

Puccini's *Tosca*, and the Journey toward Respect for Equal Dignity for All

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Summary

This is a story of an opera and how it applies to the need to build a world worth living in, for our children and all beings, and the obstacles on the path to get there. Modern-day topics such as terrorism and gender relations are part of this quest. This text starts with a brief description of the opera, and then addresses its relevance for the transition toward a world that manifests the ideals of the French Revolution of *liberté, égalité, and fraternité*, a motto that is also at the core of modern-day human rights ideals: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood (and sisterhood).”

The opera

Yesterday, I had the privilege of seeing the opera *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini, at the Metropolitan Opera in New York. It is an opera based on Victorien Sardou's 1887 French-language dramatic play, *La Tosca*. In the program leaflet we read:

No opera is more tied to its setting than *Tosca*: Rome, the morning of June 17, 1800, through dawn the following day. The specified settings for each of the three acts – the Church of Sant'Andrea della Valle, Palazzo Farnese, and Castel Sant'Angelo – are familiar monuments in the city and can still be visited today.¹

It is a melodramatic piece, containing depictions of torture, murder and suicide. The score and drama are prime examples of the style of *verismo* or “realism.”

The historical context is as follows: In 1796, following the French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte and his army invaded Italy, which had long been divided into small states, with the Pope in Rome ruling the Papal States.

The King of Naples, Ferdinand IV, was a member of the House of Bourbon and thus opposed to the French Revolution and Napoleon. Ferdinand tried to resist Napoleon, and, in 1798, he briefly occupied Rome. But the French Revolutionary forces expelled the Neapolitans within the year. Ferdinand fled to Sicily while the French armies installed a Parthenopaeian Republic, which was ruled by seven consuls, among them consul Libero Angelucci, who appears in the opera as Angelotti.²

However, the clergy inspired a peasant counter-revolution that allowed Ferdinand to return to his capital. In this moment, we meet the Chief of Police in the opera, Baron Scarpia, and Angelotti is imprisoned. Yet, Napoleon soon returned. The opera plays on the day of the Battle of Marengo that was fought on June 14, 1800, between French forces under Napoleon and Austrian forces near the city of Alessandria, in Piedmont, Italy. At first, Napoleon seemed to lose the

battle, yet, at the end of the day, the situation turned into his victory. The opera begins with the celebration of what still is believed to be a victory, until the message arrives that defeat was the true end result of the battle. The Neapolitans thereafter abandoned Rome, and the city spent the next fourteen years under French domination.

The opera highlights the republican ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité* that inspired many people around Europe, before a new dominator, Napoleon trampled over many of those ideals. A representative of the past dominator order, Scarpia, drives republican idealists into their death, first Angelotti, together with his friend, the painter Mario Cavaradossi, and, finally, also Cavaradossi's lover, Tosca.

The opera highlights also the fickleness of power by playing out in a situation, where people could lose their heads in one moment, and become rulers in the next moment. Angelotti preferred to take his own life just before being apprehended. A few hours more time, and he could have returned as a consul. And his friend Cavaradossi could have returned to painting. Only devoutly religious Tosca would have had on her conscience that she killed evil Scarpia.

Yet, perhaps mostly, the opera highlights how the power games of superiors can be used and abused by lower ranks for extorting favors. Scarpia uses his position of power over the life of Tosca's lover to coerce her into letting him rape her. She pays the highest price, first with becoming a murderess, then with her lover's death, and finally with her own death.

So far the opera. It is yet another opera that the myth that opera is nothing but boring stuff for ignorant people who live in the past, who have too much money and too much time to invest it into snobbish status show-offs (I always get the least-costly seats with partial view half a year ahead, since I live almost without money). Also this opera was and is scandalous and educational.

A world caught in the security dilemma

The right to kill infidels

This opera teaches many things, among them humility. This is what we hear quite in the beginning of the opera: “Chi contrista un miscredente si guadagna un’indulgenza!” The English translation says: “He who aggrieves a misbeliever earns an indulgence!”³ The German translation is even clearer in expressing what happens: “Wer einem Ketzler nachstellt, macht sich von einer Sünde rein!”⁴

Indeed, in this opera, even children are taught that it is their noble duty to hurt infidels. Does this not eerily remind of contemporary voices such as the following:

In September, Sheikh Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, the Islamic State's chief spokesman, called on Muslims in Western countries such as France and Canada to find an infidel and “smash his head with a rock,” poison him, run him over with a car, or “destroy his crops.” To Western ears, the biblical-sounding punishments—the stoning and crop destruction—juxtaposed strangely with his more modern-sounding call to vehicular homicide. (As if to show that he could terrorize by imagery alone, Adnani also referred to Secretary of State John Kerry as an “uncircumcised geezer.”)⁵

If we wish to understand contemporary terrorism, to my view, it is of utmost importance to learn to respect the sincerity and “goodness” that stands behind the motivation to protect “one’s own people” against *the Other*, be it “infidels” or other kinds of “enemies.” This opera is like a mirror, where people in the West see that what they despise in terrorists was their own culture not long ago – and, if they look carefully, it still is, in many ways.

