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Psychological Dimensions of Peacemaking

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Abstract

The essence of conflict resolution and therefore peacemaking is summed up in the phrase “mutual needs satisfaction.” This concept presupposes an understanding not only of physical needs but also the emotional needs of all parties involved. This article describes the emotional needs, calling them “human givens” (because they are innate in us) and the innate resources that help us get those needs met. It also describes the three main ways that can interfere with needs being met. It suggests that this knowledge should be absorbed in the political and diplomatic spheres because our emotional needs motivate our behavior and drive learning. Learning is not the same as indoctrination, which is the methodology of cult formation, and the random way people approach peacemaking must change soon.

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As with making peace between children, couples, and neighbors, the essence of achieving satisfactory outcomes always comes down to satisfying mutual needs. But this outcome presupposes an understanding of innate human needs, what we call “human givens” (the physical and emotional needs that are planted in us at the moment of conception).

Because innate emotional needs are little understood by politicians, diplomats, and the general public, they are often unmet in the environment. That failure causes havoc as these needs play out in misdirected and chaotic ways, including politically. Many dynamics are involved in domestic and international relations. But there is now an urgent need to focus on this missing piece of the equation because when leaders decide on policies and enact decisions that prevent basic human needs from being met or inhibit us from using our innate resources to the full, anxiety rises in the population and disenchantment and conflict result. In peacemaking, ignorance of this factor means negotiations and peace talks will not be rooted in solid ground and will be less likely to succeed.

This article looks at a new paradigm of understanding human needs as a foundation for moving forward and assesses how we learn and how that learning affects our progress. It also describes the crucial role of cults in politics, tribalism, and religion, group behavior patterns whereby human needs are hijacked often for ill purposes.

Human Givens

The “human givens approach” to helping people suffering mental and emotional torment grew out of my work with the Irish psychologist Joe Griffin. We were puzzled and alarmed by the large number of schools of psychotherapy and counseling that attempted to alleviate such torment, many forms of which were cult-like and in some instances actually harmed people (by, for example, creating false memories in their clients or taking volition away from them by keeping them “in therapy” for a long time). Other disciplines—physics, chemistry, biology, geography, and so on—did not operate hundreds of different models in this way and we resolved to do something about it.

We made real progress when we realized that therapy always works best when it comes not from an ideological or theoretical standpoint but from a profound understanding of what it is to be a human being.

We began by setting aside theoretical models and exploring the most fundamental law of nature, the one that states that, to survive, every living thing must search its environment for the nourishment it needs to continually rebuild and maintain itself. This instinctive knowledge marks out the difference between all life forms and inanimate objects.

This drive to seek appropriate nourishment from the environment results, when we find it, in a fulfilling pattern-match as each need is satisfied. We call the understanding we developed the “human givens approach.” This same idea is an essential dimension of peacemaking at any level: unsatisfied needs (status, volition, meaning, connection with a community) can play out in very negative ways politically, for example, through extremist ideologies that claim to meet those needs but that do so destructively. Or they can block successful mediation because the most basic needs of each side remain unsatisfied.

Physical needs take priority because if they are not met, we quickly die. They are easy to appreciate. We all need air, food, water, and shelter. We have all felt the fear of suffocation, the emotion of hunger or thirst, or the strong desire for shelter from the elements.

When we put our minds to it even the common diseases that ruin the lives of millions can be alleviated fairly easily by committing sufficient material and educational resources to satisfying physical needs.

Innate Emotional Needs

Our emotional needs are as critical to our healthy development and well-being as our physical needs. Their manifestation is infinitely malleable and depends on the genetic predisposition, culture, and life experiences of each individual. Critically, it is impossible to suffer mental illness when our emotional needs are met reasonably well and in a balanced way. When ordinary life is fulfilling, we are not distressed or looking for ways to destroy our enemies. Life is just far too engaging. But when our needs are not met, we quickly become anxious, angry, or depressed, and this fact has large implications for politics and peacemaking. We might become violent or develop addictive behaviors to compensate. If these emotional symptoms last for a long time, they will have a detrimental effect on our physical health and raise stress levels in those around us. And all these common conditions are precursors to even more serious disturbances, such as schizophrenia.

Our emotional needs are as follows:

Security: Feel safe enough to keep anxiety levels down so we can think clearly and respond intelligently to events while not becoming so risk averse as to prevent progress).

