsibility. Self-responsibility has many aspects, we need to take responsibility for what we think, for what we feel, for our bodies and our health, as well as our finances. Taking responsibility for ourselves is I think the most difficult developmental challenge we face, the journey to fully embody it takes a lifetime for most of us. Whereas blame is simply a projective process, where the deep unaware inadequacy that inevitably flows from unreconciled insecurity, is dumped onto either our self or other, in the form of badness and rejection. Self-responsibility is our existential reality, we are responsible for our ‘selves’. As adults, even when unaware of what is driving us, we are still responsible for our choices and actions, that’s the tough reality of life, a reality that the law recognises.

Seeing society and people as struggling with insecurity transforms the political picture, it enables us to move into a place where we can hold both left and right political perspectives from a place of some sanity. We can let go of the archaic good and evil, right and wrong positions and move away from our out of date “blame culture”, towards something that is more creative and enlightening. Blame is the projection of badness onto the self or other, whereas seeing people as coming from insecurity promotes a more human, growth and development orientated perspective. This is why the “first rule” is to try and forgive, it is this that enables us to get past blame towards curiosity, inquiry and understanding. Towards at depth, compassion.

The insecurity in large groups, communities, institutions and societies

Insecurity takes on particularly difficult forms within larger groups and communities and especially organisations and institutions where its negative aspects get processed in powerfully unconscious ways, anxiety is infectious. It is as though the larger the group the more regressive is the expression of insecurity. Our need to be accepted by ‘the group’ is so powerful that it unconsciously overrides personal needs and self-responsibility, forcing us into “collective obsessional behaviour”. Also, in any group the needs of the neediest tend to dominate because there is an intuitive recognition that for

the group to find its power and optimal functioning, the most pressing needs have to be attended to first. (Maslow)

Wilber (2006) argues that the wisdom or sanity of any group or community comes from the aggregate level of development of those making up the group. If the centre of gravity of those in a group is at the level of pathological projection emanating from deep unreconciled trauma, then they can be Nazis, fundamentalists, ultra-conservatives or ultra-socialists, or any group committed to imposing their world view on everyone else. (As opposed to trusting in open and deep as possible democracy with its trust in the “organismic self-regulation” (PHG 1951) and the inherent goodness of people). Wilber has pointed out that individuals or communities cannot become inclusive, open, compassionate and capable of “deep democracy” until an “integral” level of development has been achieved by a clear majority.

This is also why it takes so long for societies to mature. As long as there is a majority of people at levels of development that mean they are tied to unconscious projective behaviour, it is very difficult for the more enlightened to be heard and have power and influence. Indeed for ‘common sense’ to rise to the surface. The analogy with personal development is that it takes a certain ‘weight’ of awareness and clarity and self-responsibility to build before behaviour changes, which can then be significant, before settling down for another period of stasis. With communities and institutions that “weight” is based on the aggregate of member’s development. The rejection of State Communism in Eastern Europe was, I think, an example of societal shifts that are possible. Also with the recent general acceptance of the need for a “living wage”, where the ‘common sense’ of it became overwhelming.

Wilber puts forward research to support the view of developmental hierarchy (or “holarchy”, Sonne & Toennesvang 2015) through stages, for both individuals, communities and societies. Briefly, these “stages” are “Survival” (0+) (In brackets are my own very approximate / typical ages from which the level starts and there is no end age, as many of us end up dealing with young aspects of ourselves into our old age), then “Tribal”(4+), then “Mythic” (or Religious) (8+). These are all stages of development where people get caught into defending themselves through projective means, where there is compulsive defensiveness to any challenge of values / beliefs. It is not until “Rational” (or “Modern” or Enlightenment) (12+) that there starts to be the ability to look at the facts, but then materialism and rationality becomes the new ‘God’. “Postmodern” (18+) gets to challenge the underlying cultural determinants behind our perceptions but tends to get lost in ultimate subjectivity, so it is not until “Integral” (late 20’s+) that people are developed enough to start truly questioning themselves and start to be aware of and trust in their innate wisdom.

