On Advancing Truth and Morality in Conflict Resolution

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Abstract

Excerpt

The editors of this special issue have articulated many dilemmas facing workers in the fields of conflict analysis and resolution. One way they characterize the difficulties, described by Arthur Koestler , is balancing between spiritually-directed, but socially ineffective activism like that of a Yogi or acting like a Commissar disregarding the means used in order to achieve desirable socioeconomic transformations. This matter is often argued . Some people assert that a wellmeaning person's actions often result in undesired effects, while the person ready to act brutally provides widespread benefits. On the other hand, others argue that acting harshly in order to produce good results is doomed to fail and have ill effects.

Keywords: *conflict resolution, morality, problem-solving conflict resolution, truth*

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CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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The editors of this special issue have articulated many dilemmas facing workers in the fields of conflict analysis and resolution. One way they characterize the difficulties, described by Arthur Koestler , is balancing between spiritually-directed, but socially ineffective activism like that of a Yogi or acting like a Commissar disregarding the means used in order to achieve desirable socioeconomic transformations. This matter is often argued . Some people assert that a well-meaning person's actions often result in undesired effects, while the person ready to act brutally provides widespread benefits. On the other hand, others argue that acting harshly in order to produce good results is doomed to fail and have ill effects.

This argument has many implications for the conflict resolution field. Intermediaries and protagonists face many questions in waging and resolving conflicts in pursuit of justice, peace, and freedom, while trying to avoid deaths, injuries, and other costs. When (if ever) is it appropriate for an intermediary to drop bombs on people in a country whose government is killing and driving an ethnic minority from the country in order to impose a settlement protecting the rights of the minority? When (if ever) is it appropriate for a mediator to facilitate a conflict settlement between adversaries who differ vastly in strength and resources? The answers vary with the values and beliefs held by those trying to provide answers.

I contribute to this discussion by locating it within a broader context, by considering the nature and the relations between truth and morality. Since both truth and morality are generally viewed as virtues, we might expect that pursuing each would help attain the other. Indeed, for some people, in certain situations, that is the case; but often it is not. The problems are indicated by the just-noted argument. Often the truth reveals a harsh reality and morality sometimes is considered in terms of good intentions; and that combination can result in unfortunate consequences. In this paper, I examine the possible contradictions between seeking truth and striving to act morally, in relationship to conflict resolution, in order to find ways to help reconcile the contradictions.

For those of us trained in sociology and other social sciences, in the decade after World War II, striving to be objective and to be value-free were important goals. At the same time, many of us entered the social sciences in order to improve the human condition, and we shared an understanding of what conditions needed improvement, such as ending racism and averting the threat of nuclear destruction. Given our understanding about the nature of truth and how to discover it and given our understanding of morality and how to advance it, we necessarily confronted many dilemmas. As graduate students we argued these matters from many points of view, and each person lived with a measure of discomfort trying to manage the dilemmas. The tension between trying to find truth and to act morally still has not been resolved, and worse,

many people now seem little concerned. Some people may be unconcerned because they doubt the possibility of achieving one or both goals, or think the two are so distinctive that they do not affect each other, or believe they are so ambiguous that they readily can be made compatible. However, I think the issue of reconciling the pursuit of both goals remains important and deserves attention, particularly as it relates to conflict resolution. Furthermore, recent intellectual thought and policy experiences can improve our understanding of truth and morality in conflict resolution and help reconcile some aspects of their contradictions.

Basic Concepts

This discussion of truth, morality, and conflict resolution considers each concept broadly. Thus, the truth may be harsh, for example, that power differentials are great and the strong can impose their will; but it also can be benign, for example, that people share identities and sympathize with each other. Morality includes seeking to advance social justice, as emphasized here; but it also includes fostering mercy and forgiveness, sustaining stability and order, and avoiding cruelty. Conflict resolution is also considered broadly, as discussed in the introductory essay by Richard E. Rubenstein and Frank Blechman.