Status: Be valued by others and receiving a degree of respect from family members, friends, colleagues, peer groups, and the wider world. Status is connected to security because if we have sufficient status, we are unlikely to be cast out of the community. In the distant past such rejection would have meant certain death. (Early humans survived only because they banded together in groups to scare off predators. As isolates they were easy prey.)

Attention: Best seen as a form of nutrition (both too much and too little is bad for us). Mature people have learned how to exchange attention—to give and receive it well. Through balanced exchanges of sincere attention, we learn and families and cultures evolve.

Control: Along with control over decisions that affect our lives, we must develop the flexibility to realize that we cannot control everything and that we need to adapt to unanticipated changing circumstances.

Emotional connection: We satisfy this need through friendship, loving relationships, and physical intimacy.

Community connection: We are social animals and need to belong to groups in which we are valued. We know this connection is important because being rejected from any group is deeply painful.

Privacy: Access to a certain amount of space and time so we can reflect on and consolidate life experiences and ponder possibilities is essential for human development.

Achievement: Our minds and bodies evolved to be used and are at their healthiest only when they are used. We need problems to solve. (Becoming competent in something that requires effort is the antidote to low self-esteem.) And when we stretch ourselves to gain new knowledge and skills, we are expanding our model of reality and improving our ability to think contextually.

Meaning and purpose: Feeling that life has meaning makes suffering tolerable. We find meaning by being stretched mentally and physically in one or more of three ways: by being needed ourselves and serving others (as in raising a family, working in a team, or running a business), by learning new mental or physical skills (as in traveling, exploring, learning a language, undertaking academic study, obtaining a profession, or learning how to play a sport or how to play a musical instrument), and by being connected in some way to ideas that are bigger than ourselves (as in committing to a political ideology, engaging in a philosophical quest for truth, following a religious practice, or pursuing a spiritual path).

Innate Resources

Along with physical and emotional needs, we have innate guidance systems to help us meet them. We call these “resources” and they evolved to help us meet our needs. They include the following:

Memory: The ability to develop complex long-term memory enables us to add to our innate knowledge and learn.

Rapport: Mirror neurons help us to empathize and build rapport, develop a “theory of mind,” and live and work in teams.

Imagination: This enables us to solve problems, focus our attention away from our emotions, and use language more creatively and objectively. When we evolved to consciously choose to access imagination at will, human evolution speeded up.

Emotions and instincts: These evolved to protect and guide us and provide the impetus for action. But because they narrow down our options, they can also misguide us.

Reason: A conscious, rational mind that can check out our emotions, question, analyze, and plan.

Metaphorical pattern-matching: The ability to “know”—that is, to understand the world unconsciously through metaphorical pattern-matching. We learn through metaphor.

Observing self: This is that part of us that can step back, be more objective, and allow us to know ourselves as unique centers of awareness separate from intellect, emotion, and conditioning.

Dreaming: Our brain when dreaming every night preserves the integrity of our genetic inheritance by metaphorically defusing the expectations held in the autonomic arousal system that were not acted out the previous day.

Together these innate needs and resources make up the human givens. Over enormous stretches of time, they underwent continual refinement as they drove our evolution on. They are best thought of as inbuilt biological templates—patterns that continually interact with one another (in undamaged people) and seek their natural fulfillment in the world. They make it possible for us to survive and flourish and live together as many-faceted individuals in a great variety of social groupings and continue to evolve.

Can Humanity Be Stabilized?

Stabilizing humanity by reducing conflict through working to get needs met should not be beyond the ability of humankind. Every policy idea should be considered from the perspective of whether enacting it would sabotage people’s ability to meet their essential life needs. If society were truly run according to human givens principles, so that people were properly fulfilled in their family life, in school, and at work, we would find humanitarianism breaking out at all levels of society. Rates of mental illness would decline. More people would stretch themselves in healthier ways and become more insightful, recognizing the need to curb greed and control their emotions. This effort in turn would stimulate an instinct to fulfill a yet more refined inner need, one that also finds its completion in the environment, the non-selfish “connecting up to reality” process often described today as “spiritual development.”

Instead, all too often, organizations frustrate this. Consider just one need, *control*, and how government ignores the stress levels organizations generate in their employees and citizens by not letting them have sufficient control over how they work or by requiring them to work in

jobs that do not stretch them sufficiently. Many teachers, physicians, nurses, social workers, and police feel they have little control over their working practices but are made totally responsible when mistakes are made or things do not work out. This system is unfair and unreasonable but common.

