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Appendix

A long road to looking at good things

I’ve been interested in strategies and tactics for a long time — decades actually. So why not look at strategies and tactics to protect and promote good things such as friendship, happiness and expert performance? Well, it didn’t come naturally.

In 1976, I moved to Canberra and soon joined Friends of the Earth. It was an energetic group of young activists. At 29, I was the oldest one in the group, yet many of the others had far more experience in activism.

FOE was concerned with many environmental issues, for example forestry and whaling. However, the big issue at the time, where most effort was targeted, was nuclear power, especially uranium mining: Australia’s major role in the production of nuclear power was providing uranium for fuel. FOE was the main group campaigning against nuclear power, though within a few years other organisations were created with a dedicated focus on nuclear power.

The anti-nuclear campaign had both negative and positive dimensions. The negative side was opposition to nuclear power by pointing out its many problems: reactor accidents, long-lived radioactive waste, proliferation of nuclear weapons, high cost, threats to civil liberties and mining on Aboriginal land, among others. The main emphasis in campaigning was telling people all the bad things about the nuclear option.

The positive side was a different energy future involving energy efficiency, renewable energy technologies like solar and wind power, and social changes to reduce energy needs, such as promoting public transport and cycling and producing more food

locally. However, the positive side didn't receive nearly as much attention as the negative. Negative arguments seemed stronger: they were more focused on the movement's immediate goal of stopping uranium mining. Furthermore, the media were more interested in bad news: the 1979 Three Mile Island nuclear accident received saturation coverage, and the 1986 Chernobyl accident was the clincher, making nuclear power untouchable in much of the world.

The positive argument — there are viable alternatives to nuclear power — was really a reserve argument to be used when people wanted to know how the world could cope without the nuclear option. There was a problem with the positives: not everyone agreed about the alternative. Some people preferred technical fixes: keep the world operating just like it is, except use a different technology. So instead of nuclear electricity, use electricity from wind power and solar cells. Instead of using oil, obtain fuel from farming waste, and make car engines much more efficient. Other people preferred social change, like town planning to reduce transport requirements and, more fundamentally, cutting back on consumerism.

Disagreements in the movement were routine, but it was important to be united in campaigning, and the easiest thing to agree on was what we were against. The movement was the anti-nuclear movement, and it was “anti”: the emphasis was on what we saw as the problem, not on solutions.

A few years later, I became interested in peace issues and in 1979 helped set up Canberra Peacemakers, at that time the only peace group in the city. People talked about the peace movement, but it was better described as the antiwar movement. Once again, the emphasis was on the problem, not on the solution.

The problem was a big one: war. Within a couple of years, the movement grew enormously, but the focus narrowed: it became opposition to nuclear weapons and nuclear war. There were huge rallies around the world. In Canberra in 1982 we had the biggest rally and march that anyone could remember. It seemed like the movement would keep growing until it was successful. After all, the future of the human species was at stake, and popular opinion was strongly in favour of reducing nuclear arsenals. But within a few years, the movement dwindled away to nothing and nuclear war dropped off the media agenda. After the end of the cold war in 1989, it seemed the danger had passed — except that there were still tens of thousands of nuclear weapons in arsenals around the world.

I was interested in strategy against the war system. Most people in the movement focussed on nuclear weapons. Sure, they are bad, but I saw them as one manifestation of the war system. Without tackling the system, problems were going to recur. So I delved into what I thought were the driving forces behind the war system: the state, bureaucracy, the military, science and technology, patriarchy ... yes, it certainly was the big picture. Tackling these roots of war meant having strategies against the state, bureaucracy and so forth.

The encouraging part of this exploration was that no matter what problem I thought about — little or big — I could find people trying to challenge it, and sometimes whole movements. My main message to peace activists was to look at the roots of war and start thinking how to challenge them.¹ Unfortunately, not many were listening!