Traditional Views

Truth, traditionally considered, is the accurate depiction of reality; it is defined as the correct understanding of what has happened in the past and what is happening now. This assumes there is a reality that exists independently of the observers and is knowable by them. The whole truth may not be known, but knowledge is cumulative and seekers can help move toward an increasingly accurate view of truth.

Traditionally, searching for truth requires reliance on reproducible methods for gathering and analyzing information. The search must avoid bias and put aside personal preferences. Neither personal values nor expectations about the consequences of knowing the truth are to affect the search for it. Even if all bias and subjective expectations cannot be avoided, as much care as possible should be taken to minimize distortions of the objective truth.

Morality, on the other hand, is traditionally based on value preferences, and value preferences cannot be derived from beliefs about reality. Morality is articulated in the form of should statements, not factual statements . It is given authority by shared understandings for example about God or human nature. For many social scientists, this has meant that morality, unlike truth, is a matter of faith and conviction that is socially constructed. It follows that morality varies with the standards of each culture and can not be judged by absolute standards.

Accepting the differences between the domain of values and morality and the domain of facts and of truth does not mean people live in only one domain. People necessarily live and act in both. Seeking to advance either truth or morality with little regard to the other, moreover, can hamper advancing the other. The dangers of such single-mindedness can be briefly noted. In following moral imperatives, information may be distorted sometimes unintentionally when not

guarding against bias due to expectations based on preferences. Distortion also may be intentional, when information is selectively gathered and reported to advance the course of action deemed morally correct.

Similarly, in pursuing truth with little regard to moral concerns, the rights of humans may be sacrificed, as when they are treated as objects and subjected to experimentation without consent. Furthermore, advances in knowledge may provide instruments of coercion and control, and those with the power to apply them will do so, increasing their exploitation of others.

New Developments and Changing Concepts

The traditional conceptions of truth and morality have been subjected to severe criticisms. The newer views warrant consideration here, because they contribute to easing some of the tensions between advancing truth and morality jointly. The existence of a reality separable from the observation of it, an assumption in traditional conceptions of truth, is now widely questioned. What we know must derive from observation and that must be filtered through our senses, however instruments augment them . It follows that reality can be known only under specific conditions of observation. Reality therefore varies under different conditions and through diversely situated perspectives. This does not mean that we can construct reality any way we like; matters vary in the strength of their predispositions to be perceived one way rather than another. Some matters are widely recognized similarly, consistent with many kinds of observations.

The interpretation of events necessarily depends on the frame of analysis that is used. For example, the consequences of using a particular means of struggle depend greatly on the parameters of time and of social space being considered. The consequences can be considered in terms of immediate effects within days or of long-lasting or delayed effects over the course of decades. The consequences may be considered as limited only to those who were directly engaged in the struggle or to include those who are bystanders, but are also impacted.

Recent social experience and thought have also influenced our current understanding of morality. One development has been the growing sense that certain kinds of conduct are almost universally deplored. Even those persons who perpetrate the condemned acts often hide or deny that they or members of their group committed such acts, or they construct them as other kinds of acts; but sometimes they come to acknowledge that their group was wrong or that they themselves did wrong. For example, this can be seen in the statements and actions regarding Apartheid made by white South Africans in the 1990s. The extension of shared norms may be seen in the growing acceptance of the existence of universal human rights and the condemnation of genocidal acts . The study of normative regimes in international affairs also reveals the existence of moral standards that influence the conduct of governments sharing those standards .

The attention to shared normative standards provides a broad basis for moral imperatives. This is exemplified by the argument for conventionalism as the basis for ethics in international relations and other domains. Ethics is based on principles that people use to justify and win acceptance from others for their actions. To be effective, the concerned parties must share the principles. Rather than promulgating any particular ethical tradition as the foundation for moral theory,

according to this view moral obligation can be and is based upon agreement to regard "certain rules as authoritative, and certain practices as legitimate; . . . whatever the parties concerned agree to regard as just or legitimate <u>is</u> just or legitimate," . The analysis in this essay is based on the conventionalist approach, not finding that there is a universally agreed upon moral code and not asserting that a particular moral code is supreme. But neither does the argument presented here assume that every conventional moral code is equally supportable.