During the past millennia of human history, the world was much less interconnected than today. In a compartmentalized world the security dilemma reigned: “I have to amass weapons, because I am scared. When I amass weapons, you get scared. You amass weapons, I get more scared.” In the context of a strong security dilemma, out-group relations follow the motto of Vegetius, “if you want peace, prepare for war,” or that of Carl von Clausewitz, “the best defense is a good offense.”

In such a context, dominator societies emerged, with a strong-man at the top, to use the terminology of social scientist Riane Eisler,⁶ and an honor culture making men proud of combat. Strong-arm systems were built that defined peace in terms of stability and control. In an honor context, “doing nothing” is to appear “weak,” while showing strength and readiness to defend oneself with violence means being “honorable.”

In my book *Making Enemies*,⁷ I point out how the George W. Bush administration of the United States of America, for instance, was deeply embedded into the *Southern Honor* that historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown describes in his book with the same title.⁸ Wyatt-Brown shows Southern inclination toward the “warrior ethic” embracing the following elements, namely “that the world should recognize a state’s high distinction; a dread of humiliation if that claim is not provided sufficient respect; a yearning for renown; and, finally, a compulsion for revenge when, in issues of both personal leadership calculations and in collective or national terms, repute for one or another virtue and self-justified power is repudiated.”⁹ David Hackett Fischer informs us that Southerners “strongly supported every American war no matter what it was about or who it was against.”¹⁰ Social psychologists Richard Nisbett and Dov Cohen¹¹ explain the psychology of violence in the culture of honor in the southern part of the United States. On page 109 of my book on humiliation and international conflict, I wrote:

Conceptualizations such as “‘they’ want to break our will, but ‘we’ won’t let it happen,” or “‘they’ are cowards,” or “*The enemy*” are embedded in gut feelings imbued with masculine norms of honor that thrive on contests of “strength,” on “keeping the upper hand,” on “victory,” and on avoiding appearing to be a “wimp” or a “sissy,” in other words, avoiding to appear “female.” In such a context, humiliating “*The enemy*” is felt to be legitimate, especially when this enemy does not act “manly” and thus is felt to forfeit the status as equal in honor. Terrorists are “unlawful” in this frame of mind because they “hide behind civilians” and are “cowards,” regardless of how much actual courage might be invested (even if misinvested). “Unlawful combatants” commit “treason” against traditional honor norms, which makes them “free” to be tortured. The introduction of categories such as “unlawful combatants” informs us that *Southern Honor*, though no longer openly invoked, is still permeating certain policies in the United States of America.¹²

The administration of George W. Bush is now the past, but the mindset is not. Nobody will doubt that former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Bolton is a sincere patriot. Allow me to share parts of an email sent out by him to his supporters on March 12, 2014, to make clear that within the confines of the security dilemma, goodness will translate into the yearning to prevail over one’s enemies:

Dear (name of the recipient),...

Our biggest national security threat is Barack Obama.

This is a president who does not believe in American exceptionalism, a president who is uninterested in national security and America's place in the world, who considers our strength part of the problem, and who believes that America is the cause of international tension...

Conservatives need to take this year to mobilize the vast majority of Americans who believe as we do – that America is the greatest nation on earth and that our leaders should start acting like it.¹³

John Bolton's universe of meaning aims at protecting the honor of the United States. He and his followers probably also agree with the necessity to use "enhanced interrogation" methods on suspected terrorist that others call torture, precisely to protect their country.¹⁴

The motto, "We do not wish to appear weak, we wish *them* to fear *us*!" is a motto that all sides use who are embedded into the way of thinking and feeling that the security dilemma engendered over the past ten or so millennia. In this cultural context, terminologies are used such as *victory* and *triumph* rather than concepts associated with dialogue among fellow victims of the security dilemma. All sides feel profoundly steeped in "goodness": the fear that *we* wish to inculcate in *them* is "honorable defense" that flows from our goodness, while the fear that "the enemy" wishes to inculcate in *us* is attributed to the enemy's evilness. Both sides feel exactly the same: "Their fear tactics are abominable, while *ours* are honorable." Or "While they'd better tremble in the face of our fear tactics, we must make sure that their fear tactics do not touch us." "Terrorists Want Us to Feel Insecure - 5 Ways to Triumph," is the title of an article in *Psychology Today*.¹⁵

If the transition to a peaceful world shall succeed, what needs to be highlighted is precisely the fact that the security dilemma in a divided world is a tragic dilemma, which turns fellow humans into enemies. This dilemma can be overcome by nurturing the fact that humanity is one single family rather than perpetuating a cruel culture of fear and threat beyond its necessity. This is a lesson that all sides would need to learn, including those whose rhetoric goes no further than "the terrorists will win if we let fear win."

