HATE AND LOVE: DESTRUCTIVE AND CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICTS

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In Roget's Thesaurus, hate and love are adjacent entries and there is little doubt that these two opposing emotions are often found together. Human infants are born with the potential to both love and hate. In this brief paper, I shall sketch out some of the conditions which influence the development and expression of the readinesses to hate and to love as well as the conditions which lead to destructive or constructive processes of conflict resolution.

Evolution, through natural selection, has insured that all living creatures have the capacity to respond positively to stimuli that are beneficial to them and negatively to those that are harmful. They are attracted to, approach, receive, ingest, like, enhance, and otherwise act positively toward beneficial objects, events, or other creatures; in contrast, they are repelled by harmful objects and avoid, eject, attack, dislike, negate, and otherwise act negatively toward them. This inborn tendency to act positively toward the beneficial and negatively toward the harmful is the foundation on which the human potential for love and hate develops. How this human potential will be developed and expressed is determined by each individual's life history, his/her contemporary circumstances, and conflict.

The Sources of Love and Hate in Human Development

Borrowing much from the object-relations school of psychoanalysis, I shall here provide a truncated outline of the sources of love and hate in human development. The original feelings of gratification and harmonious oneness with the world occurs in the womb and is recaptured by the infant with trustworthy maternal

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figures, who respond to its need for nourishment and nuturance with warm, loving and reliable care. Such beneficial experiences, repeated and over time, give rise to two complementary concepts: the good (idealized) other and the good (idealized) self. These are the seeds from which adult love and adult self-esteem ultimately develop; favorable circumstances are necessary for the seeds to germinate and grow into health maturity.

Inevitably, the infant's experiences are not only gratifying but they are also frustrating and harmful: feeding is too little or too late; the parental figure is angry, anxious, rejecting, teasing, withholding, or not available. The infant feels the painful sensations associated with aloneness, emptiness, rage, teething, etc. These harmful experiences, repeated and over time, give rise to two related concepts: the bad other and the bad self. These are the seeds of adult hate and adult self-destructiveness; they thrive in barren soil, darkness, and stormy weather. There are a variety of forms of the bad other ("exciting", "rejecting", "persecuting", etc.) and of the bad self ("needy", "destructive", persecuted", etc.); they will not be elaborated here. The concepts of good other, good self, bad other, and bad self are initially concrete and sensual (i.e. they are in terms of the stimuli and sensations immediately associated with the gratifying or frustrating experiences) rather than abstract-symbolic.

In the early stages of development, the conceptions of "good" and "bad" other and "good" and "bad" self are separate. In part this results from lack of integration due to cognitive immaturity but it also represents an active splitting of the cognitive processes to prevent the good (other and self) from being overwhelmed by the bad (other and self). This active splitting sometimes is referred to as the "paranoid-schizoid" position: "paranoid" is used since the main anxiety is that the bad will persecute and annihilate the good; "schizoid" is used since the major defense is the active "splitting" of the ego so that the "good" and "bad" do not come into contact.
During this and subsequent periods of development, there is also employment of two mechanisms affecting self-control and social perception: introjection and projection. There is introjection or internalization of the good and bad objects: the internalized good parent provides support in the absence of the external parent and the internalized bad parent inhibits or punishes the "needy" or "raging" behavior of the bad self. There is projection or externalization of the good or bad self, or of the good or bad other, onto others or onto objects of the environment. Thus, the teddy bear in childhood and one's fatherland or one's mother church in adulthood can serve as externalizations of the good parent and be important sources of self-support. Criticism or attack on these externalizations of the good parent or good self are apt to be viewed as attacks on one's vital parts. Projection of the bad self onto an adversary enables one to attribute to the other the evil we feel, but deny, in ourselves and to attack it there with exceptional vigor.

As cognitive and emotional development proceeds, the small child will attempt to bring his good and bad objects together and recognize his mother as a whole person and also realize that it is he, the same person, who loves his mother when she gratifies him and hates her when she frustrates him. How he deals with his ambivalence, his love-hate for the same person, and his sense of evil and goodness in himself will play an important role in determining the roles of love and hate in his later life. There will be little need for hatred if he has been helped to develop an integrated view of himself with sufficient confidence in the good aspects of himself to be able to have a constructive orientation to his own shortcomings. Such a perspective enables one to love others in their full reality, with awareness of their weaknesses as well as their strengths.