Each level developmentally transcends and includes the one before. This process is about dis-identifying with our current way of being and moving into a place where we can look and see and face it for what it is. Then we can transcend it in an inclusive way, our new perspective is wider and free from the previous attachment and identification (Kegan 1994). We have ‘grown up’ into a new developmental stage. This is what has to happen when people engage in therapy, they have to move towards this “integral” level of consciousness in order to be able to take the process seriously, to grow into the space where deep self-reflection is possible. A place where we can “separate ourselves from ourselves” (Gurdjieff 1973) sufficiently to start to see the truth of the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of our functioning. This is also why many people refuse or criticise therapy, because of course it can be a real threat to their world view and sense of themselves. Insecurity cannot, it seems, be fully owned, faced and healed until this “Integral” level of development has been reached.

Discernment and assessment - ethics

All this leaves us as ever, with our need to assess the developmental level and wisdom of individuals, groups, communities and societies. We are anyway constantly judging our environment in all sorts of ways and by using this 'lens' of insecurity, combined with Wilber's taxonomy can give a new perspective. It supports the assessment of motivation and development when navigating through the confusing fog of life and politics. It provides a space for discernment (assessment / judgement) that promotes compassion and inclusion rather than punishment and exclusion.

This "hierarchical" discernment goes against our current "modern" and "postmodern" zeitgeist. The "modern" does not understand ongoing personal development towards 'enlightenment' and the "postmodern" argues against any hierarchical power and control, saying that everything is subjective and culturally determined and that there is no objective meaning. But I agree with Wilber, development is real and measurable and assessable (and ultimately towards the transpersonal). To me the core of this is about assessing the level of unresolved insecurity, the degree of freedom from insecurity.

We are back to boundaries, back to what we do all the time anyway, assessing the value and meaning of behaviour. This is about a basis for ethics, about being clear on what we are basing our understanding and perception of human behaviour; both individual and societal, and is the basis for this tentative enquiry into politics.

What are the implications of all this for politics?

From this ethical stance, what is the nature of a government that embodies these themes? "Support and challenge" implies both state support and self-responsibility.

The Conservatives argue that this is what they are offering. But they are surely not addressing the suffering of too many people, the term "poverty deniers" does seem to fit. Overall what they offer to those in crisis is challenge and negative judgement whilst selfishly making the rich richer in the name of entrepreneurship and a more competitive economy. The early learnt repression of feelings in private schools makes it is easy for the elite to feel "entitled" (Duffield 2014) and judgemental, able to look the other way, avoiding the awareness of suffering.

I'm afraid (given my enthusiasm for the breath of fresh air that Mr Corbyn has brought) that I still think that the Left are in a way "deficit deniers", their economic 'magic wands' do create false hope for those who, understandably, wish for liberation, but at the same time projectively avoid responsibility at some level. It is so easy to blame the other.

The difficulty here is that when we look through the lens of either support or challenge, each tends to become totally convincing and the other disappears – "the underprivileged and those in need deserve support and those with privileged, wealth and power created the problems and need to pay for it" - or - "you make your own luck in life, it is all about the choices you make and only you can take responsibility for yourself". Is it more 'human' to support and risk dependency in the hope that self-regulation will take root. Or is better to "challenge" and risk damaging hardship, in the hope that it will facilitate self-responsibility? There can be no definite answer here because it is connected to the profound mystery of 'free will' and choice, the functioning of which cannot be pinned down.

Do you kick a child out of the home if they are refusing to grow up? Keeping on supporting them can just perpetuate their dependency and victim way of being. Nature follows the "kick out" rule, but surely we are more civilised and understand, as above, that all "negative" behaviour comes from

insecurity. But the point here is just this, that support in whatever form, money, understanding, communication, insight, wisdom etc., etc., can only ever be a part of the solution. Taking self-responsibility is the other unavoidable and lonely part. Addicts deserve support, but only up to a point and the same surely goes at various levels for those in poverty, unemployed, unwell, disabled or homeless. Obviously there are groups for whom there is no argument in our society; the very old, the chronically ill/disabled, children's education and care, are all beyond this dilemma because these groups are clearly incapable of taking responsibility for themselves.

When people are in need it is not their "fault", as above, this is not about blame, but those in need do have to take some self-responsibility. It is clear that most do accept this, which is why on the whole support works and generally people find their way in life. But there is also a significant minority that refuse and therefore need tough boundaries and then it is only fair that those boundaries apply to everyone. We obviously have to have a rules based welfare system.