On pages 43–44 in my *Making Enemies* book, I wrote that in the emerging global village, all concepts, ideas, and feelings formerly attached to out-group categorizations per definition lose their validity. When there is only *one* single in-group left, there can be no out-group. Out-group notions increasingly "hang in thin air" because they lose their former basis in reality. When a tree dies, it no longer bears fruit, and, while people may need time to grasp this, they cannot escape this new reality.

Words such as "*enemies*," "*wars*," "*victory*," and "*soldiers*" (as well as the already mentioned word "*they*," as opposed to "*us*") stem from times when the human population lived in many separate *villages*. Under the new circumstances *we* are citizens of *one* village, with no imperial *enemies* threatening from *outside*. There is, indeed, no *outside*. Likewise, there is no "*they*" anymore; there is only "*us*." The only sentence that fits the reality of any village, including the *global village*, is, "*We are all neighbors; some of us are good neighbors, some are bad neighbors, and in order to safeguard social peace we need police [no longer soldiers to defend against enemies in wars].*"

A village comprises good and bad neighbors, while enemies traditionally have their place outside of the village's boundaries, as have soldiers, wars, and victories. A village enjoys peace when all inhabitants get along without resorting to violence. Words such as "*war*,"

“*soldier*,” or “*victory*” are anachronistic. The only language that fits the new situation is the language of policing, because safeguarding social peace within a village calls for police sustaining a cohesive social web, not soldiers seeking victory. Currently, we witness many such transitions of language. The traditional notion of the *soldier* is presently changing to connote *peace keepers* and *peace enforcers*.¹⁶ The *warrior-soldier* who left home to reap national and personal glory, fame, and triumph is becoming obsolete. Furthermore, there is a movement away from the word *enemy*, toward the word *terrorist*. *Terrorists* are *inner enemies*, *very bad neighbors*, the only subgroup of *enemy* that can exist *inside*.^{17 18}

Everything in society is about sex. But in sex, everything is about power.

What else do we learn from this opera? We learn how the culture of the security dilemma has detached sex from love and associated it with power. Throughout my life, I must admit, learning about this fact was a horrifying journey for me personally.

„Bei jedem Thema geht es um Sex, außer beim Sex. Da geht es um Macht.“ Or, in English “In every conversation it is about sex, except during sex. Then it’s about power.” This was a sentence I read in an article by Charlotte Roche in the magazine *Der Spiegel*.¹⁹

Indeed, for Baron Scarpia sex is only “sexy” when it is arrived at through power, with power, and as proof of power. He sings:

Ha più for te sapore la conquista violenta che il mellifluo consenso. Io di sospiri e di lattiginose albe lunari poco mi appago. Non so trarre accordi di chitarra, né oroscopo di fior né far l’occhio di pesce, o tubar come tortora! Bramo. La cosa bramata perseguo, me ne sazio e via la getto. Volto a nuova esca. Dio creò diverse beltà, vini diversi. Io vo’ gustar quanto più posso dell’opra divina!

In English:

For myself the violent conquest has stronger relish than the soft surrender. I take no delight in sighs or vows exchanged at misty lunar dawn. I know not how to draw harmony from guitars, or horoscopes from flowers, nor am I apt at dalliance, or cooing like the turtle dove. I crave, I pursue the craved thing, sate myself and cast it by, and seek new bait. God made diverse beauties as he made diverse wines, and of these God-like works I mean to taste my full.²⁰

Why did sex become associated with power? The culture that the security dilemma engendered carries the belief that everything on this planet is ordered in a way that some things and some beings are worth more and others less, that a calculus of gain and loss, of up and down. This is regarded as the backbone of the naturally or divinely ordained order of the world; civilization would be lost if this order were not respected, protected, and reproduced. Those committed to maintaining such a world of domination and submission, are bound to have to invest a continuous effort into interrupting any uncensored flow of being-in-the-world. They have to always keep an inner distance from their own selves and others’, to be able to continuously gauge the “correct” friend-enemy, or worthy-unworthy domination-submission calculus before acting.

Since men are “up” and women are “down” in society, men’s identity is anchored in wanting to avoid “descending” into femaleness. Therefore men have almost no break from this inner distancing work. They learn to continuously stay detached, particularly from women, so as to avoid falling prey to the “weakness” of being “like a woman.” At the societal level, this manifests

in sentences such as: “Don’t cry like a woman!”²¹ And this, while love means crying, crying from being touched by the sublimity of love. I wrote about this in the section on “sacred love” in my gender book.²²

Ta-Nehisi Coates is an African-American writer, journalist, and educator. His description of the white people (or those who believe themselves to be white), and how white people believe to be above black people and live in ignorance of their own vulnerability, is similar to how I experience men around the world, including black men *via-à-vis* women, including white and black women. In his book *Between the World and Me*, Coates gives his father’s voice the floor, who quotes South Carolina Senator John C. Calhoun as saying: “The two great divisions of society are not the rich and poor, but white and black. And all the former, the poor as well as the rich, belong to the upper class, and are respected and treated as equals.”²³ And there it is, Coates’ father continues saying to his son, “the right to break the black body as the meaning of their sacred equality. And that right has always given them meaning, as always meant that there was someone down in the valley because a mountain is not a mountain if there is nothing below.”²⁴ This is how I experience men treating women – at least I remember having been treated in this way, in more or less subtle ways, all my life, by both white and also black men.

