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All conflicts and wars originate in the minds of human beings. A deeper understanding of the divergent interests, attitudes, fears and prejudices involved, would facilitate the realistic and creative resolution of conflicts. Social scientists have studied ethnic conflicts, making quantitative statistical comparisons, superficial opinion surveys, and historical and theoretical analysis, relatively ignoring the in-depth investigation of psychological attitudes and interests.

Good novelists, competent actors and actresses, and individuals who have harmonious relationship with others, have all a natural capacity for empathy and are able to appreciate the attitudes of others and temporarily see problems as another person sees them.

A competent investigator, who does not favour any side and is concerned for the welfare of all, has an open flexible mind ready to learn without prior fixed conclusions and has a capacity to temporarily empathise with others, can interview diverse individuals informally as opportunities arise and question them on diverse aspects of the conflict, listening quietly without judgement or condemnation, trying to genuinely see as he or she sees with temporary identification. The results can be noted later and generalisation and classification made, without ignoring the uniqueness of each individual. Insights can be gained by pondering and wondering, and the understanding rigourously and systematically presented and communicated to other social scientists, criticised, modified and improved.

Deeper understanding gained through such studies through empathy, can be communicated to the wider public to promote harmonising enlightened self-interest and reduce divisive narrow self-interest.