The other side of my analysis was to think of alternatives to the war system. I looked at several I thought were especially

¹ Brian Martin, *Uprooting War* (London: Freedom Press, 1984).

promising: social defence, peace conversion and self-management. In Canberra Peacemakers, most of our effort was oriented to social defence. Most people had never heard of it. We came up with a description: “nonviolent community resistance to aggression as an alternative to military defence.” It means using strikes, boycotts, sit-ins, vigils, rallies and various other methods to oppose an invasion or coup.²

Quite a few people had written about social defence and there were advocacy groups in a few countries. In Canberra Peacemakers we produced a broadsheet, organised workshops, produced a slide show and worked with members of a community radio station.

We raised awareness about social defence, but it was tough going. Most people, when they think of “defence,” think of military defence — and they think of defence by professionals, namely military personnel. They don’t think of citizen action; they don’t think of what they might do themselves to resist aggression. So we pulled out the best examples we could find, for example popular resistance to military coups in Germany in 1920 and Algeria in 1961, and civilian uprisings that, with little or no violence, had ousted dictators in places like Guatemala and Haiti.

We made contact with other groups promoting social defence, in the US, Netherlands, Italy, Britain and elsewhere. But we were going against the tide. Perhaps it was too early to have a chance of converting from military defence to social defence.

Meanwhile, I became involved with the issue of dissent, initially collecting information about scientists who came under attack because of their environmental teaching or research.

² My publications on this are at <http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/sd.html>.

Environmental concern is mainstream today, but in the 1970s taking a pro-environment position was risky for a career scientist. These scientists had publications blocked, access to research data restricted or tenure denied.³

Over the years, this led me into a wider variety of cases of suppression of dissent, from doctors to government employees.⁴ In 1991, a new organisation was set up to support whistleblowers in Australia and before long I became involved. Indeed I was president of Whistleblowers Australia 1996–1999 and continue today as a vice president.

Looking at whistleblowing was definitely a matter of regularly confronting negatives. An honest employee raises concern about some problem in the organisation — dubious finances, appointments, products, whatever — and before long suffers a host of reprisals including ostracism, petty harassment, reprimands, demotion, punitive transfers, referral to psychiatrists, dismissal and blacklisting. The impacts on whistleblowers are horrific.

The usual response to this is to advocate laws to protect whistleblowers, but unfortunately such laws hardly ever seem to work. Often they aren’t enforced or employers know how to get around them. More fundamentally, whistleblower laws operate too late and too slowly. Usually the worker has already spoken out and suffered reprisals.

My preference is to encourage workers to develop skills so they can be more effective in addressing the issue of concern,

³ Brian Martin, “The scientific straightjacket: the power structure of science and the suppression of environmental scholarship,” *The Ecologist*, 11 (1), January-February 1981, 33–43.

⁴ Brian Martin, C. M. Ann Baker, Clyde Manwell and Cedric Pugh (eds.), *Intellectual Suppression: Australian Case Histories, Analysis and Responses* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1986).

skills such as gathering information, building a personal support network, preparing a cogent argument and liaising with outside groups.⁵ With these skills, the goal is to tackle the problem, not just to speak out about it. The reality is that most whistleblowers have very little impact on the problems they raise the alarm about. Often it is better to lie low and wait for the right opportunity to expose the problem. Often leaking information to media or action groups is far more effective than speaking out and becoming a martyr.

In the back of my mind, I was always aware of the shortcomings of focusing on trying to fix problems. With whistleblowers there were usually two problems: the one they spoke out about — corruption, abuse, danger to the public — and the treatment of the whistleblower, namely reprisals. But where in this focus on whistleblowers and their tribulations was there any attention to what was going well in organisations? Well, it wasn't anywhere.

In my studies of nonviolent action, I became interested in a process called political jiu-jitsu. Protesters sometimes are physically attacked. In 1930, Gandhi organised a protest to challenge the British salt monopoly in India. At that time, India was a British colony. As part of the British government's exploitation of the country, salt was taxed and Indians were banned from making it themselves. The tax wasn't all that great but Gandhi realised it was a powerful symbol of the oppressiveness of British rule.