Coates’ father continues to describe the ignorance over one’s own vulnerability that also I observe in wide segments of Western society, for instance, when terror attacks happen, yet, moreover, I also observe it in men of all colors as opposed to women in general, of whatever color:

I am sorry that I cannot save you — but not that sorry. Part of me thinks that your very vulnerability brings you closer to the meaning of life, just as for others, the quest to believe oneself white divides them from it. The fact is that despite their dreams, their lives are also not inviolable. When their own vulnerability becomes real – when the police decide that tactics intended for the ghetto should enjoy wider usage, when their armed society shoots down their children, when nature sends hurricanes against their cities — they are shocked in a way that those of us who were born and bred to understand cause and effect can never be. I would not have so live like them, you have been cast into a race in which the wind is at your face and the hounds are always at your heels. And to varying degrees this is true of all life. The difference is that you do not have the privilege of living in ignorance of this essential fact.²⁵

Scarpia is shown in the opera surrounded by prostitutes. As in sex parties for powerful men all around the world, these women approach those powerful men in the most astonishing ways, ways those men would never allow any person to approach them, except perhaps their mothers when they were babies. These “girls” are no longer human beings, they are appendices of the male body. The female bodies are there to massage, soothe, and wipe the male body. The female body is like the door handle that exists for the hand, the hand that pushes the handle to open the door. Those men have access to their own bodies through removing from women their independent humanity.

Just recently, a known figure in Norway, Harald Eia revealed “that he prefers recognition from men rather than women. He would rather be clapped comradely on his shoulder by Otto Jespersen than be embraced by Linn Skåber. Praise from men is dollar, praise from women is rubles.”²⁶

I had the great privilege of having Berit Ås on my doctoral committee, professor of social psychology at the University of Oslo, and Norwegian politician. She was the first leader of the Socialist Left Party (1975–1976) and served as a Member of the Parliament of Norway 1973–

1977. She was a deputy member of parliament 1969–1973 (for the Norwegian Labour Party) and 1977–1981 (for the Socialist Left Party). She holds honorary doctorates at the University of Copenhagen, Saint Mary's University (Halifax) and Uppsala University, and received the Rachel Carson Prize and the Order of St. Olav in 1997.

Berit Ås wrote about the five *master suppression techniques* that she observes being used against women in particular, though they may be used against other disadvantaged groups as well.²⁷

A woman's beautiful humanity is also her "crime"

Tosca is a beautiful woman who has never done anything wrong. On the contrary, she has done everything in her power to be a "good woman." Yet, suddenly, she finds herself in a situation, where she is persecuted by the Chief of Police, Baron Scarpia. She cries out: "What have I done to you in my life? It is I you torture so. It is my spirit... (*bursts into convulsive sobs*) Yes, my spirit you are torturing."²⁸

Tosca sings: "I lived for art, I lived for love: never did I harm a living creature! Whatever misfortunes I encountered I sought with secret hand to succour. Ever in pure faith, my prayers rose in the holy chapels. Ever in pure faith, I brought flowers to the altars. In this hour of pain, why, why, oh Lord, why dost Thou repay me thus? Jewels I brought for the Madonna's mantle..."²⁹

What is Tosca's crime? What causes her to be a target? Many women in the world ask this question. Girls who are married off as children and turned into servants and abused in their husbands' houses, may ask why they are exposed to such undeserving treatment.³⁰ They try to comply with all the expectations directed at them so as to gain the right to be treated with respect, and nothing seems to suffice. Women in privileged segments of world society, who have excelled in their education, and who suddenly feel "punished" by their men for "thinking too much," might ask the same questions.

Unfortunately, I must count myself into the latter group. I wish I had understood earlier the lesson Norwegian journalist Marie Simonsen teaches in her article on Eia: "...also younger men still do better to build one another up, crave and mirror each other. Most women are amateurs in this art and do not realize that they will never become a full member of the club without breaking out of it and use their vote on their own terms."³¹ My only consolation is that I am not alone in being slow in learning. Even Norway, the land of gender equality, suffers from a *gender paradox*, namely, the fact that although Norwegian women have a high level of participation within the workforce, more so than most countries, the Norwegian job market remains highly segregated in terms of gender.

Our dignity network had its 25th Annual Conference in Kigali, Rwanda, in June 2015. I just spent two months there. It has been an intentional policy by the government since 1994 to support women's impasse into education and leading positions in society. The Rwandan parliament is 64 percent female. While being there, I heard many stories of husbands being unable to accept their highly-educated wives, getting to grips with no longer being "above" their wives, but perhaps even "below" them.³² In the United States, in the past, marriages in which wives were higher educated than their husbands, indeed, faced a higher risk of divorce, compared to couples with the opposite educational differential.³³ Yet, as statistics show, since it has become increasingly common for wives' education to exceed their husbands' education, this has changed, at least in the United States.³⁴

In other words, a beautiful highly educated woman risks to be both “too” beautiful and “too” educated. Women’s beauty is her “crime,” her effect on men is her crime, because she may remind him of his vulnerability as a human, and make it harder for him to keep up his ideal image of an invulnerable heroic warrior. The traditional age gap between husband and wife is employed to “protect” his self-image through a power gradient, as is keeping her away from education.