Unfortunately, some people are raised under conditions which are not conducive to such integrated perspectives of self and others. Their harsh circumstances, authoritarian family, or ethnocentric culture predispose them to continue the active splitting between the good and bad. The consequence is that there is an idealization of
those individuals, groups, places, institutions, and values with whom and with which one is identified and a denigration of those with whom one (or one's groups) are in conflict or potential conflict. Conflict facilitates the projection of parts of the split off bad self or bad other onto those with whom one is in conflict.

The splitting, with its associated idealization of those identified with the self, and the denigration of those with whom one is in conflict, leads to strong boundaries between the "we" and the "they". Under such circumstances it is easy for the "we-group" to exclude the "they" from their moral community: to perceive the "they" as not entitled to the moral and justice considerations to which the other members of one's community are entitled. Excluding the "they" from one's moral community permits one to consider oneself to be a moral person even as one engages in what would normally be considered depraved actions. Consider the New England slave ship captains, deacons of their local churches, who brought the African slaves to the United States under the most despicable conditions. Or Adolf Eichmann, who considered himself a good family man as he knowingly participated in the murder of millions of Jews.

The Influence of Contemporary Circumstances

Although abuse, violence, and killing may arise out of the hatred contained in certain forms of disordered personalities, there is much evidence to indicate that the participants in the genocides, mass murders, death squads, and destructive wars are not primarily acting out of hatred. Hatred is secondary, arising out of the need to justify one's acts of violence. There are several other common motivations to violence: obedience to authority, here one is doing what one is ordered to do by legitimate authority or is required to do by one's role; defending oneself and the groups, institutions, or values that are central to one's security or identity; engaging in instrumental actions to remove obstacles to goals that one wants to achieve; and asserting one's power, to deny one's powerlessness. Several social conditions appear to be particularly conducive to the development or
intensification of hatred and the other alienating emotions which permit otherwise non-violent members of a society to dehumanize and kill victims. First of all, there is an emergence of or increase in difficult life conditions with a corresponding increase in the sense of relative deprivation. This may happen as a result of defeat in war, economic depression, or even physical calamity. Second, there is an unstable political regime whose power may be under challenge. Third, the social institutions are authoritarian, nonconformity is inhibited. Fourth, there is a claim for superiority: national, racial, cultural, religious, etc. Fifth, violence is culturally salient as a result of past wars, the attention in the media, or the availability of weapons. Sixth, there is little sense of human relatedness or social bonding with the potential victims. And, finally, there is no active group of observers of the violence, in or outside the society, who are strongly objecting to it and serving as a constant reminder of its injustice and immorality.

Conflict: Deadly Quarrel vs. Lively Controversy

Conflict is an inevitable and pervasive aspect of life. It can take the form of deadly quarrel or lively controversy, it can be destructive or constructive. Hate can lead to destructive conflict or it can be the consequence of destructive conflict. From the discussion in the preceding sections, it is evident that personal life history and social circumstances can be conducive to the development of destructive conflict. They can predispose an individual to perceive his relations with others as adversarial and to define a conflict as a win-lose, competitive battle. Or, personality and circumstance can predispose one to see his relations with others as positive and to define a conflict as a mutual problem to be resolved cooperatively. Although personal predispositions arising from one's life history may play a role in affecting one's response to conflict, most "normal" poeple are more apt to be influenced by factors in their current situation.
The basic question, with which I have been concerned through much of my academic career, is: What determines whether conflict will take a constructive or destructive course? And, after much work and thought, I slowly realized that the answer to this question involves the combination of two simple ideas. The first idea entails the recognition that a constructive process of conflict resolution is similar to an effective, cooperative problem-solving process while a destructive process of conflict resolution has many of the characteristics of a competitive process of social interaction. The second basic idea, which was the culmination of years of research, I have labelled Deutsch's crude law of social relations. It is that the characteristic processes and effects elicited by a given type of social relationship (cooperative or competitive) tend also to elicit that type of social relationship. Thus, the strategy of power and tactics of coercion, threat, and deception result from, and also result in, a competitive relationship. Similarly, the strategy of mutual problem-solving and the tactics of persuasion, openness, and mutual enhancement elicit, and also are elicited by, a cooperative orientation.