The British conquered India in the 1700s. At that time, the standard of living for Indian workers wasn't that different from British workers, but British colonial exploitation strangled the Indian economy. Today, we might imagine that in 1930 Indians

were all passionate for independence, but actually the country was fragmented by class, caste, religion and gender. The British used divide-and-rule techniques to maintain control with only a tiny physical presence.

Gandhi's great challenge was unite the Indian people against British rule. (Meanwhile, he was also opposing other forms of oppression such as caste.) The salt protest was designed to do this. Gandhi organised a 24-day march to the sea with the intention of making salt from seawater, a form of civil disobedience to the salt monopoly. The march captured the imagination of people around the country and put the British rulers in a dilemma: act against Gandhi and the marchers and stimulate even greater resistance, or let the march continue and gather momentum.

I won't go into all the details; one facet is important here. After the conclusion of the march, Indian protesters staged nonviolent "raids" against a saltworks. They walked forward, peacefully, until they were met by police, armed with batons, who beat them, often brutally, leaving them injured and bleeding; other activists carried them away to hospitals.

The usual idea is that nonviolence is weak: a bit of violence stops the protests. But this ignores the impact of the interaction on others. The salt march and subsequent arrests and beatings inflamed the nation, helping foster a spirit of resistance that transformed the struggle. The British, by beating a few defenceless protesters, massively stimulated support for the independence struggle within India.

One of those witnessing the beatings was a US journalist named Webb Miller. He wrote eloquent accounts of what he saw and managed to get them past British attempts at censorship. His stories were read widely in Britain, the US and other countries

⁵ Brian Martin, *The Whistleblower's Handbook: How to Be an Effective Resister* (Charlbury, UK: Jon Carpenter; Sydney: Envirobook, 1999).

and were instrumental in changing attitudes about the independence struggle.

Richard Gregg, a young man from the US, went to India in the 1920s to study Gandhi's campaigns. He wrote a book titled *The Power of Nonviolence* in which he coined the term "moral jiu-jitsu" to explain the reaction to the salt march beatings and other such assaults. Basically, he likened nonviolent action to the sport of jiu-jitsu, in which the opponent's weight and momentum are used against them: when nonviolent protesters are attacked, the result can be greater support for the protesters.⁶

Decades later, leading nonviolence researcher Gene Sharp took Gregg's concept and modified it. Gregg had given a psychological explanation for moral jiu-jitsu. Sharp instead gave a broader explanation involving social and political factors, calling the phenomenon "political jiu-jitsu." Sharp gave lots of examples, for example the shooting of protesters in the 1905 Russian revolution that undermined support for the Czar and laid the basis for the successful 1917 revolution.⁷

With colleagues Wendy Varney and Adrian Vickers, I wrote an article about how sometimes there was very little resistance to violent attacks, using examples from Indonesia, including the 1965–1966 massacres in which over half a million people were killed. Following reports from referees, I introduced

⁶ Richard B. Gregg, *The Power of Nonviolence*, 2d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1966).

⁷ Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1973).

political jiu-jitsu as a concept to help make sense of what had happened.⁸

This got me thinking about reactions to violent attacks and in 2002 I had an insight: why is it that violent attacks on protesters sometimes *don't* generate greater support? I started thinking of what the attackers did to prevent the jiu-jitsu effect. This led me to develop the backfire framework.

The basic idea is that powerful perpetrators of something that people might see as unjust — such as beatings or killings of peaceful protesters — will use five sorts of methods to inhibit public outrage.

- Cover up the action.
- Devalue the target.
- Reinterpret what happened by lying, minimising the consequences, blaming others and framing events differently.
- Use official channels to give an appearance of justice.
- Intimidate or bribe people involved.

When I started looking at injustices — for example the massacre of protesters in Dili, East Timor, in 1991 — I found evidence of these methods, often all five of them. So political jiu-jitsu didn't always occur when nonviolent protesters were attacked — it depended on the outrage-management methods used by the attackers and on how effectively they used those methods.