Women living under control of the so-called Islamic State must abide by rules governing their dress, which is enforced by morality police in each city, claiming to serve Sharia law. News headlines read: “ISIS morality police attacked a young Syrian woman dressed in a full burkha and face veil – because they thought her eyes were too exposed.”³⁵

In 1999, together with fellow women from Kenya and Somalia, I developed the idea of a Non-arrogant Elite Women Network.³⁶ A young woman wrote to me in April 2005:

I am beginning to realise that life is not easy for women like us. Our independence comes from deep compassion, realisation of pain and suffering and our intellect is not a source of arrogance but a resource through which we try to transcend so many things in life. But unfortunately we can get despised and misunderstood for that intellect and for desiring to fly as high as possible. I realise that I am located within a historic time where a transition from traditional gender roles to newer ones creates confusion in men and despair in women. So I guess we have to bear the struggle at this time, so that our children might enjoy a happier and liberated life.

This is the text we placed on the Non-arrogant Elite Women Network website:

“Men marry down and women marry up,” this is a well-known saying that is supported by statistics. In other words, the more education, experience, and status women acquire, the more they lose their “value” as eligible partners. It is as if excellence, when displayed by women, has humiliating effects on some men. Most women are shocked and surprised when they face rejection or even severe retaliations from men who attempt to punish and humiliate them for their excellence. Admittedly, there are women who combine ambition with arrogance, sometimes even with arrogant ignorance, and, clearly, they need to be much more ambitious and strive for humility and true excellence. But many women wish to make the point that they would like to attain excellence and be proud of it and that this does not at all entail arrogance or looking down on others.

What is the lesson of this section? If Mahatma Gandhi observed, “There is no path to peace. Peace is the path,” what is then the path to peace? The first step is to refrain from demonizing and devaluing “the enemy.” The next step is to refrain from investing all energy into shock and indignation and exhausting one’s efforts in self-centered self-pity over one’s own fear and trying to overcome it. On the contrary, fear can inspire learning, and fear is called for, not least, because the situation promises to get much worse. Fear is needed to provide the motivation to do the next step, namely, to invest all energy into bringing this world together and forward.

There is an African saying: “It needs a village to raise a child.” We live in times, where it is our responsibility to be fearful enough to grasp the opportunity that lies in crisis, and to create a global village that is able to hold its children, to give them a sense of worth and dignity, and prevent them from falling into the trap of expecting dignity from cycles of humiliation. The

lesson of this section is to look at this opera and learn humility by understanding that the security dilemma taught everybody, the West included, that cycles of humiliation may lead to victory. Today, in an interconnected world, our responsibility is to overcome this culture. We fail our responsibility, if we cannot do more than point with horror at “the enemy,” condemn what is condemnable per definition, namely, terror, and bemoan our own fears.

How do we build a global village that can hold its children? By abandoning the ideal of the invulnerable warrior and embracing the nobility of love. This includes dismantling the ranking order between women and men. It means celebrating the softness, the fluidity, and diversity of life. It means learning about what I call *big love*.³⁷

Arthur Lyon Dahl is President of the International Environment Forum, and a retired Deputy Assistant Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). He writes: “Evolution follows punctuated equilibria, and we seem to be in one of those periods of rapid change where there may not be time for a smooth transition. We should see the likelihood of coming crises as we hit planetary limits, whether economic, social or environmental, or more likely a combination of all three, as opportunities to advance the Great Transition. Such crises, through the pain they cause, may help to remove the roadblocks to the fundamental change that is needed, and allow us to leapfrog to the better world that we all hope for.”³⁸

The sense of rank and the wish to be higher up than others

Puccini's manner to get the story was “discreditable”

It seems that Puccini was fired up when he could outperform rivals. He re-discovered his interest in Tosca only when another composer, Alberto Franchetti, took up the story. In 1894, Franchetti and his librettist, Luigi Illica, met with Sardou in Paris, and one evening Illica read his Tosca text aloud. Verdi was among the listeners and praised the piece. This was the beginning of an ugly “discreditable” intrigue with Puccini at its center, where Tosca was condemned as impossible material for an opera. We read in the program:

The combination of Verdi's reported praise and Franchetti's possession of the subject probably revived Puccini's earlier interest in Tosca. Ricordi had no doubt which of his two composers would produce a more successful opera, and so a somewhat discreditable maneuver ensued: Ricordi and Illica persuaded poor Franchetti that the subject was, after all, not suitable for operatic treatment – too brutal, too risqué, too tied to forgotten historical events. The ruse worked, and by the end of the year Illica was at work for Puccini, aided by Giuseppe Giacosa, his collaborator on *La Bohème*.³⁹

Verismo

Verismo as an operatic genre had its origins in an Italian literary movement of the same name, which, in turn, was related to the international literary movement of *Naturalism* as practiced by Émile Zola and others. The aim was to portray the world with greater realism, and include themes that had not generally been seen as to be suitable for literature, for instance, the lives of the poor.

