

# Questions and Tasks for Truthforce Research

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In order to gain deeper and broader knowledge of truthforce (Gütekraft), the truthforce working group ([www.guetekraft.net](http://www.guetekraft.net)) is collecting questions which are relevant to research in this field. We would like to stimulate readers to come forward with their own research ideas and proposals, so we present here some examples of research tasks from existing lists. We are seeking to encourage students and research workers to undertake research in this field (e.g. for a seminar, dissertation or thesis). The truthforce working group is willing to provide assistance, e.g. by putting interested people in touch with particular persons or institutions or by suggesting relevant literature. We also invite anyone, who wishes to do so, to present experiences of truthforce which they themselves have experienced.

## 1. Particularly urgent

is the investigation of documents and literature: Reports about truthforce activities, the effects and the results of truthforce and of related activities with similar aims, case descriptions and case studies should be universally accessible as far as possible (e.g. on the internet), e.g. with the use of Archive Active (contact: Wolfgang Hertle [[wolfgang.hertle@gmx.de](mailto:wolfgang.hertle@gmx.de)]). Literature in the field of truthforce research should be carefully collected and systematised and at the same time made accessible for all on the internet.

## 2. Understanding of Ourselves and of Truthforce

1. Burkhard Bläsi has investigated what people who have practised truthforce for many years say about their experience. He has developed a psychological theory by examining the main factors that are at work in the change processes of truthforce. This research work, entitled “Konflikttransformation durch Gütekraft” (“The Transformation of Conflict by Truthforce”) is the first analytical work of this kind. His theory should be reviewed and further developed, e.g. through interviews with both parties to particular conflicts, examining unsuccessful cases, and systematic observation of actors during the process of working through conflict.
2. How do people, individually and collectively, make sense of subjective experiences of the application of truthforce?
3. What processes of cause and effect can be identified: What has helped to solve conflicts which seemed insoluble? What enabled the conflict parties to be open to one another, to make contact with each other and to exchange information? Which measures helped in confidence-building and reconciliation? What is seen as success and what is seen as failure?
4. The way in which protagonists of truthforce view the effects of their actions is largely determined by their subjective, culturally biased convictions and values. They do not necessarily coincide with the actual cause-and-effect processes which are the basis of conflict transformation. Common threads in different views about the way in which truthforce works may well be of fundamental importance to the understanding of

truthforce, i.e. in building up a body of theory. There is a need for a comparative study of the various concepts and theories of protagonists and organisations in different cultural, religious and ideological contexts, e.g. Gandhi, King, Goss-Mayr, Catholic Worker, AVP, etc.

There is also a need to examine practice and compare this with theory (consistence or congruence analysis). This needs to be done in order to validate and refine theory and in order to obtain possible criteria for a scientific theory of truthforce. This is a complex task for a number of disciplines: theology, philosophy of religion, science of religion, psychology of religion, ethnology, history, social science and social psychology.

5. Interdisciplinary research (involving ethnology, science of religion, theology and social sciences) into truthforce in major religions and traditions could make a significant contribution to the peacemaking role of religion (WCC Decade to Overcome Violence, meeting of religious leaders in Assisi, etc.) and particularly to inter-religious dialogue.

### **3. Development of the Concept**

1. Violent acts are sometimes carried out with the best of intentions, e.g. when parents who want the best for their children beat them, so that they may behave better in the future, or when military action is taken to prevent genocide. Benevolent intention plays an important part in truthforce, but truthforce is not to be equated with benevolent intention. Can the theory of knowledge or systems theory help with the development of a concept of truthforce which will be difficult to misuse?
2. Fictional literature, religious texts, customs and everyday habits may contain important information which throws light on the basic questions about truthforce. How is the power of the concept of truthforce understood in these different contexts (including those where there is no mention of truthforce as such)?
3. To what extent does the inner consistency or congruence between the basic values of the actor, their use of specific ways of reaching their goals and the goals themselves determine successful “truthforce-ful” behaviour?
4. Is there a difference between “truthforce-ful” conflict solving behaviour of women and men and what significance does this have for our understanding of truthforce?
5. Is it the case that only non-governmental groups can act in accordance with truthforce, due to the fact that there is no apparatus of authority in the background?
6. “Tactical non-violence” or “principled nonviolence”: Can these two methods bring about the same patterns of change?

### **4. Important Case Studies**

1. The foremost example of the use of truthforce is the ending of the Marcos regime in the Philippines in 1986. The ending of the dictatorship was preceded by a long process of systematic preparations. This needs to be researched and evaluated thoroughly as regards the effects of truthforce. And there needs to be a critical assessment of the results of research.
2. In mid-India between 1960 and 1972 Gandhians managed to encourage robbers to give themselves up and hand their weapons over to the police. In many countries there are people who earn their livelihood from the use of weapons. This is a major problem. Police operations are usually ineffective. There is a need for research into attempts, such as that in India, to resolve the problem by means of truthforce. Why were the robbers ready to

give up their lives as outlaws? Can this be transferred to other situations? These and other questions need to be answered.