To distinguish this model from Sharp's concept of political jiu-jitsu, I adopted the term "backfire": when the methods to inhibit outrage are unsuccessful, the attack can backfire on the attackers, namely be counterproductive.

⁸ Brian Martin, Wendy Varney and Adrian Vickers, "Political jiu-jitsu against Indonesian repression: studying lower-profile nonviolent resistance," *Pacifica Review*, 13 (2), June 2001, 143–156.

Rather than just apply this model to violent attacks on peaceful protesters, I started looking at all sorts of issues. I collaborated with Sue Curry Jansen, an expert on censorship, to examine instances in which attempted censorship had backfired, such as the defamation suit by McDonald's against two anarchists, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, over their participation in writing a leaflet titled "What's wrong with McDonald's?"⁹ I collaborated with Steve Wright, a leading authority on the technology of repression, on tactics used by governments that manufacture, sell and use torture technology.¹⁰ In the following years I looked at the beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police in 1991, at the dismissal of biologist Ted Steele from the University of Wollongong in 2001, at the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam war in 1968 (in collaboration with Truda Gray), and at the 1994 Rwanda genocide, among others.¹¹

At some point during my work on the backfire model, applying it to one case study after another and finding ample evidence of the same sorts of tactics, I realised I was focussing on bad things, such as censorship, unfair dismissal, torture and genocide. These are all important: being able to predict the tactics used by powerful perpetrators can be valuable. But what about the other side of life? What about good things?

That was the genesis of my study of ways to make good things better. I had looked at tactics used by perpetrators of things perceived as unjust and at counter-tactics by those

9 Sue Curry Jansen and Brian Martin, "Making censorship backfire," *Counterpoise*, 7(3), July 2003, 5–15.

10 Brian Martin and Steve Wright, "Countershock: mobilizing resistance to electroshock weapons," *Medicine, Conflict and Survival*, 19 (3), July-September 2003, 205–222.

11 See "Backfire materials," <http://www.bmartin.cc/pubs/backfire.html>.

opposed to injustice, so I was attuned to looking at tactics. However, looking at good things was not an obvious switch. Although I had long been interested in alternatives, such as alternatives to nuclear power and to the military, an alternative is not quite the same thing as a good thing.

An alternative is something that could exist, or maybe it does exist but could be expanded or improved. Energy efficiency, for example, is good if it's cheaper and less dangerous than producing energy from nuclear power, coal or even solar power. However, energy efficiency is not a good thing in isolation. It's part of an energy system and, in that context, it's a good thing as an alternative to bad things. That's fine, and I'm all for energy efficiency, but it's not quite what I wanted to tackle. A good thing is something in the here and now that well informed people widely recognise as worthwhile and, if asked, would desire to do better or to do more of it. In other words, I wanted to look at tactics in support of good things seen as good in themselves.

The difference between alternatives and good things is a matter of degree — there's a big overlap. Tactics for doing good things better can be applied to promoting alternatives and every good thing can be seen as an alternative. I suppose I wanted to get away from issues that are highly contentious.

I've already mentioned that there's a lot more research on understanding and fixing problems than on understanding and promoting good things. There's also vastly more research on explaining and understanding than on practical action; in the social sciences, there's hardly any analysis of tactics. By studying tactics to do good things better, I've departed from the mainstream of research. That's fine with me.

My approach

My aim was to come up with a set of methods — which might also be called actions or tactics — that protect and promote good things. So how to proceed?

I could start by looking at good things, such as happiness and friendship, and seeing what sorts of things protect and promote them. This would be the approach of grounded theory: look at the data with few preconceived ideas and gradually build up a theoretical framework — a set of ideas — that fits the data.¹² This would be a promising approach for studying a particular area, such as friendship. I could look at actual friendships, observing them myself or inspecting primary data, and develop a set of tactics for protecting and promoting friendship. This would be most valuable — but it is a different sort of project. There would be no guarantee that the tactics to support friendship would apply to other areas. I was looking for a more general framework than is likely with a grounded theory approach.

