

Comment on Sarah Schulman's *Conflict Is Not Abuse*

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I think the book contains extremely important messages, which all of us need to pay attention to. So, I highly recommend the book.

I agree with most of the points made in the book. For example, the idea of relating Supremacy with Traumatization appears reasonable to me. In fact, I have been thinking about the connection in terms of the underlying psychological state of insecurity. Referring to attachment theory, Supremacy can be associated with the “avoidant” type of insecurity and Traumatization, with the “disorganized” type of insecurity. The former is explored in, e.g., Madeline Levine’s *The price of privilege* (2006), the latter is discussed in a number of trauma books including, Gabor Maté’s *In the realm of hungry ghosts* (2010).

I also agree with the author’s point of applying the same approach to all sorts of relationships, from individual to world-wide. In this dangerously “nationalistic” era, it is exceedingly important to realize differences and resolve conflicts peacefully.

Next, here are a few complaints. Although it may be just me, I did not feel like going through all the twitter and other on-line postings in the way presented in a later chapter. I would prefer a summary with occasional quotes.

Another thing I didn’t like was a statement on page 140, “I’m the opposite of a Buddhist, as I believe in action.” Although I’m not a Buddhist, this statement seems to be offensive to those who are familiar with Buddhism. There are engaged Buddhists and there are known/unknown contributions to peace by Buddhists and Buddhist-inspired people. Actually, I would like to note that battling with the common source of Supremacy/Traumatization is the number one priority in Buddhism (at least, as I understand it). That is, one of the main source of insecurity is attachment/aversion and that is what Buddhists are trying to address throughout the last 2,500 years. So, I would not be surprised to see Buddhists (or Buddhist-inspired people) actually practicing something analogous to the author’s approach without/before reading this book.

Now, the application of the author’s approach to all the areas on the relationship spectrum is not new to Buddhism either. The only reference to Buddhism in the book is Tara Brach. But I wonder what the author (and other readers of the book) would think about a broader range of the Buddhist literature, e.g., Andrew Olendzki’s *Unlimiting mind* (2010), which explains Buddhist ideas quite relevant to this book. While there may be things in this book that may not appeal to some people, there may be things that may be quite convincing. My own feeling is that the paths described in Olendzki and Schulman have a lot in common.

Anyway, not everyone is interested in the Buddhist writing. So, for those, Schulman’s book must be a very good resource.