The status of an opera singer

Liudmyla Monastyrskya was Tosca in the performance I saw. She hails from Kiev, Ukraine, and is married, with two children. In an interview in 2011, she said: “Opera singers are considered elite abroad, and they have corresponding wages. I would like a renaissance of academic music to start in our country too.”⁴⁰

What connects these three parts of this section? First, all play out in a world where *higher beings* preside over *lesser beings*, where some people are higher up in a hierarchy of rank, compared to others who occupy lower ranks. Second, all wish to recalibrate this ranking order. Some help themselves and rise up by outcompeting others; this is what Puccini did. Others help others, by empowering those at the bottom; this is what verismo does, and what Liudmyla Monastyrskya wishes for when she thinks of her colleagues in Ukraine.

My dream is a world where all humans are regarded as equal in worthiness, and people refrain from wasting energy on dreaming to be higher than others, a world where people rather invest their efforts into nurturing everybody's talents for the common good.

Arthur Lyon Dahl writes:

Consider how the market would work if each actor valued the open sharing of information through consultation rather than competition, and placed the well-being of the whole of society, and even of the actor with whom he was trading, above his own self-interest. A market mechanism based on ethical responsibility and trust would work better, both in theory and practice, than a market founded on self-interest and competition.⁴¹

Concluding remarks

In my work, I regard human rights ideals of equality in dignity not as a Western achievement. I see the West merely as having been impacted by what I call the second round of globalization more than the rest (I see the first round as ending with the *Neolithic Revolution*), which brought about a new set of global realities.⁴² Those realities eroded the old moral universe of honor and gave way to a new era of dignity, or, more precisely, they eroded traditional collectivist norms of ranked honor, first detaching the individual from the collective, for finally to unrank human worthiness, now dreaming of extending equal dignity to all individuals.

The new moral sentiment of human rights ideals condemns handling fellow human beings in ways that degrade their equality in worthiness. Individuals operating within the new paradigm are encouraged to stand up in civil disobedience if manipulated into the collectivist context of fear by the security dilemma. This new dignified individual feels humiliated if equal dignity is violated. In other words, the right to feel violated by debasement and humiliation has been democratized: no longer can only aristocrats resist the loss of honor, now everybody can resist the violation of dignity.

After about ten millennia of hierarchical domination, a major transition is thus presently unfolding. Subjugating people or putting/pushing/holding down people is now widely regarded as violation. The new *Zeitgeist* urges the dismantling of the vertical gradient of human worth. What masters and underlings once colluded in calling *benevolent patronage* is now criticized as *humiliating domination*.

Anthropologist William Ury, drew up *a simplified depiction of history*, where he pulls together elements from anthropology, game theory and conflict studies to describe three major types of society: *simple hunter-gatherers*, *complex agriculturists*, and the current *knowledge society*.⁴³

I use Ury's historical periods as a starting point to include pride, honor, and dignity (I use the Weberian *ideal-type* approach, which allows analysis and action to proceed at different levels of abstraction⁴⁴). I label the first 95 percent of human history, when hunting and gathering dominated and circumscription did not yet set limits for migration, as the *period of pristine untouched pride*. I call the past five percent of human history, the period of complex agriculturalism, the *period of ranked honor*. The human rights vision for the future of humankind could be labelled as a future of dignity, or, more accurately, a *future of equality in dignity for all*. The year 1757 could be seen as important linguistic marker in the English language for the latter transition.⁴⁵

Riane T. Eisler, social scientist and activist, has developed a *cultural transformation theory* through which she describes how otherwise widely divergent societies followed what she calls a *dominator model* during the past millennia.⁴⁶ At the core of the new era stands the *partnership model* of society, or *non-domination* as philosopher and political theorist Philip Pettit calls it,⁴⁷ nothing else but the dismantling of the dominator structure towards a partnership structure, the de-legitimization of the practice of ranking people into higher and lesser beings, the rejection of such practices as *rankism*.⁴⁸

It is an *enthymeme* that we encounter when we hear about "Dignity Revolutions," meaning that certain parts of the argument are not spelled out, but presupposed in everybody's mind (*enthymo*): it is not respect, nor pride, nor honor, nor simply dignity alone that marks the core of the new moral universe, it is *respect for equal dignity for all*.

This is a world of mutuality, rather than a world of exchange or even reciprocity. Linda Hartling is a relational theorist. She explains (in a personal communication on November 3, 2015):

Based on 20 years of studying relational psychology, I consider "reciprocity" an extremely limited term for describing a quality or characteristic of relational engagement. Reciprocity implies some form of exchange. I'd like to propose that what is often identified as reciprocity might be more accurately understood as "mutuality" in relationships. Mutuality in relationships is a concept advanced by a pioneering group of relational theorists at Wellesley College.