To speed up the process, instead of looking at individual friendships, I could look at the work of others who have studied friendship, drawing on their generalisations. Ideally, I could find a definitive account of research into friendship and could pick out a set of methods to promote it. This wouldn't take nearly so long as developing my own grounded theory and would enable me to do the same with a range of other topics, such as happiness.

However, finding a definitive account of research in an area is not always easy. I started reading general books on friendship,

finding a range of perspectives and comments. What I would have liked to find was a textbook on friendship, summarising research findings in the field in a logical way. Textbooks do this in quite a few fields, such as nutrition, government or nursing. That's because these areas are so developed that there's a body of established research findings and lots of students taking classes to become practitioners — nutritionists, political scientists or nurses, for example. But friendship is not a field like this. There is no standard occupation of "friendship promoter" and, therefore, little incentive to codify the research findings in a convenient form such as a textbook. The same applies to several of the good things I proposed to look at, such as citizen advocacy and chamber music.

Because of this shortage of easily accessible frameworks in particular areas, I decided to use one of my own. One way would be to use a framework in an area where there is a degree of consensus, such as happiness, or to develop a framework of my own from scratch. I wasn't making much progress when I had an idea: what about using my framework for studying tactics against injustice, but adapt it to look at good things?

As already described, according to the backfire model, powerful perpetrators of something potentially perceived as unjust are likely to use one or more of five methods to reduce outrage:

- Cover up the action.
- Devalue the target.
- Reinterpret what happened by lying, minimising the consequences, blaming others and framing events differently.
- Use official channels to give an appearance of justice.
- Intimidate or bribe people involved.

¹² Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1967).

So far, this framework doesn't have much connection with methods for protecting and promoting good things. The connection comes from looking at counter-tactics to the perpetrator's tactics. These can be conveniently grouped into five categories, responding to each of the perpetrator's tactics.

- Expose the action.
- Validate the target.
- Interpret the events as an injustice.
- Avoid or discredit official channels; instead, mobilise support.
- Resist intimidation and bribery.

I had found, through looking at a wide range of struggles, that these five types of counter-tactics were often used.

My next thought was to apply these counter-tactics to good things. Of course, to support good things, there's often no injustice or opponent. What or who, for example, is the opponent of friendship? So adapting these tactics against injustice to become methods to support good things wouldn't necessarily make a lot of sense.

To see whether this approach would work, I examined case studies, such as happiness and chamber music, to see whether the methods were involved. This required modification of some of the tactics.

Expose the action becomes expose the good thing or, for an individual, becoming aware of the good thing. The key concept here is awareness.

Validate the target becomes value the good thing. The key concept is validation or, in other words, seeing something as having value. I chose the word "valuing" as clearer than "validation."

Interpret the events as an injustice becomes interpret the thing as good or worthwhile. Interpretation is essentially to explain something. In the backfire model, reinterpretation — by the perpetrator of something perceived by others as unjust — is *explaining away*, namely explaining things in any way except that what happened was unjust. Possible techniques include lying, minimising the consequences, blaming others and framing the events in a way that makes them more acceptable. None of these techniques seems very relevant to good things, unless what's involved is countering the opponents of good things. So as a preliminary version of this tactic, I simply used understanding as the key concept.

Avoid or discredit official channels; instead, mobilise support. Figuring out how this applies to good things was not easy. The idea in the backfire model is that when a powerful individual or organisation does something seen as reprehensible — a massacre of peaceful protesters is a prime example — then to dampen popular outrage, those involved may use experts, government agencies, official investigations or courts to give an appearance of justice, but without the substance. Many people believe that formal procedures do indeed provide justice, so referring a matter to an ombudsman or a court makes it seem like things will be dealt with properly. My studies showed that this is often an illusion. In the aftermath of prominent massacres and police beatings, governments set up inquiries that either white-washed the perpetrators or targeted low-level functionaries. In cases of whistleblowing and unfair dismissal, the various appeal agencies typically are slow, procedural and expensive: they operate in ways that dampen outrage.