If policies and practices were organized around helping people get their needs met and not based on unsound grandiose schemes dreamed up by committees or demagogues with no clear connection to the circumstances or knowledge of what people actually require, then more conflicts could be avoided and we might progress. Organizing around helping people get their needs met would be the proper recipe for conflict prevention and the basis for successful peacemaking.

Factors That Prevent Emotional Needs from Being Met

After observing for many years that our approach was highly effective in psychotherapy, Joe Griffin and I identified three ways people are prevented from getting their emotional needs met. The presence of any one of these factors is sufficient to generate an unhealthy level of stress in an individual and, if maintained, poses the real danger that anxiety or anger disorders will develop, depression set in, psychotic symptoms appear, or addictive behaviors take hold.

1. A “sick” environment, such as an aggressive, violent, or abusive home or neighborhood; a country at war; or a school or workplace where one is subject to bullying or humiliation or is denied opportunities to be stretched to one’s full potential.
2. Lack of knowledge about how to operate one’s internal guidance system to get one’s needs met. Lack of such knowledge can be found, for example, in people who were not properly nurtured and socialized when young or were conditioned by their parents or school to have low expectations of themselves and so they developed negativity, learned helplessness, and blindness to opportunities life presents them, or they created unrealistically high expectations for themselves.
3. A damaged innate guidance system. Such damage can be caused by poor diet, poisoning, faulty transmission of genetic knowledge (as in autism and Asperger’s), or an accident that results in brain damage, subthreshold trauma, or deep psychological trauma, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The first factor is critical politically: environments that do not nurture emotional needs or that manipulate needs toward ill ends tend to generate conflict and violence.

Innate Motivation

It is now widely accepted that we are confronting global problems of such magnitude that civilized life could soon become untenable. Almost all writers and pundits agree that, unless we make significant changes in the values we hold and the way we organize our societies, we are headed for disaster. Warfare, conflict, selfishness, consumerism, lack of empathy for strangers, and the piling up of massive financial debts in exchange for short-term advantages are the powerful forces fueling the various crises we face. They are the leitmotif in almost all modern commentaries on the situation. Traditional peacemaking cannot keep pace in this context.

Our effort to improve psychotherapy practice gave us glimpses of what nature requires of our species for further evolutionary development. In this age of tumultuous change, an understanding of this requirement has taken on increasing urgency. As the thirteenth-century Sufi poet Jalaluddin Rumi says, “Things that have to be tackled have to be done at the right time. That time is generally soon.”

A more powerful and inspiring motivation than greed must take hold for the human species to find the will it needs to make the effort to save itself. For that to happen, however, an enthusiasm has to spread among us for learning how to learn about the innate needs that motivate us. Teaching the human givens approach could inspire people to develop a greater capacity for cooperation and service.

We also need greater knowledge about humility and an understanding that, if we are to learn, humility is not a virtue but a necessity—a prerequisite for real progress. This means that we must check our own assumptions, including in the fields of politics and peacemaking.

How We Learn

Learning begins the moment we are born. Attention is focused by any means and expands existing patterns in the brain, allowing more scope for richer pattern-matching to occur. Focusing attention on a new stimulus enlarges our pupils and increases blood flow to the brain.

An important mechanism underlying this process is the orientation response, the neuronal pathway from the brain stem to the thalamus, which, when activated, prepares the brain to receive information from each incoming stimulus by triggering the REM state, the state in which our basic instincts were originally laid down.

Since attention has to be focused in order for new learning patterns to be made, our emotions must be aroused by the fight or flight mechanism or by our being rewarded or punished for our curiosity or by our feeling desire or love. Our emotions activate our orientation response and focus and lock the brain's attention mechanism on the stimulus long enough for programming to take place. This is how we learn, how we develop relationships, and how we are conditioned by whatever culture we are born in. Because that process occurs via the REM state, it is the common denominator of all conditioning variables, and therefore all learning.

Reward or punishment or fight or flight intensify the focus of attention by firing the orientation response releasing the required attention energy. In any intensification of experience, pleasurable or otherwise, the underlying mechanism of all reward is the process of focusing and locking attention, whether the activity involved is taking hard drugs or alcohol, eating an enjoyable meal, falling in love, or engaging in political debate. This is what intensifies consciousness—for good or bad, pleasure or pain—and conditions in new learning, useful or otherwise.

Attention requires energy, however. We all know from our own experience that we have a limited amount of attention energy. At the end of an exhausting day, for example, we all find it difficult to concentrate: we just want to relax, chill out, and recharge our batteries.