Rather than exchange, mutuality means: "...affecting the other and being affected by the other; one extends oneself out to the other and is also receptive to the impact of the other. There is openness to influence, emotional availability, and a constantly changing pattern of responding to and affecting the other's state. There is both receptivity and active initiative toward the other."⁴⁹ It does not mean sameness, equality, or reciprocity; it is a way of relating, a shared activity in which each (or all) of the people involved are participating as fully as possible.⁵⁰ For example, parents do not relate to their children as a form of exchange. Instead, they are facilitating the growth of their children while growing in their roles as parents, growing by supporting the growth of their children.⁵¹

At the present historical cross-road, peace researcher Jan Øberg offers four dire predictions and one solution:

- 1) The war on terror will increasing blow back on Europe and the U.S. Every time a Western leader says that we must bomb more, it means more terrorist attacks on his/her own citizens.
- 2) The other response is clamping down on every aspect of freedom and democracy, moving towards a police state.
- 3) The West will lose to ISIS and there will be a caliphate - a natural response to history, however disgusting its methods (no worse though than planning the death of hundreds of millions in nuclear war).
- 4) The war on terror will be a major factor in the fall of the U.S. Empire and the weakening of the West. The non-West is just sitting and waiting for it to happen.⁵²

Here comes Øberg's solution: "Time to adopt TAMA – There Are Many Alternatives – take a break from the self-defeating militarist knee-jerk reaction that spells doom for us all. And begin to think."⁵³

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¹ *Tosca*, Program, www.metopera.org/metoperafiles/season/2015-16/operas/tosca/Playbill%20Programs/Nov%2025%20Tosca.pdf.

² Nicassio, 2002, p. 35.

³ Libretto in Italian and English, www.murashev.com/opera/Tosca_libretto_Italian_English.

⁴ Libretto in Italian and German, www.murashev.com/opera/Tosca_libretto_German_Italian.

⁵ "What ISIS Really Wants," by Graeme Wood, *The Atlantic*, March 2015 Issue Global, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/03/what-isis-really-wants/384980/>.

⁶ Riane T. Eisler, social scientist and activist, has developed a cultural transformation theory through which she describes how otherwise widely divergent societies followed what she calls a *dominator model* rather than a *partnership model* during the past millennia. Eisler, 1987. See her most recent book Eisler, 2007.

⁷ Lindner, 2006, p. 109.

⁸ Wyatt-Brown, 1982.

⁹ Wyatt-Brown, 1982, p. 2.

¹⁰ Fischer, 1989, p. 843.

¹¹ Cohen, et al., 1996.

¹² Lindner, 2006, p. 109.

¹³ John Bolton in a personal communication to his supporters on March 12, 2014.

¹⁴ Hoffman, et al., 2015.

¹⁵ “Terrorists Want Us to Feel Insecure – 5 Ways to Triumph,” by F. Diane Barth, *Psychology Today*, November 20, 2015, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-couch/201511/terrorists-want-us-feel-insecure-5-ways-triumph.

¹⁶ See Snyder, 2000.

¹⁷ See Keen, 1986. I thank Gordon Fellman for this reference.

¹⁸ Lindner, 2006, pp. 43–44.

¹⁹ “SPIEGEL-Gespräch – ‘Das Böse abfeiern’: Charlotte Roche über das verlogene Mutterbild der Deutschen, die Macht von Fernsehserien, lesbischen Sex und ihren neuen Roman ‘Mädchen für alles,’” *Der Spiegel*, Heft 41/2015, October 2, 2015, p. 130.

²⁰ Libretto in Italian and English, www.murashev.com/opera/Tosca_libretto_Italian_English.

²¹ When Kamran Mofid changed from an “economist as usual” into “an economist for the common good,” he was attacked and told if he could not remain a “good” economist, then, he should consider becoming a priest or a social worker; see his blog “Thank You Archbishops for Speaking Truth to Power,” by Kamran Mofid, February 1, 2015, www.gcgi.info/index.php/kamran-s-blog/660-thank-you-archbishops-for-speaking-truth-to-power. Kamran Mofid is a member in the global advisory board of the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network, see www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/board.php.

²² Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, pp. 117–122.

²³ Coates, 2015, p. 104. I thank Peter Coleman for gifting this book to me.

²⁴ Coates, 2015, p. 104–105. See Glymph, 2008.

²⁵ Coates, 2015, p. 107.

²⁶ Translated by Lindner from the Norwegian original: “Harald Eia kunne avsløre at han foretrekker anerkjennelse fra menn fremfor kvinner. Han vil heller bli slått kameratslig i skulderen av Otto Jespersen enn bli omfavnet av Linn Skåber. Ros fra menn er dollar, ros fra kvinner er rubler,” in “Dette har kvinner visst siden Jesu tid, Harald Eia trodde han avslørte hemmelighet om menn,” by Marie Simonsen, *Dagbladet*, November 3, 2015, www.dagbladet.no/2015/11/03/kultur/signaler/meninger/kommentar/harald_eia/41789765/.