So what does this imply for good things? When powerful perpetrators do bad things, the official channels seldom work — they give only an appearance of justice. That's why it's neces-

sary to mobilise support, as an alternative to formal processes. For good things, official channels should do exactly the opposite: they should work. So for the corresponding tactic I came to the idea of endorsement: to support good things, they should be endorsed, whether by powerful bodies or by lots of people.

Resist intimidation and bribery is the final counter-tactic in the backfire model. It doesn't immediately seem all that relevant to good things. Why would intimidation and bribery be involved, after all? To get a useful tactic for supporting good things, it's useful to think about the core idea behind resisting. Resisting as a counter-tactic means doing something about the injustice despite the risks and temptations, namely despite the risks of retaliation and the temptations of some form of reward. Applied to good things, the implication is simply to do the good thing.

In summary, by adapting the counter-tactics for increasing outrage over injustice, I came up with a preliminary list of methods for supporting good things.

- Become aware of it.
- Value it.
- Understand it.
- Have it endorsed.
- Do it.

It's a very simple and general framework, which is exactly what I wanted. A complex framework, with lots of variations and qualifications, would not be so useful. As a general framework, it is more likely to apply to different sorts of good things, whereas a framework specific to one good thing might not be so relevant to another.

Is there something important not included in this simple framework? I could find out by looking at case studies. I had

some confidence in the framework's coverage of methods of support by noting that the five methods cover different domains.

- Become aware of it: domain of information
- Value it: domain of emotion
- Understand it: domain of knowledge or cognition
- Have it endorsed: domain of authority
- Do it: domain of action.

In practice, these domains overlap. For example, emotion and cognition interact. But is there some important domain missing? I was soon to find out.

I started by analysing writing: if being able to write well is a good thing, then how can it be protected and promoted? It turned out that all the five methods are relevant. But there was something else. As an individual, you can support your own writing by being aware of it and so forth — especially by doing it — but I soon realised that the key to easily maintaining a writing habit is not eternal vigilance, namely using willpower to keep writing, but being in a supportive context. For example, if you have a room and a time and a plan, daily writing is far easier to maintain.

So there's another dimension, which can be called context or the environment. But it's not just one more method to add to the list, because every one of the five methods is relevant at both the individual level and the level of the context or environment.

I soon found that much attention to doing good things is oriented to the individual. The vast motivation industry is symptomatic. Promoting individual motivation certainly can be valuable. It typically covers all five of the methods for supporting the goal: awareness, valuing, understanding, endorsement and action. But in many cases changing one's environment isn't emphasised so much. And the option of changing social

arrangements, namely people working together to change the environment in ways to support good things, was missing.

In real life, the process of protecting and promoting good things is complicated, contingent on circumstances and sometimes filled with dilemmas. No model can possibly capture the full complexity of life — nor would it be sensible to try to attempt a full representation, because then the model would be reality itself. The whole point of a model is to simplify the thing being modelled, to aid in making sense of it. There are always many different ways to model something, so the key to a useful model is choosing a viewpoint helpful for the purpose intended.¹³

The model I outline here is intended to assist practitioners — namely, people trying to do good things better. Scholars usually have a different aim: they want to understand and explain the world. Sometimes this is useful for practical purposes, but often it is not, because it serves the purposes of academics more than anyone else, with the result more obscure than practical.

The model here is intentionally simple. That's partly so it can apply to many different sorts of good things. It's also simple because people trying to do good things already know a lot of the detail, usually far more than any outsider can hope to grasp. The value of the model is to point to some obvious elements found in lots of different cases and thus to encourage reflection about what is being done in any particular instance. If the model points to one or two things that might have been overlooked, I think it is worthwhile.

¹³ Brian Martin, "On the value of simple ideas," *Information Liberation* (London: Freedom Press, 1998), 143–163.