Evidence supporting the idea that we have a limited amount of attention energy comes from research into the connection between dreaming and depression. It was found that when the orientation response (technically called a PGO, or ponto geniculo-occipital, spike) fires off too intensively and for longer than normal periods while we dream, the balance between recuperative slow-wave sleep and the energy-burning REM sleep in which dreaming takes place is disturbed. That is why depressed people wake up tired, unable to focus and lacking the motivation to do anything. Excessive worrying about innate emotional needs not being met causes this depressed state. Worrying generates a large number of stimulations of the autonomic arousal system. When no action is taken to solve the difficulties and get these needs met somehow—which would de-arouse the autonomic nervous system—excessive dreaming is the result. This misuse of imagination is why humans are so vulnerable to depression. Worrying depletes our store of attention energy. It's a question of balance: we become de-aroused if we take appropriate action in the environment and remain aroused if we misuse our imagination by focusing on negative fantasies and worries.

Our capacity to give attention enables us to focus on the world around us and learn. But

we can be conditioned with inappropriate patterns that, when they fire off, create unhelpful neurotic responses that prevent us from learning. When abstract language and words that mean different things to different people are used by politicians, preachers, salesmen, and debaters on social media, they raise emotions, play on our tribal predilections, and carry our attention in one direction or another without the engagement of our full volition and our critical mind.

Learning versus Indoctrination

“Hypnosis” is the word used to describe any artificial means of getting people to enter the REM-state trance. A trance is simply a focused state of attention; thus, anyone can be hypnotized providing they can focus attention. (Even animals can be hypnotized.) The easiest way to hypnotize people is to emotionally arouse or fascinate them. It follows that a hypnotic trance can be generated in thousands of ways. The problem that arises for us is that when in a trance human beings are highly suggestible.

The trance state is our natural learning state: how we learn and absorb new information. We have to suspend our critical faculties for a bit and open up the REM programming pathway in the brain in order to add new information and insights into our internal model of reality. While all learning is post-hypnotic, it happens at varying degrees of intensity. Why does this matter in politics?

One form of learning is brainwashing, also known as mind control or thought reform, a process in which a group or individual systematically uses unethically manipulative methods to persuade others to conform to the wishes of the manipulator, often to the detriment of the person being manipulated. We see political leaders using this sort of manipulation all the time.

The difference between brainwashing and real learning is stark. In normal learning, the individual is given the opportunity to, at various points in the process, reset the learning in the larger context of their already acquired model of reality in order to evaluate it. In brainwashing, information is implanted by a learning process that requires the victims to be kept in a highly emotional state with no possibility of relating the new knowledge to a bigger context. (Strong emotions narrow our focus of attention, inhibiting critical thought.) Cult members, for example, are not given time to question what they are being encouraged to absorb. Objectivity is discouraged. This type of learning is therefore not subject to further modification because the victims’ volition is taken away, even though they don’t realize it.

Thus, brainwashed people, however intelligent they are, are difficult to reason with when their beliefs are put under scrutiny. Whenever the pattern of doctrine is summoned up in them, they automatically regress into the trance state that charismatics put them in and behave as they were instructed to do. That behavior usually involves dogmatically expressing the beliefs they were programmed with; a common problem is our polarized politics today.

The Eyes Have It

People enthusiastically evangelizing about whatever they were programmed with are unaware that they have regressed to a trance state. Their pupils contract to the size of pinpricks, a strong visual indication that they have been brainwashed and that they are not espousing real knowledge that they have subjected to evaluation. Their attention is focused *internally* on the messages that were hypnotically planted in them, not *outwards* on the person they are speaking to and the wider world. In this state they have no self-awareness. They are not in touch with outside reality or their own observing self, one of our resources described earlier.

The term “brainwashing” was coined in 1950, but knowledge about how to brainwash arose around the world through primitive tribal initiation rites that are thousands of years old. Conditioning techniques were developed to bind people together and ensure that group

members submitted to tribal rules and obeyed the chiefs and elders. The process always involved raising expectation; imposing a period of withdrawal from the community; generating high emotional arousal for long periods (often maintained by continual drumming, chanting, or dancing); and inflicting frightening or dangerous endurance tests, humiliation through harangues and threats, symbolic death and resurrection, and maybe a renaming ceremony. Posthypnotic instructions for awakening the conditioned behavior at a later date would be given in the form of signals, rituals, or phrases.