In addition to developments in intellectual thought, new insights have emerged from the application of social policies to promote human welfare. Governmental and religious injunctions to control human conduct have existed since governments and religious institutions developed. The frequent ineffectiveness of policies to improve human conduct and the frequent unintentional and undesired impacts of such policies has also long been recognized. In recent decades, however, increased use has been made of social science knowledge to help formulate social policies, but that has not ensured that the policies have the desired effects and avoid undesired ones. Evidence demonstrates that good intentions do not guarantee good results. One response may be skepticism about trying to implement any moral imperatives, but another is to examine even more carefully the consequences of alternative policies. The concern with the consequences of policies grounds morality in earthly and practical considerations.

Work in problem-solving conflict resolution, in particular, has stimulated practitioners and analysts to reflect upon the nature of truth and of morality. Such conflict resolution compels attention to the varying interpretations of the past and the present that adversaries construct, even about the same events. Moreover, the insight of many practitioners of nonviolence and of conflict resolution is that through mutual probing all parties can gain a more complete truth . The probing takes many forms, as diverse for example, as those in the context of interactive workshops or of confrontations in a nonviolent campaign.

Conflict resolution is viewed broadly in this essay, but not so broadly as to include coercive, unilaterally imposed conflict terminations. To indicate this, I will sometimes use the term problem-solving conflict resolution; as used here this refers not only to mediation or even only to mediation and negotiation. Rather, it includes the constructive ways in which conflicts may be conducted, including nonviolent struggle that strives to change opponents into problem-solving associates . It includes policies to avert destructive struggles, and it includes transforming seemingly intractable destructive conflicts into tractable conflicts or even into a collaborative relationship between reconciled former enemies.

Experience with conflict resolution efforts requires attention to ethical issues . Certainly mediators and other kinds of intervenors face choices involving moral concerns about the propriety of intervening and how to intervene. Moreover, the partisans waging a struggle endeavor to morally justify their actions to their constituents and allies and also to their adversaries. When partisans take a conflict resolution approach, the moral issues are particularly salient. One stance taken by some persons concerned about the morality of various kinds of conflict resolution is to assume basic human needs or to declare particular basic values or moral principles that should guide conflict resolution work. James Laue and Gerald Cormick , for example, argued that conflict resolution ethics rest on "the basic premise.... that persons are inherently valuable, and to be treated as ends-in-themselves" : 34. They derive three core values

from this premise: proportional empowerment, justice, and freedom; and on the bases of those values they derive several ethical principles for intervenors. Helpful as such directives may be, they may not be accepted by the parties in a conflict, or different priority may be given to these values and principles by various partisans and intervenors.

Reflection about conflicts makes evident that no means of struggle and no settlement has unmixed good or bad qualities. Each course of action embodies a mixture of moral characteristics. For example, people may be struggling for a future with greater social justice, but in doing so reduce freedom for many and engage in killing and suffer severe losses in the present; or a settlement may end the killing, but only briefly and in a way that engenders new injustices. To insist upon the primacy of one's own value ordering and moral principles seems to contradict some aspects of the problem-solving conflict resolution perspective.

Clinical and Universal Approaches

The concepts of truth and of morality may be applied to specific events or they may be used in reference to all people or about categories of people in specified circumstances. The former usage reflects a clinical approach and the latter a generalizing approach.

Persons working in the field of conflict resolution are often concerned about a specific conflict and what to do about it. The medical model can be helpful in understanding the implications of such an emphasis. Physicians generally value their clinical skills: the ability to diagnose what is happening to a particular patient at a specific time, and in deciding what is the most effective therapy to treat that patient. In doing so, they draw on general theories of physiology, pharmacology, and many other disciplines. But it is the peculiar and unique interactions of many general processes that account for the condition of each patient. On the other hand, scientists studying a specific illness try to learn how various conditions and processes interact to explain variations in that illness. Their knowledge is generally framed in terms of probabilities. For policy makers in the public health field, such probabilities are a reasonable basis for guiding policies to prevent ill health.