3. "The collapse of the German Democratic Republic and events preceding it": The effects of truthforce should be researched and evaluated. And there needs to be a critical assessment of the results of research.
4. In the Alternatives to Violence Project violent prisoners are taught non-violence skills in accordance with the concept of "transforming power" (a term coined by Quakers) which is akin to "truthforce". Evaluation (both qualitative and quantitative) of the results of training programmes should provide valuable evidence of the effects of truthforce and indicate ways in which the training might be improved.
5. Accompanying research during activities (e.g. campaigns, interventions) of groups and organisations of social movements. Evaluation of the activities of groups who use only "truthforce-ful" means to achieve their goals, e.g. x1000mal Quer, EUCOMMunity, Wittstock, attac (?), "Jericho in der Eifel", Zivile Inspektion in Büchel (Civil Inspection in Büchel). Comparative study. Methods: Interviews, observation and the analysis of documents. Criteria for use in evaluation should be obtained both from activists and from broader tradition. It should also be clear that accompanying research is part and parcel of the process of evaluation. A thorough analysis of effects can be useful to actors as a means of monitoring the success of their actions. Comparative study of "Larzac" and "Gorleben".

## **5. The Use of Truthforce and its Mode of Operation**

1. What are the significant factors influencing the effectiveness of consciousness-raising, protest and resistance against political decisions? (Opinion polls about personal feelings, changes in public opinion on certain issues, and about the causes of certain voting behaviour and decisions by politicians).
2. Non-violent accompaniment and protection (Peace Brigades International) and the monitoring of violent situations: Which method works: Deterrence (Eguren / Mahony)? Truthforce? Or both?
3. What processes of de-escalation work by means of truthforce?
4. Evaluation: What part can truthforce play in the process of reconciliation? Goal: Requirements for effective reconciliation, e.g. helping to improve communication between former warring factions.

## **6. Truthforce amongst Activists**

What experiences have been made in the peace movement with consensus and mediation in conflict situations? Should all groups in the peace movement have the right of co-determination regardless of their different backgrounds, requirements and abilities? Can these groups work together without hierarchy? When is hierarchy helpful? How much hierarchy is appropriate? Which forms of debate on delicate or controversial issues helped to avoid giving offence or discriminating against certain groups during the process of developing a constructive common solution? How can a variety of opinions and interests be given due respect? What are the differences and similarities between nonviolent movements from various cultural backgrounds around the world? What can be learnt from this?

## **7. Experiments with Truthforce**

1. Controlled empirical research (under laboratory conditions) of micro-processes: Under what conditions does cooperation between conflict partners lead to overall benefits? To what extent is the creation of such benefits dependent upon the limited nature of available resources? Experimental games, inter-group research: The effects of co-operation within groups and between groups and the outside world.
2. Experimental conflict research: How does “truthforce-ful” behaviour work in comparison with other forms of behaviour depending on a variety of factors: make up of the group, form of interaction, variations in behaviour, behaviour of individuals, issues at stake, etc.
3. Field experiments: e.g. cooperation with an organisation which is trying to carry out a campaign in several regions or localities. Actors in different localities will be asked to use different strategies. Data: Behaviour as indicator, interviews with all involved, counting of members of different groups, etc.

## **8. Learning to Apply Truthforce**

1. Does nonviolence training increase competence to engage in nonviolent action or, in other words, “truthforce-ful” behaviour? If yes, which elements of training contribute significantly to the development of such competence? The evaluation of training may provide some indication of significant characteristics of “truthforce-ful” behaviour and at the same time show where training methods may be improved.
2. How do people develop “truthforce-ful” attitudes? What influence can be attributed to the following factors: social environment, personal experience, self-image, peer group pressure, painful sanctions, frequency and type of contact with “the others”, and acceptance of various sources of information?
3. The power and influence of emotions: What part is played - in political groups, in affinity groups, and in the level of trust or mistrust towards politicians and rich people - by confidence in one’s own power to make things happen and one’s own powers of judgement (and that of others)?
4. The development of self-knowledge; knowledge of one’s own strength’s, one’s shadow side and violent aspects of one’s personality; experience of oneself, personal life history, self-respect, repertoire of behaviour, playing the role of victim; social environment, stage in life, crises and learning processes, spiritual development, how one behaves towards oneself, internalised oppression, blind spots, what one attributes to oneself: What is counted as being due to personal achievement? chance? personal failure?
5. What sources of strength have been discovered by individuals, groups and organisations? What difficulties have they faced? What solutions have they found?