Highly profitable cults and “self-development” courses around the world use these techniques. They succeed and become popular because they manipulate people in a highly charged emotional atmosphere to feel better about themselves. They remove people’s volition while claiming they are freeing them.

Even some of the most good-willed individuals come to the negotiating table programmed to a considerable extent by their culture, ideology, or experiences in war and other forms of conflict. If managers, diplomats, mediators, school students, and health workers were taught to understand the importance of our attention capacity and how it can be manipulated—including how, like other forms of energy, it must be nurtured and used wisely—we might become more flexible, intelligent, and creative in the ways we respond to other people and react to stress-inducing circumstances. This kind of flexibility is essential to successful peacemaking.

Hypnosis, Tribal Thinking, and Conflict

Politics and negotiations are not only about individuals; they also are affected by group behavior. Nations, political parties, and ideologies are basic factors in politics, and they are often prone to cult-like behavior.

Cults are commonly thought of as religious or utopian groups with a charismatic leader. Cults vary from the mild in effect to the extreme. Some cults do much damage, causing the breaking up of families or, at worst, instigating horrific acts of war, ritual murder, mass suicide, and terrorism. Although the more flagrant groups might require members to conduct themselves in bizarre ways, wear strange clothes, and talk in a “culty” way, most cult behavior is only a slightly exaggerated form of the normal cultural conventions that we are steeped in from childhood and throughout our lives, such as peer-group pressure to conform.

Arthur Deikman, author of *Them and Us*, a study of cult formation, points out that people who are not members of a cult generally regard cults as dangerous but rare. He found, however, that patterns of cult behavior are more widespread than generally thought. Cults form in human communities as readily as water freezes when the temperature drops below a certain point because the desires that bring people to join a cult—including the need to feel secure and protected—are universal human longings. “Cults form and thrive,” Deikman writes, “not because people are crazy, but because they have two kinds of wishes.” He continues: “They want a meaningful life, to serve God or humanity; and they want to be taken care of, to feel protected and secure, to find a home. The first motives may be laudable and constructive, but the latter exert a corrupting effect, enabling cult leaders to elicit behaviour directly opposite to the idealistic vision with which members entered the group.”¹

The four characteristics of cults are obedience to a charismatic authority figure, avoidance of dissent, diminished realism, and devaluation of outsiders. Any group that seeks to accomplish something worthwhile requires a similar structure: a degree of compliance with a group, some direction (leadership), minimal dissent so progress can occur, and an evaluation of less effective methodologies to achieve an agreed-on goal. In other words, groups are necessary but vulnerable to becoming cult-like.

With a better understanding of the psychology behind group behavior and what motivates people, we can better grasp what is going on in the world. Conflicts always occur when one

cult clashes with another. When nations or ideologically driven political movements indulge in cult behavior, especially the devaluation of outsiders, the risk of violence and conflict is dramatically increased.

A Ubiquitous Longing

Our innate need for meaning and purpose in the face of the inevitability of death creates a longing to connect to something greater than ourselves. Cults would not exist if it were not for this ubiquitous longing. But fool's gold exists only because pure gold exists. The problem is that all those chasing fool's gold do not know that there is far more fool's gold about than pure gold. We are easily led astray.

Most groups of people display some of the characteristics of cults. The challenge that then arises is how to discriminate true gold from false, how to separate the information from the packaging. Because we all tend to perceive only what makes sense to our existing patterns, we are vulnerable to the blandishments of dubious opinion formers, cult teachers, political rabble-rousers, and charismatic tyrannical leaders.

When the form a cult takes matches people's expectations of what a group that offers to satisfy their need for meaning looks like, those who are unaware that the content may be markedly different from what is promised can easily pattern-match to what the cult offers and get drawn in. Furthermore, seeing that a cult has large numbers of followers and that it seems to be popular confirms to such people that "it must have something of value in it." Critical reasoning is abandoned in the excitement of belonging: the "love-bombing," the certainties, and the emotional arousal involved. But emotional arousal destroys contextual thinking, in effect making us temporarily stupid and preventing critical reasoning. Mediators or the parties involved in peacemaking who suffer from this state of mind will have great difficulty achieving constructive results.

A Bad Trade

What the participants do not see when they join a cult is that they are involved in a form of trading. In return for work or money, adherence to its beliefs, and a willingness to recruit new members, the cult will satisfy some of their innate needs by giving them attention, structure, a community, and a sense of being special and having meaning in their lives. It cons them into thinking that the warm feelings they get from all this are sufficient to trigger spiritual development. This is a poor trade because it cannot deliver.