Certainly both approaches are desirable. In treating a patient, much information about that person is needed. Wisdom and experience in applying general theories to the case being worked on are invaluable; good judgment is crucial . Generalizing from those experiences to the larger universe, however, can be fraught with danger. The way to acquire universal knowledge depends upon other methods.

Truth, then, may refer to what we know and understand about a particular person or conflict or to what we know about general processes of social life and social conflicts. Similarly, morality may refer to what is the right thing to do in a particular circumstance, or what is generally right in most circumstances. In this essay, I use both approaches. The reader should recognize that

observations from one point of view are not necessarily the same if taken from another vantage point.

In the practice of conflict resolution, the clinical approach is preeminent. Conflict resolvers use their moral standards and draw from their understandings of truth to prescribe actions for the adversaries and for themselves in particular struggles. Analysts of conflict resolution sometimes also indulge in prescribing policies, applying their understandings of relatively general truths and moralities, to specific cases. They may also provide general prescriptions for classes of conflicts, but most often interpret past efforts at conflict resolution in light of their general understandings of truth and morality.

Contradictions between Pursuing Truth and Morality

Even with these broad conceptions of truth and morality, pursuing one may sometimes interfere with the advancement of the other. Thus, in some ways, the pursuit of truth can result in what would be widely regarded as immoral conduct. Certainly many people deplore some of the effects of the technological innovations based upon the advancement of a truth by natural scientists, whether these are nuclear weapons, pesticides, or automobiles. Clearly most of these technological developments have diffuse effects, many of which were unforeseen and unwanted, but many of the effects have been those desired by most people. The effects are influenced by social structures and cultures, and by social policies, based to varying degrees on social knowledge. The search for truth about social matters by social scientists, however, is of special concern here.

Although the theory and methods of the social sciences have not yielded the kind of power found through the natural sciences, social science information and techniques provide resources that people can and do employ to pursue their goals. This is evident in marketing products, in seeking votes in election campaigns, in gaining support for particular social policies, and in mobilizing groups to wage a struggle or to support a peace settlement. Much of the social science information and methods are more available and more effectively used by those who are economically and politically advantaged. Consequently, the advancement of such knowledge is not neutral in practice. It often further strengthens those who are dominant in the established social system and therefore potentially thwarts efforts to bring about changes that reduce inequities therefore

Conversely, social science may, undermine the authority of dominants, but this too may seem contrary to morality. Much social life is sustained and constrained by myths of common descent and of solidarity, by confidence in the ultimate realization of justice, and by particular beliefs about human nature. The search for truth about such matters often takes the form of demystification and the revelation that they serve to maintain the existing hierarchical order. Such revelations then may weaken the existing moral order.

In the field of conflict resolution, many specific contradictions between truth and morality arise. Mediators trying to serve morality by fostering a settlement between antagonists confront various contradictions. The mediators may believe in general in the value of honesty, at least to retain credibility with adversaries, but they often practice some degree of deception in the expectation

that a settlement will thus be reached. The deception may occur by selectively reporting what one side said about the terms it might accept, or it may occur in trying to create public expectations that will pressure the negotiating partners .

Contradictions also seem to arise from the inherent structure of the relationship between the adversaries, and that affects the adversaries as well as any would-be intermediaries. For example, the asymmetry in resources available to each contending side in truth tends to shape the terms of a settlement; but often it is the less advantaged side that in fairness deserves some redress. Intermediaries then must choose to act in ways that serve one moral objective in greater measure than another: for example, whether to minimize present losses by fostering a rapid settlement or to maximize future justice by strengthening the weaker party and so prolong the struggle. The dilemma may be reduced by beliefs about the probability of actually achieving one or another goal; the perceived probability may strongly favor one selection rather than another. In a world in which people believe that coercive strength is the ultimate arbitrator of social conflicts, placating an adversary will be seen as inviting aggression or immorally accepting an unfair outcome.