When the Left and Right make their case well both are compelling, because both are saying something fundamentally true about the human condition. We need to accept both "self-responsibility" and "support", it is not "either or". We need to embrace the complexity and resist the simplistic, and at times so seductive, option of attaching to one side or the other.

What comes to mind here, is a coming together of two apparent paradoxes; that of the individual versus community, and support (awareness) versus challenge (responsibility). From one point of view the individual has to grow up and take responsibility for themselves and find personal development and liberation through their existential aloneness. From the other view, it is clear that, the other is myself, we all interconnected and need support, community, relationship and connection (including a connection to the transpersonal). The resolving of these paradoxes is always in the movement into the mystery of 'the here and now' and the immediate practicalities of the possible. Ideologies are surely always a projection of insecurity, with their identification with their perspective being 'right'.

This points towards the usefulness of Wilber's "Quadrant" perspective which argues that any situation can be seen through four different lenses of "I, we, It and Its". The singular and plural, with the internal and external. Each is relevant and important, but 'the truth' is the whole of all perspectives.

The dilemmas around the Welfare State?

This issue here is about the amount of welfare support the state supplies. This is about the inevitable tension around the uncertain boundary between the size and depth of the State "safety net" and the need for people to take responsibility for themselves. About the constant problem of deciding where to draw the line with the resources available. Does that person deserve welfare support? If so at what level? Does that community need government money or would they be better off taking self-responsibility? Every culture makes different choices at different times, the pendulum swings.

Those in crisis

However the extent to which we do not totally withdraw support from anyone is, I think, a measure for us in developed Western economies, of our civilised-ness. On that measure in the UK we do seem to be failing quite often, with too many reports of the very needy being failed in our society. Here the Left are surely correct, in this rich country of ours nobody should need foodbanks and be living in unhealthy housing. It should surely be the government's (i.e. our) responsibility to support those in crisis. People are suffering and these people are our neighbours, we surely cannot be content while they suffer.

The question is, what level of need defines "crisis" and what does support in such situations look like and how do you prevent people using it to avoid self-responsibility? Those without money for food

need feeding, those without a roof need a roof, crisis provision for those in desperate needs to be available with care and compassion. People need an address from which to start repairing their lives. This support must be basic and short term, but civilised. Surely this has to have the highest priority, nobody can start repairing their lives without basic needs being met and by supporting and facilitating people's wish to develop.

Those unable to find a way out of crisis support obviously need a range of tailored educational, social, practical and psychological support. But most importantly there needs to be cheap social housing available to enable people to move on in the process of taking of taking responsibility for themselves. There has been madness in our social housing policy over last thirty five years, with the "right to buy" scheme having disastrous consequences, especially when combined with the restriction on Councils being able to borrow to build social housing. The experiment with "third way" Housing Associations has in many cases surely been an inefficient waste of money. So it seems to me that we desperately need local authorities to be able to take back control over crisis and social housing provision.

The Left's prescription is to rescue, the Right's is to say that they are providing the conditions for economic growth. These arguments see poverty from opposite perspectives. What creates poverty is the huge question here? Is it Capitalism itself? Does Capitalism inevitably unleash greed (a form of insecurity)? How responsible are those with wealth and power? How responsible are those in poverty for being there? If you are lazy (another form of insecurity!) and you feel the world owes you a living, then it is not surprising that you end up poor. If you are made redundant in an area of high unemployment or are on very low wages and high housing costs it is also not surprising. The causes of poverty are obviously enormously varied, but the point I want to make here is that I'm sure that those that are trapped medium to long term in poverty are those who also suffer from greater levels of insecurity, they are caught in a vicious circle.

Our historic class system and outdated morality has combined with our profoundly limited education system to leave generations of people with low skills in an increasingly competitive world economy. On top of that our welfare system has made it possible for some to live on benefits. Why work when your life expectations are very low, the options open seem very unattractive, and you don't have to?

