BEYOND CONFLICT

FROM SELF-HELP AND PSYCHOTHERAPY TO PEACEMAKING

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As in all my work, my wife Ginger Ross-Breggin is the single most important and beneficial influence. She continues to inspire me to write in a more easily understandable manner and adds immeasurably to my awareness of the human condition. While I held my beliefs about love long before I met her, I genuinely doubt if I could have sustained them much longer without her. Love is a powerful idea; but so many forces in life, and too many within ourselves, act to discourage it. This book is a hymn to our "shared values," Ginger's concept that enriches the final chapter.

I am deeply grateful to my friends Leonard Roy Frank and Pam Clay, both of whom read the manuscript with great care and made many useful suggestions and necessary corrections. My neighbor, David Whitford, also carefully read the manuscript and made significant contributions.

Richard Rubenstein, my colleague at George Mason University in the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, offered important insights and much-needed encouragement as well. Without his original invitation to join the Institute, it's possible that I would not have been inspired to write this book. Another George Mason colleague, Frank Blechman, also made useful criticisms. In general, I want to thank all the members of the Institute and, in particular, Mary Lynn Boland, for making it all run smoothly.

Sharon Presley was especially helpful in directing me toward recent research in social psychology. Keith Hoeller also went through the book from beginning to end and found many ideas that needed clarification and elaboration. Emilio Viano and Robert Morgan not only helped with the manuscript, they provided lengthy, encouraging evaluations that helped inspire the finishing touches. In addition, I received a combination of moral support and/or criticism from David Cohen, David K. Hart, Larry Tirnauer, Craig Blaner, Yvette Ogle, Joann Robertson, Gerald Dubin, and Jean Ross.

Claudia Delgado has helped with innumerable office tasks surrounding the manuscript and Marilyn Cramer has come through as a consultant every time I've created a computer disaster for myself.

My agent for my recent books is Richard Curtis. He and his staff have done everything an author could hope for.

As I describe in the Preface, this book was completed only a few months after *Toxic Psychiatry*. St. Martin's is the publisher of both books, and I have been enormously pleased with the company and *all* its staff members. In the acknowledgments to *Toxic Psychiatry* I have already thanked senior editor Jared Kieling for his work on that book, which became an important step toward the publication of this one. Thanks again, Jared. Now I also want to thank his assistant, Ensley Eikenberg.

Simon Winder is the St. Martin's senior editor for *Beyond Conflict*, and it would be hard to imagine a more enthusiastic and appreciative supporter. Finally, authors do not usually get to thank their publicists in print because they don't know whether they want to thank them until several months after publication. Well, I have reason to thank the entire promotions office at St. Martin's, and especially Kate Kahn, for their efforts on behalf of *Toxic Psychiatry*.

For anyone who wishes to learn more about the burgeoning field of conflict analysis and resolution, many resources can be found at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (ICAR), George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia 22030-4444. ICAR offers masters degrees and doctorates in conflict analysis and resolution. It also houses two important national organizations in the field—COPRED (Consortium on Peace Research, Education and Development) and NCPCR (National Conference on Peacemaking and Conflict Resolution).

For people who wish to learn more about psychiatric reform, *Toxic Psychiatry* provides an appendix on resources.

I would also like to acknowledge Kenneth Boulding (1970, 1978) who has suggested a somewhat similar three dynamic analysis limited to the societal level, but with rather marked differences that do not so readily lend it to personal growth and conflict resolution theory. Boulding used the term dynamics or social organizers in his theory of human relationships and specifically described them as the threat system, the exchange system, and the integrative system. His theory helped to clarify the development of my own, but there are important differences. As one example, Boulding sees the integrative or love system as a form of exchange, while I envision it as unconditional love or gifting. This leads to both a different analysis and a different social ideal. Boulding does not relate the concept of dynamics or social organizers to basic human needs and does not

apply his theory to self-development or interpersonal conflict resolution.

In addition, a variety of humanistic psychologists and psychiatrists have contributed to my thinking, as well as to basic needs theory in general. They include Erich Fromm (1956, 1976), Erik Erikson (1963), Gordon Allport (1955), Karen Horney (1945, 1950), Alfred Adler (1969), Ansbacher and Ansbacher (1956), and Abraham Maslow (1971).