²⁷ Ås, 2008.

²⁸ Libretto in Italian and English, www.murashev.com/opera/Tosca_libretto_Italian_English.

²⁹ Libretto in Italian and English, www.murashev.com/opera/Tosca_libretto_Italian_English.

³⁰ “Forced to Marry Before Puberty, African Girls Pay Lasting Price,” by Sharon Lafraniere, *New York Times*, November 27, 2005, www.nytimes.com/2005/11/27/world/africa/forced-to-marry-before-puberty-african-girls-pay-lasting-price.html.

³¹ Translated by Lindner from the Norwegian original: “...også yngre menn fortsatt er flinkere til å bygge hverandre opp, digge og speile hverandre. Kvinner flest er amatører i faget og skjønner ikke at de aldri vil bli fullverdig medlem av klubben uten å bryte ut av den og bruke sin stemme på egne premisser,” in “Dette har kvinner visst siden Jesu tid, Harald Eia trodde han avslørte hemmelighet om menn,” by Marie Simonsen, *Dagbladet*, November 3, 2015, www.dagbladet.no/2015/11/03/kultur/signaler/meninger/kommentar/harald_eia/41789765/.

³² “Rwanda’s Women Make Strides Towards Equality 20 Years After the Genocide,” by Alexandra Topping in Kigali, *The Guardian*, April 7, 2014, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2014/apr/07/rwanda-women-empowered-impoverished.

³³ Schwartz and Han, 2014. See also “Are High-Achieving Women Doomed to Be Single and Childless?” by Elizabeth Aura McClintock, *Psychology Today*, August 25, 2014, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/it-s-man-s-and-woman-s-world/201408/are-high-achieving-women-doomed-be-single-and-childless.

³⁴ Schwartz and Han, 2014. See also “Are High-Achieving Women Doomed to Be Single and Childless?” by Elizabeth Aura McClintock, *Psychology Today*, August 25, 2014, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/it-s-man-s-and-woman-s-world/201408/are-high-achieving-women-doomed-be-single-and-childless.

³⁵ “ISIS Morality Police Arrest a Woman Wearing Full Burkha and Face Veil... Because Her EYES Were ‘too Exposed,’” by Flora Drury, February 18, 2015, *Daily Mail*, www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2958076/ISIS-morality-police-arrest-woman-wearing-burkha-eyes-exposed.html.

³⁶ Non-arrogant Elite Women Network, www.humiliationstudies.org/intervention/nonarrogantwomen.php.

³⁷ Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, p. 165.

³⁸ Arthur Lyon Dahl in his contribution to the Great Transition Network (GTN) discussion on the topic of “The Church of Economism and Its Discontents,” on November 30, 2015, in response to Norgaard, 2015.

³⁹ Program, www.metopera.org/metoperarchives/season/2015-16/operas/tosca/Oct%2029%20Tosca.pdf.

⁴⁰ “Liudmyla MONASTYRSKA: ‘Besides vocal, we need image’,” by Larysa Tarasenko, *Day Kiev*, August 23, 2011, www.day.kiev.ua/uk/library/books/marshrut-no1-vypusk-37-fotobiyenale-krayiny

⁴¹ Arthur Lyon Dahl in his contribution to the Great Transition Network (GTN) discussion on the topic of “The Church of Economism and Its Discontents,” on November 30, 2015, in response to Norgaard, 2015.

⁴² Lindner, 2006.

⁴³ Ury, 1999, p. 108.

⁴⁴ Please read about ideal types in Coser, 1977, p. 224:

Weber’s three kinds of *ideal types* are distinguished by their levels of abstraction. First are the *ideal types* rooted in historical particularities, such as the “western city,” “the Protestant Ethic,” or “modern capitalism,” which refer to phenomena that appear only in specific historical periods and in particular cultural areas. A second kind involves abstract elements of social reality—such concepts as “bureaucracy” or “feudalism”—that may be found in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. Finally, there is a third kind of *ideal type*, which Raymond Aron calls “rationalizing reconstructions of a particular kind of behavior.” According to Weber, all propositions in economic theory, for example, fall into this category. They all refer to the ways in which men would behave were they actuated by purely economic motives, were they purely economic men.

⁴⁵ Lindner, 2015.

⁴⁶ Eisler, 1987. See also Eisler, 2007.

⁴⁷ See Pettit, 1997.

⁴⁸ Fuller, 2003. In a human rights context that stipulates that all human beings ought to be treated as equal in dignity and rights, hurtful psychological dynamics of humiliation are set in motion when *rankism* is practiced, i.e., when “women” are regarded as a lowly category, or “children,” “the elderly,” “foreigners,” and so forth.

⁴⁹ Jordan, 1986, p. 82.

⁵⁰ Miller and Stiver, 1997, p. 43.

⁵¹ Genero, et al., 1992, examine the difference between reciprocity and mutuality, in Linda Hartling in a personal communication, November 3, 2015.

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