The typical effects of successful cooperation breed further cooperation, while the typical effects of competition breed further competition. In addition, a cooperative problem-solving orientation to a conflict leads to a constructive process of conflict resolution while a competitive, win-lose orientation to conflict leads to a destructive process. If one wants to create the conditions for a destructive process of conflict resolution, one would introduce into a conflict the typical characteristics and effects of a competitive process: poor communication; coercive tactics; suspicion; the perception of basic differences in values; an orientation to increasing the power differences; challenge to the legitimacy of the parties; personal insecurity; the deprecation of others, and so forth. On the other hand, if one wants to create the conditions for a constructive process of conflict resolution, one would introduce into the conflict the typical effects of a cooperative process: good communication; the perception of similarity in beliefs and values; full acceptance of one
another's legitimacy; problem-centered negotiations; mutual trust and confidence; information-sharing; and so forth.

Elsewhere I have described in detail the key elements in destructive conflicts which tend to escalate and perpetuate themselves. Such conflicts are like malignant tumors; they grow out of control and enmesh the participants in a web of hostile interactions and defensive maneuvers which continuously worsen their situations, making them feel more vulnerable, more burdened, and more hatred toward the other. The key elements which contribute to the development and perpetuation of a malignant conflict include: (1) an anarchic social situation, (2) a win-lose or competitive orientation, (3) inner conflicts (within each of the parties) that express themselves through external conflict, (4) cognitive rigidity, (5) misjudgments and misperceptions, (6) unwitting commitments, (7) self-fulfilling prophecies, (8) vicious escalating spirals, and (9) a gamesmanship orientation which turns the conflict away from issues of what in real life is being won or lost to an abstract conflict over images of power.

I do not have the space or time here to describe how these elements contribute to the development of malignant conflict processes. However, since a win-lose, competitive orientation is so central to such processes, some of the consequences for conflict of such an orientation are briefly described below:

1. Communication between the parties is unreliable and impoverished. Either available communication channels and opportunities are not utilized or are used to try to mislead or intimidate. Little confidence is placed in information obtained directly from the other party; espionage and other circuitous means of obtaining information are relied upon. The poor communication enhances the possibility of error and misinformation of the sort likely to reinforce preexisting orientations and expectations. Thus, the ability of one party to notice and respond to shifts away from a win-lose orientation by the other party becomes impaired.
2. The conflict stimulates the view that the solution can only be imposed by one side or the other through superior force, deception, or cleverness. The enhancement of one's own and the minimization of the other's power become objectives. The attempt by each party to create or maintain a power difference favorable to its own side tends to expand the scope of the conflict from a focus on the immediate issue to a conflict over the power to impose one's preference upon the other.

3. The competitive conflict leads to a suspicious, hostile attitude that increases sensitivity to differences and threats while minimizing awareness of similarities. This, in turn, makes the usually accepted norms of conduct and morality less applicable. It permits the behavior that would be considered outrageous if directed toward someone like oneself. Since neither side is likely to grant moral superiority to the other, the conflict is likely to escalate as one side or the other engages in behavior morally outrageous to the other.

Concluding Comment

I wish to conclude on a hopeful note. Through the efforts of many scholars, in many disciplines, much has been learned about constructive and destructive processes of conflict resolution. We know that it is easier to prevent than to cure malignant conflicts and we are beginning to develop systematic knowledge about the attitudes, knowledge, and skills involved in constructive conflict resolution. Our Center at Teachers College, The International Center For Cooperative and Conflict Resolution, as well as many other centers are engaged in training children as well as teachers and administrators in the processes involved in constructive conflict resolution. We have much to learn about such training and we are conducting systematic research so that we will learn, but already it is evident that children can be taught enough in twenty hours of training so that there is a noticeable reduction in school violence.
With training, conflict does not disappear: it is turned into lively controversy rather than deadly quarrel.