PREFACE: FROM *TOXIC PSYCHIATRY* TO *BEYOND CONFLICT*

Surprisingly, the two books that most fully present the twin aspects of my work have been published within less than a year of each other. First came *Toxic Psychiatry: Why Therapy, Empathy and Love Must Replace the Drugs, Electroshock and Biochemical Theories of the New Psychiatry* (1991), and now this book, *Beyond Conflict: From Self-Help and Psychotherapy to Peacemaking.*

While *Toxic Psychiatry* does describe caring, human service alternatives to conventional psychiatry, it is mainly a sweeping criticism of modern biologically oriented psychiatry. It exposes the politics of psychiatry and the damaging effects of drugs and electroshock. *Beyond Conflict* has a more positive thrust. It presents my approach to life as a practicing psychiatrist and psychotherapist, and a professor of conflict analysis and resolution. It is, in the words of one of my friends, a much more "uplifting" book.

Yet the themes of my life and work, as reflected in the separate books, are really inseparable. *Toxic Psychiatry* is an aggressive attack on the destructive principles, fraudulent claims, and dangerous technologies of modern psychiatry; but the spiritual energy behind it derives from the principles of liberty and love—my belief in human rights, the inviolability of every single human being, and the healing power of human caring. *Beyond Conflict* more fully articulates that spiritual energy. It proposes that love must become the guiding principle of human relationships in general, as well as the ultimate solution to the most severe personal, societal, and political conflicts.

The aim of both books has been to present scientific and philosophical ideas in a form available to any interested reader. They reflect my commitment to more holistic writing, accessible to any thoughtful person, and based on equal parts of thinking and feeling, scholarship and real-life experience. People need books that offer better principles through which to guide their lives. Toward that end, writing should be comprehensive *and* comprehensible. I have tried to meet that standard.

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Part I

Understanding the Three Dynamics: Love, Liberty, and Coercion

CHAPTER 1

From Self-Help and Psychotherapy to Peacemaking

Human values must be universal. In the past, narrow values have led to tragedy. As the twentieth century draws to a close, our values must be broad and deep. The question of the kind of life human beings ought to lead cannot be solved within the framework of accepted social commonplaces and mere common sense. This is true because man himself is not limited to a single society in a single country but is part of a chain connecting humanity, the natural phenomena of the whole earth, and the cosmos.

Daisaku Ikeda,* Choose Life *(1976)

We are the aware generation. Modern psychology and modern communications have enabled us to see conflict everywhere: within ourselves, between ourselves and others, on the world scene, and with nature. But we have not become so successful at seeing solutions—at finding ways of easing and resolving conflict within ourselves and our society.

In every aspect of life—from self-help and psychotherapy to peacemaking—we need better principles for resolving conflict and promoting harmony within ourselves and others. We need approaches that make personal *and* political sense, that connect us in a rational and caring manner to ourselves as individuals and to the world around us, including other people and nature. We need a viewpoint that helps us understand and heal the pain of human conflict.

A good set of healing principles should be useful in every aspect of living. Inner peace and world peace are, at root, one and the same. Complexity of course increases as we move from issues of personal growth to those of world community; but the principles, I believe, remain basically the same. This means we can deepen and fine-tune our understanding of life through self-examination and through studying society. We can apply one basic approach to self-help and to helping others, to resolving personal conflict and to ending social strife. This book attempts to provide such a holistic approach.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BASIC NEEDS

If we can understand basic human needs and how they become frustrated or satisfied, we will have made a critical step toward finding better ways of resolving all kinds of conflicts. The most severe conflicts often have to do with psychological and social needs, rather than physical or material ones. They can be resolved through improving human relations and, especially, through the collaborative satisfaction of each other's basic needs.

Human needs can be divided into three categories: love, liberty, and coercion. *Love* includes the whole range of motivation related to human bonding, from the infant's desire for holding to the adult's dependence on close friends, family, and community. *Liberty* includes needs associated with autonomy, independence, self-determination and freedom, such as the infant's first efforts to walk and the adult's later efforts to take charge of his or her own life. *Coercion* encompasses the need to use force, violence, and intimidation. It rears up in a small child's frustrated rage, in a man or woman's attempts to control a spouse, or in a politician's call to arms. Whether coercion and even violence are *basic* needs or purely learned responses remain controversial.