As a society we historically made our fortune by ruthless exploitation. It seems to me that this created something of an 'entitlement' legacy that came from all that privilege which then percolated slowly throughout our whole culture. Over the past sixty years or so the "chickens have been coming home to roost" from this legacy of arrogance. Over this time other countries have increasingly become more competitive than us through facing the realities of life without our prejudices. Many in the UK still struggle to take responsibility for themselves and the cultural dimension of this is shown up by the way immigrants do not have the same hang-ups. They are often able to improve their lives relatively straightforwardly, unencumbered by a cultural legacy of arrogance around being 'owed a living'.

Arrogance is just another form of insecurity whatever your class. As above those unfortunate to suffer from insecurity get stuck in "victim mode" and inevitably move into self-blame or blaming the other (depending partly on introvert or extrovert personality type). With deep insecurity there inevitably come comes deep selfishness and defensiveness and even aggression and violence. These can come to be the ingrained characteristics of people within many different types of community, leading to all sorts of destructive behaviour.

The reality is that it is very difficult to help people who, due to deep seated insecurity, refuse to take responsibility for themselves and then 'act out' or project their internalised destructive patterns, either on themselves or onto society at large. In the end the law is there to provide the best safeguards we can against those who 'take it out' on others. But the law is inevitably a blunt, inefficient and last

resort answer. Here again, I think that a general deeper societal recognition and acceptance of how all 'negative' behaviour has its roots in insecurity would help to throw the most useful light on this. Without it we are left with just a vengeful morality that simply entrenches insecurity, alienation and blame.

Trying to help those who don't want help because they do not believe they need it, yet are reliant on welfare, is surely some of the most demanding but most important work we can do as a society (the denial is because accepting help would be to accept the need for change in a situation where there are already unbearable feelings of inadequacy). This is where the most support, creativity and determination is needed from government. After all, every life that turns around, profoundly changes the whole world. It is rarely too late for change, and never too late for hope. In the end though there is no choice but to leave those who determinedly 'choose' negativity at some level to "stew in their own juice", whether that is in jail or in substance abuse. Again it is impossible for there not to be 'free will'.

Unfortunately there are still those who are stuck in "acting out" the consequences of insecurity by abusing others, but stay within the law. Dictatorships, bullying and harsh hierarchical structures are still rife in our society, whether in families, communities, institutions, businesses or government (it is certainly so in our schools). So the only way to affect change is again, through raising the awareness and understanding of insecurity and its consequences, bringing it as fully as possible into our social consciousness. This will highlight the negative and unacceptable aspects of these situations, making them increasingly socially unacceptable, just as has been happening with feminism and sexuality over the decades. It would also support the ongoing enquiry into how to do things differently.

The reducing crime figures suggest that the underclass of the alienated, of addicts and criminals is steadily getting smaller, but that does not mean we should just ignore and isolate them. The criminal justice system recognises this, but not nearly enough, and could surely benefit from greater resources and vision. Surely incarceration represents a golden opportunity to turn lives around and it is being largely missed.

We also have an obligation to be as creative as possible about finding ways to help deprived communities transform into supportive and creative places. Again through empowering them, rather than infantilising and de-powering. Helping to transform these communities by deeply challenging the negativity, cynicism, victim-ness and crime that so often comes with ingrained poverty. We need to find new ways of fostering creativity and self-repair through all sorts of community building projects and invitations to take back self-responsibility. My sense is that through providing funding for the initial skills and inspiration, community building projects around improving housing, the environment, allotments, sport, arts / music projects, etc., big differences can be made. There has to be much wonderful potential for turning alienation and cynicism into creativity, through the taking of some power and control back into lives that feel hopeless. This is very tough work, but I am sure that there are heroes doing it all over the place right now, whom need more support, encouragement and the support to train others.

Money isn't everything ... it does not make you happy. It is often meaning and community that makes us happy. This is the shift in perspective that this article is arguing for, shifting the focus from materialism and blame onto enabling and facilitating the conditions for personal, communal and societal development through facing and healing insecurity. All based on what, for me, is the firm knowledge of the creativity and goodness of human beings.

Flatter Hierarchies

There are many movements within businesses and organisations that are modelling and embracing this new approach of empowering people rather than infantilising them. These new structures have flatter hierarchies, they are open and supportive and give little space for insecurity to hide. They are about deepening democracy and putting the emphasis on developing people within organisation so all parties have a chance of getting their needs met, enabling people to feel empowered and engaged.