The pursuit and reliance on truth may seem to contradict morality due to the complexity of social conflicts. Large-scale fights involve many parties and many issues. Whether analyzing, waging, or seeking to resolve a conflict, selections must be made giving more salience to some parties and issues and relegating others to the periphery. Again, the beliefs people hold about the likelihood of future developments affect the choices people make and what they regard as ethical. Thus, expecting one party in a multi-party conflict to be intransigent, other parties that are concerned that the conflict will escalate destructively if it is not quickly settled may move to resolve it, and exclude the party they regard as intransigent. The interests of the excluded party are then surrendered, as was done by the British and French government heads regarding Czechoslovakia in 1938, in their failed attempt to appease Nazi Germany. The actions have been widely condemned as immoral, but also seen by many as erroneous in its premises :357-427. On the other hand, in the case of the October 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, the heads of the Soviet and U.S. governments excluded Cuba from the negotiations in which they managed to resolve the crisis. Given the risks of prolonging the negotiations and perhaps failing to resolve it, in this case the exclusion of a party with a major stake in the conflict was widely considered as morally correct.

Finally, I note how seeking to advance morality may interfere with the pursuit of truth. The commitment to certain moral principles may lead people to avoid examining or recognizing truths they fear may undermine or hamper the implementation of those principles. In the arena of social conflicts, for example, whether people are committed to the righteousness of retribution or to the redemptiveness of forgiveness may influence the evidence sought and analyzed. Similarly, having loyalty to narrow identities such as a particular ethnic community or having loyalty to very broad identities encompassing the adversaries affects the consequences of struggles and whether they are evaluated as losses or gains. Commitments to the morality of avoiding killing people or to the morality of risking one's life to protect one's people also may channel the selection of evidence and entire research agendas.

Mutuality in Advancing Truth and Morality

By now, the reader will have thought of many disagreements with what I have written and thought of ways in which seeking to enhance truth and morality are not incompatible with each other, and in fact may be mutually helpful. I now turn to discuss how these pursuits can be mutually supportive.

Contributions of Truth to the Advancement of Morality

Relatively few persons view morality as simply acting correctly, and are not primarily concerned with the consequences of their actions; they seek to express their convictions and give witness to them. Most persons, most of the time, however, are concerned with the effects of their actions and seek to produce what they regard as morally good effects. Insofar as the consequences of moral conduct are considered important, knowing the truth helps guide and advance morality in several ways.

As the earlier discussion of clinical knowledge and general theory indicates, truth can pertain to varying realms: ranging from local and historically specific instances to universal and general phenomena. For most people, to act morally or to even decide what is morally correct partially depends on the anticipated consequences of particular actions. Knowledge about likely consequences is based to some degree on detailed information about the peculiarities of a specific situation. The better the information and insight one has about a particular conflict or other situation, the more likely one is to choose policies that people generally would regard as moral. Consequently, the choice among various, and sometimes inconsistent, moral imperatives will be eased.

Truth also refers to general theoretical propositions and empirical generalizations. They provide information that can help decide which moral principle should be accorded high priority under various circumstances. Theoretical propositions and empirical generalizations necessarily tend to be abstract and cannot, by themselves, justify particular actions in specific conflicts. Nevertheless, they can indicate probabilities of developments that would support certain kinds of conduct rather than others.

In addition, two areas of truth seeking have particular substantive relevance for acting morally. One is to search for knowledge about the moral sentiments that humans in various communities actually share. That knowledge provides grounds for constructive ways of conducting struggles and resolving conflicts, since they can provide adversaries in those communities with common ground to constrain destructive behavior and find a mutually acceptable outcome.

The other area of relevant research is directed at discovering the bases for relatively moral outcomes of conflicts and other social activities. As conflict analyzers, resolvers, and protagonists, we need to know more about the circumstances and processes that generate effective moral conduct, as well as of destructive immoral behavior. Thus, not only do we need to understand how policies of genocide are undertaken and carried out, but how they might be prevented or resisted effectively. For example, analyses of varying survival rates of Jews in countries under Nazi occupation or accounts of particular communities or groups who sheltered and assisted Jews and other targets of Nazi genocidal policies provide valuable information, helping to advance morality .