Human needs do not exist in a social vacuum. They develop and find expression through human relationships. A baby's smile at the sight of its mother is inseparable from the presence of a mother, and both mother and child interact to increase each other's tendency to smile. The desire for romantic love requires feeling passion toward another person, and it cannot fully mature without reciprocity. The development of feelings of esteem in a child depends upon those who encourage or undermine it, and even the most autonomous adults continue to respond to how others feel about them.

From infancy on, individual human needs cannot be teased out from the fabric of social relationships that satisfy or frustrate them. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of an infant becoming a normal human in the absence of nurturing relationships. Babies don't learn to smile frequently without reciprocal responses from adults, and abandoned or neglected infants cannot by themselves grow into effectively functioning adults (see chapter 2).

THE PSYCHOSOCIAL NATURE OF BASIC NEEDS

Biological needs, such as sex or hunger, do not by themselves produce conflict. Conflict results from unfulfilled psychosocial needs, such as the desire for self-esteem, autonomy, or love. Both human beings and chimpanzees have needs for touching, nurturing, and companionship. Both humans and chimps compete for love in their communities and families, creating conflict among themselves, and both use loving gestures and overtures as a method of conflict resolution (see chapter 2).

Biological needs, such as sex, become sources of conflict through the psychosocial meanings or values attached to them. The rapist is no more out for "sexual gratification" by itself than is the lover. The one seeks power or revenge, the other tenderness or intimacy. The needs for power and for intimacy are the motivating forces, not physical sex.

Similarly, in typical marital disputes in my therapy practice, the man desires sex in order to feel respected or loved while the woman desires respect and love before she wants sex. Often sex becomes little more than the focal point for conflict over autonomy and control.

Some men and women suppress their sexual desires out of religious conviction, and still others seek sexual release without help from other people. In every case, the biological need for sexual pleasure or release is much less important than the psychosocial needs surrounding it, such as autonomy, self-esteem, or love.

The same is true of hunger or thirst. People are motivated by these instinctual drives to seek food or water, but are not necessarily driven into conflict with other people, even when they are starving to death or dying of thirst. For example, the social prohibition against killing people for food is rarely broken even under extreme circumstances. But when people associate hunger with injustice or other psychosocial or community issues, then it becomes a major source of personal and political conflict.

PSYCHOSOCIAL DYNAMICS

The word "dynamic" connotes energy, force, change, and progress. It suggests the capacity of human beings to overcome at

least some of their biological constraints and cultural experiences to achieve a higher level of functioning based on rational values and loving principles.

Dynamic is most familiar through the term psychodynamic, a loosely defined concept indicating the internal forces and processes of the mind. Dynamic in this book refers to *psychosocial* experiences—interactions between an individual's needs and the social relationships that satisfy them. The love dynamic, for example, encompasses both the person's need for love and the kinds of relationships that stimulate and satisfy it. The liberty dynamic includes the individual's desire for autonomy and independence and how that is expressed or frustrated through relationships.

THE THREE DYNAMICS

The three psychosocial dynamics correspond to the three basic needs: love, liberty, and coercion. Each of the dynamics—love, liberty, and coercion—produces a very different kind of psychological and social experience. The feelings, thoughts, and actions that occur along each dynamic are different, and the outcomes for everyone involved are different as well. From each dynamic, we can identify a consistent set of unique principles to guide our actions and our lives.

Once we learn to identify each dynamic, we can more quickly and thoroughly grasp the implications of what is taking place within and among the participants. We can influence the quality and the result of a relationship or conflict depending on which approach we take toward others, and which approach we encourage them to take toward us. We can decide which principles to implement and to live by.

If a father, for example, has a conflict with a son, he has three basic options. He can force a solution on his child (coercion), he can create an environment in which his son has as much choice as possible (liberty), or he can solve the problem in a loving manner aimed at satisfying his son's basic needs (love). Or the father may try a mixture of all three approaches.

Similarly, if a nation is planning strategy for handling an international conflict, it again has three basic options—love, liberty, or coercion—and again, the outcome will be greatly affected by its

choices. The nation can threaten war (coercion), seek to negotiate through diplomatic channels (liberty), or offer to collaborate with the adversary toward the mutual satisfaction of each side's basic needs (love).