Strong hierarchies with fierce boundaries create fear and insecurity which is the enemy of openness, creativeness, communication, fun and compassion. Top down oriented institutions exert control through fear and bureaucracy which increases insecurity. Examples of how alternative approaches can work come from Ricardo Semler, The Integral approach, Gestalt and many other “Organisational Change” programmes, the Co-operative movement, community empowerment movements (e.g. Frome Town Council), groups like Relational Change, the Life Focus Community movement, many “Green” and alternative living experiments, organisations like the Transitions movement, etc., etc.

The current “happiness” project being led by Lord Layard (supported by the Dali Lama) is wonderful, but surely naïve because it does not promote the understanding of what it is that gets in the way of our “happiness”. Again, we repair our insecurity through understanding and going through the middle of it, making it our friend, rather than ignoring, avoiding or bypassing it. We then become less defended, can engage more fully in life and be, ‘happier’.

A knowledge of, and trust in, people’s underlying goodness

I hope, that with understanding how insecurity is at the heart of our difficulties and that repair and growth are possible, we can increasingly trust people’s creativity and innate wisdom. An overriding theme for the government then surely has to be “power to the people”, devolving power wherever it is possible. It is something that is often promised, but never seems to be delivered. We need to deepen our democracy by making it much more “bottom-up” rather than “top-down”. It could enable communities and individuals to grow and take more power over their lives, to take more responsibility, (see example of Frome Town Council Guardian 22/5/15). Obviously governments cannot create communities, only people can do that, but there must be structural and financial aspects that used creatively would work in supporting the development of meaningful communities. Steps that go against the forces of capitalism that cause fragmentation and alienation. Having a basic premise of trusting people, rather than always trying to control them, creates a different environment and reducing rules and bureaucracy to a minimum has to be liberating for all concerned.

The trend for the ‘legalisation’ of all boundaries in institutions is horrific, the incessant defensiveness against being sued and the insidious influence of insurance companies means that rules have to be spelt out and bureaucratically monitored, it sucks the lifeblood out of so many jobs. We desperately need to find ways of getting back to using common sense and personal oversight and responsibility in our institutions. Again, it is about supporting people’s creativity and goodness by putting the need for openness, participation, democratic control and development at the heart of as many jobs as possible. I suspect that laws need to be changed to help this process, making it harder for people to be sued? We need to reduce our blame culture, increasing personal responsibility, possibly using “restorative justice” techniques rather than legal sanctions when things go wrong.

Many of our institutions suffer enormously from too much hierarchy and defensive bureaucracy. The NHS, Education, Police & Prison Service and Armed Forces are all examples which are long overdue for a profound overhaul in this direction, their hierarchical structures are hugely out of date! The one I know most about is Education which is so clearly screaming out for change. Schools run as dictatorships is archaic and what does that teach our children? Schools desperately need to be

democratised and become examples of co-operative, appreciative, creative communities that foster self-responsibility. As above the Prison Service desperately need reform and in the Armed Forces the generations of brutality and vicious hierarchy also needs to change to meets the needs of the modern world, and the needs of all involved. We need people who understand human nature and are able to take responsibility for their actions, not robotic killing machines who later become alcoholics and or PTSD sufferers. The potential for humanising the armed forces is enormous and exciting and would, I believe, lead to an even more 'professional' service. They represent one of the last bastions of the belief in the necessity for hierarchical power and control.

Equality and Capitalism

Robert Peston (BBC "Inequality is bad for growth" 21/05/15) pointed to the recent research about how greater equality means faster growth because people are more motivated, creative and settled enough to engage in long term planning and investment. The extremes of inequality stunt these processes creating more insecurity for both the poor and wealthy. So deep inequality is undesirable on many levels. But, he goes on to argue there are also policies which promote equality which diminish growth and creativity because they rely on too much bureaucracy, as for example in France.

So the task is to encourage and facilitate equality without diminishing personal freedom, creativity and self-responsibility. It is a very hard circle to square because of our dual nature, but (as above) by working to lessen the negative forces arising from insecurity the situation can slowly transform.