The transformation of destructive conflicts, with large components of immoral conduct, into constructively waged struggles is usually the product of many incremental steps by many people. Even the seemingly sudden dramatic turning points are often the resultant of previous changes that have slowly built the pressure and support for the event that is seen as critical and transforming . Therefore, many people can and do contribute to such transformations in varying but not inconsequential ways. Similarly, the waging of constructive conflicts and the attainment of constructive outcomes, minimizing immoral destructiveness, requires the work of many people.

Contributions of Morality to the Advancement of Truth

Concerns about promoting and advancing morality are also in many ways conducive to advancing truth. First of all, the promotion of truth is generally highly prized in all moral communities. Of course, understandings about the nature of truth vary greatly, and people often qualify the principle of truth to permit deception and dishonesty in particular situations in order to advance other values or larger truths in a longer time perspective.

As prior discussion has indicated, the effectiveness of attempts to act morally in a specific struggle depends immensely on knowing a great deal about the particular circumstances of the struggle. That knowledge can help direct the search for morally relevant truth. One of the appeals and values of participatory or action research is that the validity and relevance of knowledge is tested and either confirmed or refuted by experience.

One of the important insights of the problem-solving conflict resolution approach is that taking the adversary's point of view into account is crucial in waging a struggle constructively and in reaching an outcome that is mutually satisfactory. As Robert F. Kennedy observed, "The final lesson of the Cuban missile crisis is the importance of placing ourselves in the other country's shoes. During the crisis, President Kennedy spent more time trying to determine the effect of a particular course of action on Khrushchev or the Russians than on any other phase of what he was doing." : 102.

Learning the perspectives of different parties in a dispute provides more complete understanding of a conflict than relying on any single perspective. Many of the methods developed in the conflict resolution field encourage examination of disputants from several perspectives, ranging in technique from reflective listening to the structuring of interactive problem-solving workshops .

In general, moral concerns can provide a focus for truth seeking. Without a focus, the task of advancing truth would be even more difficult since the world of truth is infinite and no one can know everything. Furthermore, moral issues are important matters for social inquiry, since moral concerns are central to human life. We humans are social animals who must live together; and we develop moral guides that are helpful and in some ways necessary to do so. Learning about them and developing more and more widely accepted guides as well as historically specific directives are increasingly vital tasks.

Implications for Fostering Social Justice through Conflict Resolution

The meaning of social justice, perhaps even more than other moral standards, is widely contested. Every adversary in a struggle typically claims to be advancing or defending claims for justice. Members of each side support their claims, on the basis of their constructed historical experience, their interpretation of divinely given rights, their view of natural rights, or on other grounds.

The role of a conflict resolving intermediary or a prescriber of conflict resolution action, therefore, is often problematic. Their own standards of social justice may best be given relatively lower priority in order to facilitate an accommodation between the adversaries, and not to try to impose still another moral standard. But, many times one party's claims for justice may appear to be so extreme and so intolerant of the adversary's claims, that the intermediary should give weight to their own sense of social justice as they provide conflict resolution services.

Although I argue that there is no detailed universally accepted moral code and no empirical basis for any group to assert the supremacy of its moral code, I believe that humans learn particular codes and try to act in accordance with them. They are shared and upheld by community members. Each person modifies them in accord with her or his personal experience and tries to synthesize them, since each person belongs to many communities. Everyone tries to apply them as guides to conduct, including behavior in particular conflicts. In that context, I discuss social justice and its relationship to doing conflict resolution.

I believe that one measure of social justice is the extent to which the members of any social system recognize each other as fully human. Another measure is the scale of the social system within which justice is being assessed, whether a family, community, country or the world. The more extensive the social system whose members accord each that recognition, the more extensive is social justice. Greater levels of equality in resources make the recognition of shared humanity more likely, and such equality in itself is a measure of social justice. In addition, social justice is fostered by shared norms of tolerance toward other people. Conflicts are inherent in social life, but they can be waged and resolved constructively, so that all the adversary parties achieve some measure of justice. Democratic institutions can and often do contribute greatly to the constructive waging of conflicts, providing procedures for marshaling forces, persuading opponents, and making binding decisions.