Once new members are drawn into a cult, it begins to take away their volition and bind them to it by employing techniques that have been in use for thousands of years. These invariably involve destabilizing each individual and negating their sense of self by insisting they do not understand their own past. The leaders will imply, or directly state, that only they know what is good for their followers, even to the extent of controlling what they can eat and drink, what they should value, how long they can sleep, and, even whom they should marry. Depriving followers of sleep, keeping them constantly active, denying them time to rest and think, publicly haranguing or humiliating them, separating them from the outside world so they cannot do a reality check, and keeping the emotional temperature high to suppress critical thought are just some of the techniques.

All such methods make it easy to condition new devotees by taking away their volition and their ability to introspect freely. At their worst, cults can even propel people to rush blindly toward the security they seek by killing themselves and others. This sort of self-destruction is exemplified by the men who brought about the destruction of the twin towers in New York on 9/11 and by the mass suicide of 909 members of the Peoples Temple cult at Jonestown, Guyana, many of whom killed their own children before taking their own lives. The suicide bombers of

Sri Lanka, Africa, and the Middle East are equally dedicated.

Political Movements Are Cults

Many heavily ideologically driven political groups are cults whose members, however, are unaware that they have joined a cult. The reason cults can attract followers, even highly intelligent ones, so easily is that we are not educated about psychological responses. Most people are unaware, for example, that when attention is focused collectively and emotion generated, hypnotic group phenomena will occur. This conditioning can damage people's potential for development. Thus, it pays to be careful if one is invited to join a group, of whatever rubric, that claims to be a developmental group.

The best way to determine whether someone is a cult leader is to observe them. How well do they contribute to reality? How balanced are they? How sane are their relationships? Is the way they live their lives and mix with people fair and generous? Are they contributing to the real world, or do they behave like parasites and survive by exploiting group members financially? If they are not contributing directly to the wider community or if their relationships are not functional and they are projecting themselves as "special" despite seeming unbalanced—then they *are* unbalanced.

Understanding that this principle applies to whole communities as much as to individuals can help us in political work. If we wish to resolve conflicts and stabilize our humanity, we must all be willing to move beyond inadequate models of human functioning: religion based on tradition rather than knowledge, politics based on ideology rather than pragmatism, and psychological treatments based on obsolete theories rather than ones tested in the field. We must also move beyond medical models that promote the use of drugs to fix psychological instability and employ a bio-psych-social model, and we must move beyond the political that many political problems are resolved mainly through the hard security response. These outdated models—whether religious, political, or pseudoscientific—all produce thinking and behavior that is cult-like and no longer serve us well. They are too crude. Fortunately, millions of people have evolved enough to have rejected these models.

Cults provide a useful mirror for viewing aspects of group behavior in the wider society—the process by which the norms, ideas, values, and shared perceptions of a society are passed down from generation to generation: in conforming, we become "cultured." Alongside practical advantages in conforming there are certain disadvantages in doing so. No group or country is one static culture but is a special mix of interrelating smaller cultures. The streetwise homeless in Britain today, for example, have a different culture from a British farmer, accountant, or nurse. But simultaneously, all British people share elements that are distinctively different from those of, say, a South American, African, or Middle Eastern culture. In other words, each country's mix has a distinct "flavor." But some people involved in tribal political cults cease to think realistically. They begin to suppress any healthy dissent, give up their autonomy, devalue outsiders, and accept authoritarian rule over their daily lives. Deikman sees these pervasive patterns throughout society as threats to our need for personal volition, because "the price of cult behaviour is diminished realism."² Real spiritual development, in contrast, pulls one in the opposite direction—toward greater realism of the true situation.

The true situation of peacemaking is that we can go on as we have done, effectively waiting for a set of almost random factors to align for mediation or a peace effort to succeed. Or, we can improve our chances of success by looking directly at the obstacles thrown up by human nature and our psychology, as discussed here, and that, if better understood and managed, could be the very path toward less conflict and a more peaceful resolution of political differences. Mutual needs satisfaction based on a fundamental understanding of our innate needs (human givens) is the means of achieving sustainable peace.

Notes

¹ Arthur J. Deikman, *Cult Thinking and the Terrorist Threat* (Point Richmond, CA: Bay Tree, 2006).

² *Ibid.*