For greater equality we surely need to raise the minimum wage, with six out a total of thirty million (20%) people in work with wages below the living wage we obviously have a huge problem in this country. It seems that this time of very low inflation represents a unique opportunity to raise the minimum wage much more than the government currently plans. The problem is that it would have a huge effect on the deficit as so many of these people work, directly or indirectly for the state and there would inevitably be all those differentials in pay to be accommodated as well. The figures here are huge and how much of such an increase in pay would simply be eroded into higher inflation I have no idea. It is an example of how difficult it is to change anything radically, the laws of unintended consequences are very powerful.

This is why I think that so much of the positive change we can make has to come down the 'how' rather than the 'what'. This is about changing how organisations, businesses and institutions, function and behave rather than 'what' they do. We need those involved in delivering state services to be able to hold both support and challenge positions simultaneously, both the awareness of need, and wish to support, together with the knowledge of the value of boundaries and the need for people to grow up. As above it is very hard holding both in mind, but there needs to be the recognition both are essential. Compassion with boundaries. Boundaries with compassion.

The structures we put in place to support people, risk entrenching their victimhood and de-powering them. They also risk being bureaucratically stifling. The structures we put in place to limit support in order to force self-responsibility, risk leaving those in real need of support excluded from it. So we need to find ways that enable the structures that deliver state support to function with both firm boundaries and compassion and with a new creativity. This can only be done by supporting them to be more human, giving the people who run them more freedom and power to take responsibility for themselves and their decisions whilst helping all involved to understanding this core issue of insecurity and its ramifications.

Obviously boundaries and oversight are necessary, but they need to be as far as possible handled with compassion and acceptance that we are all struggling in our way with trying to heal and find a way through the curse of our insecurity. Whilst it may seem that there are many people committed to

profoundly selfish, immature and even criminal paths in their lives, we have to remember that anyone's journey of growing up and take responsibility for themselves, is convoluted and often involves destructive behaviour. Patience is important, as is not giving up on anyone, because there is nearly always hope. Strong boundaries encourage self-responsibility through helping people to face in themselves what they have been avoiding. Flabby and inconsistent ones just encourage attempts to manipulate, which maintains dependency and causes confusion. Harsh ones destroy creativity.

We also need strengthened boundaries to confront more fully the insecurity (selfishness and manipulative greed) of those at the other end of the wealth stick, whether this is in finance, business or property. The way that our tax system is so full of holes, created by vested interests, through which the wealthy evade huge amounts of tax surely needs sorting out.

An important aspect of moving towards greater equality has to be around the idea of "deep democracy", that slow, painful, awkward at times, patient democracy that listens, allows and digests *all* the influences in any situation. If we learn to trust ourselves and the whole of the influences in any situation, we can trust that the extraordinary inherent wisdom that people have will find its expression. Within groups this can be a powerful and creative process. This is part of "bottom-up democracy" that comes from the devolution of power. The need to devolved power is there across many of our institutions (as above) and perhaps especially to local authorities where the possibilities for devolution are exiting. Community and caring for those within it, surely go hand in hand.

As a general aim, we desperately need to keep rules to a minimum, the accumulation and the administering of them inevitably leads to a bureaucratic deadening and de-humanising of all involved. Anarchy can be seen as noble ideal, if totally impractical and idealistic. But the point is that it surely the direction of travel, where every individual, free of insecurity, simply healthily self-regulates and naturally works for the good of themselves and the community. As we evolve and societies mature, the controls needed to contain all the consequences of trauma and insecurity, become more and more obsolete and irrelevant. Proof of this "direction" can be seen in the UK's is steadily diminishing crime rates.

The Left dream of a post-capitalist world, and whilst I can see the attraction I can also see clearly how this requires a huge transformation in the consciousness of society to work. It seems to me we are travelling in something of this direction albeit very slowly. I don't see post-capitalism as not having free markets, I see it more about the movement away from money as the God we are enslaved to. The one thing that could speed up this process is through the much wider acceptance and understanding of how so many of our problems exist because we are defensively configured around deep insecurity.