The analysis presented and a variety of evidence provide the basis for this view of social justice, and ways of enhancing it . Absolute truth will never be found, but we humans do come to know some matters with greater completeness and certainty than other matters. Some beliefs turn out to be clearly wrong and others seem to be confirmed by much evidence. Similarly, although no set of absolute moral principles may be accepted by everyone that does not mean that I reject the idea of holding any moral principles. Indeed, some principles are so widely held that they may be called universal, although they need to be broadly formulated. In short, beliefs about facts can be more rather than less true; and people can act more or less morally, even if they never act in a wholly moral manner.

The balance struck between accommodating to harsh realities and holding out for greater justice is likely to vary for different actors in different kinds of conflicts, and at each stage of a conflict. For example, persons or groups playing intermediary roles properly tend to facilitate adversaries

seeking a settlement and ultimately a resolution, but either hold off or assist the party suffering the greater injustice in a struggle. The partisans themselves best decide when the struggle to advance social justice needs to be laid aside for a while, perhaps to be resumed at a later date. But, with a broad conception of conflict resolution, it is also possible to prescribe constructive ways of waging the struggle for social justice and so foster mutually acceptable resolutions in the future. For example, the consistent non-racist means and ends of the African National Congress's struggle against South African apartheid contributed to the remarkable transformation among the South African whites and of the conflict among the peoples of South Africa.

In the early, escalating stages of a conflict, adversaries can select means of waging a conflict that reduce the chances that the struggle will become destructive and seemingly intractable. This improves the likelihood of gaining greater justice, since destructive conflicts not only impose heavy injustices on many people but also makes a mutually acceptable outcome less likely. Such relatively non-destructive means include using legitimate political processes and nonviolent action, as in the civil rights struggle in the early 1960s in the United States.

The issues discussed here are particularly salient in the de-escalation and settling conflict stages. It might seem that to de-escalate a conflict, and to make partial settlements entails the co-optation of the challengers or their leaders; and consequently, a fuller justice is forgone. This sometimes is the case. But continuing the struggle until a total victory is won has other risks. One risk is that such overreaching results in defeat for example, after a bitter war or a revolutionary uprising. The other risk is that victory is won, but the costs are demoralizing and the leaders of the victorious party themselves become the new oppressors.

The path of more gradual de-escalation and accommodation has significant possible benefits, considering those alternatives. That path may even lead to fundamental transformations in the relationship between antagonists. One way that happens is that the adversaries, given some degree of mutual reassurance, engage in cooperative interactions or other exchanges, which transform their relationship. Sometimes, in the course of such a changing relationship, one side is internally transformed and its conversion or other re-structuring fundamentally resolves the conflict. In significant ways that course was taken in ending the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union, and in the repudiation of Soviet totalitarianism in the former Soviet Union, following the years of détente and increasing influence from the West. This course also contributed to the ending of Apartheid after years of increasing economic interdependence between whites and blacks in South Africa.

Finally, specific struggles do end, sometimes with written agreements that have been negotiated, often by unilateral imposition, and many times by the sides quietly accepting a new status quo or returning to the one that existed when the conflict erupted in the first place. In any case, that post-struggle stage is important since it may be the staging ground for renewed struggle or the setting for building a stable peace and for reconciliation between the former antagonists. This is another opportunity to advance the cause of social justice.

In every conflict stage, a variety of intermediary functions can be usefully provided. No one kind of person or group can provide all the possible services, and therefore a variety of intermediaries may be needed to provide different combinations of facilitating exchanges, suggesting new

options, expanding resources and compensating for concessions, pressuring parties to agree, legitimating an agreement, and monitoring compliance. Coordination among the intermediaries contributes greatly to the effectiveness of each .

In addition, the multiplicity of intermediaries can result in a larger role for moral considerations in their actions. This may occur because the engagement of many intermediaries tends to broaden the moral basis for their actions, since they are more likely to be acting on shared moral standards than if any one of them is acting unilaterally. In addition, since many moral issues are at stake in each conflict, different intermediaries taking different actions can focus on complementary moral concerns; they may do so by working with various elements on each side or at different conflict stages.