People prosper psychologically and socially when they reject coercion and promote liberty and especially love in their lives. *People can improve their personal well-being and promote conflict resolution by identifying the three dynamics and by taking actions that limit coercion and promote liberty and love. This is true in personal as well as political activities.*

UNDERSTANDING THE THREE DYNAMICS

The following is a brief summary of the essential principles of each of the three dynamics:

LOVE (DYNAMIC I):

1. Nurturing, sharing, and giving gifts
2. Cooperative relationships
3. The generation of feelings of empathy, caring, and love
4. The abhorrence and rejection of force

LIBERTY (DYNAMIC II):

1. Bargaining, negotiating, or making voluntary exchanges
2. Competitive relationships
3. The generation of feelings of respect or esteem
4. Force limited to self-defense

COERCION (DYNAMIC III):

1. Forcing, threatening, bullying, and manipulating
2. Involuntary or oppressive relationships
3. The generation of negative feelings, such as hate, guilt, shame, anxiety, numbing, and chronic anger (These feelings will be identified as expressions of psychological helplessness.)
4. The arbitrary use of force

Attitudes toward force can be critical in identifying each dynamic and in understanding their outcomes. In love, force is abhorred. We do not wish to injure our loved ones even in self-defense. In liberty, we exercise the right to use force in self-defense, but we never initiate force. In coercion, we initiate force to satisfy our needs.

Love creates bonding on a personal and societal level. It is fulfilled through both caring personal relationships and through community. It encourages mutuality, sharing, and the equal worth of all people. Liberty encourages or produces independence in personal relationships and the free market in society. It encourages competition and ranking people according to a hierarchy of achievement or success. Coercion suppresses and injures people in authoritarian relationships and in the extreme produces totalitarianism in society. It fosters power and control on the part of the perpetrator and submission and helplessness on the part of the victim.

Notice that each dynamic has a both a personal and a political parallel:

Love generates personal bonding and human community.

Liberty generates personal autonomy and the free market.

Coercion generates personal oppression and totalitarianism.

Unhappily, coercion is too easily resorted to, especially in the handling of our most difficult personal and political problems. Too much of life is made up of dominators and dominated. Meanwhile, the competition generated by liberty too easily deteriorates into winners overpowering losers. Love is required to reject coercion and to soften the competition of liberty. But love itself can become as elusive as a mirage in a desert, a distant vision maintained only by our sheer thirst for it. We frequently seem unable to love our immediate family and friends, let alone other members of our society, foreigners, nature, and the earth.

The three-dynamic approach encompasses all the ways human beings try to resolve their conflicts. In a broader sense, it also encompasses the whole range of human relationships. Thus it provides guidelines not only for resolving conflict but for personal growth and human progress in general.

Progress, however, is no longer a concept that can be glibly used. It cannot uncritically be identified with industrial or technological development, with an increasing gross national product, or a higher material standard of living. In our personal lives and within society, progress must take into account the *quality* of life, including the quality of our inner life, our relationships with other human beings, nature, and the earth itself. Human beings must learn to value nature and the earth as they would ideally value each other—with unconditional love.

NEEDS AND VALUES

All individuals probably begin with somewhat similar "human nature" or biological capacities to feel. How these capacities are inhibited or channeled into psychosocial needs will depend upon individual personality, varying social roles and culture.

When needs are assigned negative or positive worth, we call them *values*. Love begins as a biologically based potential for having feelings toward other people, becomes expressed as a psychosocial need, and then, with the aid of human consciousness, it is recognized as a positive or negative value.

INSTITUTIONS AND IDEOLOGIES

Needs become values, and then values become further elaborated into philosophies, religions, and ideologies; and these in turn become embedded in social institutions, such as the family, schools, churches, or governments. Love, for example, is transformed by culture into love of school, country, or God. It may even become corrupted by coercion in religious or patriotic wars.

Even among chimpanzees, love is embodied in an institution, the chimpanzee family consisting of the mother and her offspring, and their extended relationships within the group. Like human children, young chimps learn to love, or fail to do so, depending upon their upbringing. An elderly, failing mother chimp may produce an offspring who is "spoiled," lacking in both self-control and a sense of being loved. Similarly, both humans and chimps learn, or fail to learn, loving conflict resolution through their familial and