Our philosophy - what we are aiming at

'How' is at the heart of the change required. The 'what' gets determined to a large extent by practicalities in the end, but the 'how' reflects the intention and aim. If the aim of healing insecurity and consciousness raising is clear, then it becomes obvious that we need to trust more in the basic goodness and creativity of human nature, we need to give responsibility and accept that errors will be made (we only learn through making mistakes after all). This is instead of trying to fix every problem with bureaucratic controls (government's knee-jerk reaction of needing to be seen as 'doing something') due to being obsessed with 'blame', giving it and avoiding it. We need to support people to learn, to trust our innate wisdom, common sense, creativity and ability to grow, develop and change.

We are always making meaning, interpreting everything from our underlying philosophy, whether we are aware of it or not and this reflects our level of consciousness. As we expand our consciousness,

i.e. become freer from insecurity, we are able to have a more encompassing, more inclusive and more complex philosophy. It is insecurity that limits us. As Wilber has pointed out (and science knows well) the “truth” of any philosophy is about how encompassing it is.

This is why the *aim* of policy is surely important. The Right see paying our way and facilitating economic growth as the ‘holy grail’, for the Left it is a fairer more equal society. Both are important but what seems clear to me is that both would emerge naturally from a society that repairs and heals its insecurity. Then there is both more practicality and humanity (and humility!). Rather than the Right’s moral harshness, there would be greater sensitivity to suffering. Rather than the Left’s projective wishful thinking and bureaucratic tendencies, there would be more ‘bottom-up’ change. So we need to expand our cultural awareness and shift government policy onto being focused as clearly as possible on the developmental potential of healing of insecurity and the meaning this brings to human life. By having this aim, by turning this focus onto our personal, family, community and institutional structures we can highlight what needs to change and heal our society. We can move away from our obsession with wealth. Imagine a world where meaning and community become more widely accepted as our real satisfaction.

The wealthy and powerful with their arrogance and superiority so often interpret their profound luck and privileged as ‘entitlement. They need to realise that the poor are ‘their’ family, and that to disown them is to disown parts of themselves. If the approach advocated here was seen to work then perhaps the rich would be happier about paying higher taxes because they could see that their money was being used to improve our society, contributing to a creative and integrative process, rather than it being poured down a “scroungers” drain.

Last thoughts

Surely the inevitably imperfect way forward has to be based on practicalities and compromise rather than over identified projective dogmatism. Markets are the harsh ‘existential’ reality of life that cannot be ignored (even the Chinese are facing this out now). Free markets provide as ‘objective’ a measure as is practical, (i.e. the leased open to disastrous political manipulation) and therefore the best way of allocating resources.

But we also know that enfeathered markets are unstable and can be truly destructive so we have to control them. The question then is around the degree of control and extent of the problems resulting from the “law of unintended consequences”. This is about competing views within the, as yet unscientific art of economics. I suspect though that when the Left and Right concentrate on finding the best practical way forward they end up getting pretty close to each other. Much of the noise of difference is projection, dogmatism and party political power games.

But all this is secondary to the main task of healing people, families, communities and our society generally of the curse of insecurity. This needs a new cultural understanding of what it is to be a human being and the developmental journey we are all constantly invited to participate in. With this, the emphasis on wealth as a measure of wellbeing diminishes and meaning and community can be understood as the core means to our happiness and satisfaction. Our attention can move onto healing the poverty in our souls that insecurity creates, instead of our compensatory obsession with money.

Since our Civil War the UK has established a long and venerable tradition of slow and consensus driven change, and I do think that developmental change does have to be slow. The problem is that as a planet facing the risk of exponential climate change, we are running out of time. Hopefully the exponential interconnectedness of the digital age and accelerating technology can turbo charge our change process in time. Whilst healing insecurity takes time, it also requires the facing of the disasters of not changing and this does not take time, it takes something to do with waking up and choice. So

maybe the risks in our current predicament can support the needed speeding up of development. The addict facing death, choosing life.

Writing this has been a journey of seeing how my political standpoint came to a large extent from my own insecure self-sufficiency. I now accept much more that the other is me and my untenable previous position of focusing on my own development. Before my sense of politics was that it was too full of projections and double ended sticks to make any sense of. I feared the effort needed to think through it all, as well as the risk of being “called to action” that clarity might bring. I hope you have found this exploration interesting. If you any thoughts or comments I would love to hear them. Feedback fuels growth and connection.

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