Conclusions

We can act to maximize both truth and morality. This analysis makes evident that though these are two distinct realms, they are intimately related so that advancing one tends to enhance the other. In many ways the pursuit of each is not only reconcilable, but also inseparable from each other.

The issues addressed in this essay are particularly relevant to the field of problem-solving conflict resolution. The practice of conflict resolution is beset by many policy dilemmas; and they cannot be fully resolved reflecting as they do moral dilemmas and limited knowledge about the consequences of the choices made. The dilemmas can be reduced, however, by weighing the probability of various consequences that alternative strategies have . Knowledge is growing and with it some specifications about which strategies are likely to foster constructive struggle and constructive outcomes. Clearly, effective strategies differ for various stages of a conflict, for different actors, and for varying time frames .

The knowledge gained about the effectiveness of problem-solving conflict resolution methods lends support to specific moral principles. For example, there is evidence that to prevent or to transform destructive conflict relations, and to foster constructive relations, adversaries should demonstrate that they are attending to what the other says it needs, and even acknowledge their legitimacy to make claims. Any single party so acting can contribute to ameliorating a destructive conflict. That supports the moral principle that one should not deny the humanity of other persons, going back to the basic assumption made by Laue and Cormick that people ought to be treated as ends in themselves. In practice, however, persons who refuse to share that assumption may be regarded as not ready for inclusion in efforts to forge a mutually acceptable outcome. Constructively escalating a struggle may then be justified or seeking other partners to join in turning away from a destructive course may be correct.

All this may be clear when what is true and what is false is generally experienced as evident and what is moral and immoral is agreed upon by the adversaries, intervenors, and by others generally. But much of life is lived in the more ambiguous middle range. In those circumstances, we must rely on our best judgments and no correct policy is universally regarded as obviously right. Consequently, we should recognize that we as well as others are likely to make mistakes. That is a reason to practice conflict resolution with care and respect for the beliefs and normative

standards of other persons. The modified conventionalist approach to morality, adopted here, is therefore generally appropriate in doing conflict resolution. Acting in a doctrinaire fashion often generates many problems and is often counterproductive.

Furthermore, there are many truths and many moral considerations relevant to any specific conflict. Some truths are harsh and difficult to overcome in order to advance justice, while other truths are benign and foster greater justice. Some moral considerations refer to past injustices and others stress current and future ones, and some moral standards may be prized more than reducing injustice. No conflict resolution strategy is likely to be regarded as the right one by all the concerned persons. Diverse people may appropriately pursue different strategies, and those strategies may well be complementary.

The issues raised in any specific struggle are of course complex and defy any formula for finding a problem-solving solution. Although humans cannot escape moral and factual ambiguities and dilemmas, that is not a reason to give up trying to reduce them. The argument made here is that we conflict analysts, intermediaries, and protagonists can draw on our moral sentiments and our desire for truth to collect and think about relevant evidence that will improve the quality of our practical decisions. This will enhance social justice.

Notes

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[1]Jim Laue was always sensitive to the tensions between pursuing morality as well as truth. For those of us trying to do good and who were trained in sociology in the late 1940s and 1950s the tensions would be difficult to avoid. Jim dealt with these matters openly and honestly, supported by shared values among social scientists about what was fair and just for humans. He actively tried to advance both goals, always being careful to examine the evidence and avoid distorting it to promote his own preferences. He believed that this course would serve those values in the long run. I want to pay tribute to Jim, by reflecting on the dilemmas in this area and ways of resolving them. I thank Frank Blechman, Allan T. Griffith, Irving Kriesberg, Lois A. Kriesberg, Richard E. Rubenstein, and Robert A. Rubinstein, for their comments, suggestions, and challenges relating to an earlier version of this essay.

[2]Of course, discussions about the relationship between objectivity and activism have a long history. The relationship was a matter of intense debate in the United States between the two world wars, involving many of the social scientists at the University of Chicago, where I was a post-World War II graduate student. See . [3]Some analysts, however, see the problem as arising from technicism rather than from technology as such; see, for example, .

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