

**From Humiliation to
Dignity:
For a Future of Global Solidarity
— A Synopsis —**

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With a Foreword by Howard Richards

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Painting by Lisbeth Vilkan Glad created for the cover of the book

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Introduction

This book came into being as part of the author’s overall dignity work that reaches back many decades and is inspired by the following questions. If we acknowledge that humankind faces global challenges — namely, the degradation of our *eco-sphere* and *socio-sphere* at a global scale — we have to cooperate globally. In this situation, what are the best ways to global cooperation, and what are the most significant obstacles? What is human nature? Does it condemn us to hate, fight, compete for dominance, and exploit each other and the planet? Or can we cooperate in solidarity? If we can, can we do so globally? After all, no country, no region, can tackle global challenges alone. ‘It takes a village to raise a child’ is an African saying. Can our global village become a village that raises its children in dignity and keeps them safe? Is the following a valid promise or empty rhetoric, ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’? Can equal dignity and equal rights be the moral compass for a decent future for humankind? Or not? Is there hope? What

if *clashes of civilisations* are harmless compared with *clashes of humiliation*? What if clashes of humiliation now undermine our best chances for cooperation? What if only mutual care and trust can save us?

Where do we stand, as humankind? The author of this book offers this analysis: We have dug ourselves into a multitude of perilous crises, both despite and because of what we call progress. We engage in systemic humiliation — *ecocide* and *sociocide* — we shred our relations with our habitat and with each other. We catalyse the degradation of our *ecosphere* and *sociosphere* by damaging our *cogitosphere*, the realm of thinking and reflection. We do so to the point of *cogitocide*, so that we embark in common sightlessness on our collective *suicide* as a species, and on *omnicide*, the annihilation of all life on Earth. The suffix *-cide* comes from *caedere* in Latin and means ‘killing’.

At the same time, there is also an immense window of opportunity waiting for us to use. Unfortunately, so far, instead of recognising the depth of the crises we are in and grasping our historic opportunity to exit, it seems that most of us choose to stay shortsighted and myopic.

Few people seem to take in that *Homo sapiens* lives in a historically unparalleled promising moment. For the very first time in its history, humankind is in a position to succeed in bringing about the kinds of adaptation that are long overdue. Unlike our forebears, we have the privilege of experiencing the *overview effect* with respect to our planet, which helps us understand that we humans are *one* species living on *one* tiny planet, so that we can embrace *biophilia*. We have everything required to build global mutual trust and solidarity, we can humanise globalisation and reap the benefits that flow from the global ingathering of humanity.

Perhaps we need a crisis that is big enough to urge us to use this opportunity? Can the coronavirus crisis that began to unfold at the end of 2019 be this wake-up call? We are fortunate that the virus is not as deadly as the Ebola virus and gives us time to turn around. The pandemic highlights dignity and humiliation in unprecedented ways — the more the world interconnects, everything spreads out farther and faster, be it the nemesis of new viruses, the promise of shining ideals such as equal dignity, or the pain and anger that emerges when dignity is felt violated.

Present-day’s most definitorial systemic humiliation is a world-system that gives priority to profit maximisation rather than common good maximisation, a state of affairs that sends humiliation into every corner of the world. Not least the coronavirus pandemic was a ‘predicted crisis’ due to this predicament, as decades of warnings were overheard in the rush for profit, a rush that brought humans in overly close contact with novel pathogens that can travel around the world and kill hundreds of thousands in a very short period of time. The coronavirus pandemic throws into stark relief the fact that global care for the common good waits to be given priority, while the profit motive should serve rather than lead. The crisis calls for an ‘economy of life’ rather than an ‘economy of death’ — it calls for a *dignity economy*. It calls on humanity to remember that humans are very much capable of solidarity and that standing together in solidarity is more fulfilling and meaningful than outcompeting each other.

To counter the widespread myopic trend, this book focusses on all of human history — on *big history* — because only a wide lens makes the primary problems visible that spawn secondary, tertiary, and quaternary ones. The book looks at modern *Homo sapiens*’ entire journey on this planet and conceptualises the so-called Neolithic Revolution as a definitorial turning point that merits renewed attention today because it saw the emergence of humankind’s primary problem. Competition for domination and control was *Homo sapiens*’ master survival strategy during the past millennia, and it was once useful. The core problem of our time is that this strategy outlives its usefulness now, and it does so the more interconnected the world grows and the more overstretched Earth’s carrying capacity becomes. In an interconnected and finite world, competition for domination transmutes into a collectively suicidal strategy. This is why we, as humankind, find ourselves at a historically unprecedented turning point. It is a situation where history does not repeat itself, where the lessons of our forebears no longer hold. In this new context, the only realistic aim is to work for global mutual trust and global partnership through unity in diversity in equal dignity for all. During the past millennia, such ideas were deemed unrealistic and wishful dreaming. Now humankind finds itself in the unprecedented situation where global partnership in mutual solidarity

represents the only lifesaving strategy.

The author proposes the following roadmap for 2021 and the future, in a nutshell: If we, as humanity, wish to heal *ecocide* and *sociocide* and survive in dignity, we need a strong *cogitosphere*, a strong realm of thinking. Therefore, the first step is to overcome *cogitocide*, the destruction of our thinking. We, as humanity, need to face the fact that we stand at the edge of a *Seneca cliff*, the kind of rapid collapse that is characteristic of complex systems when they disintegrate. We have to face this fact without panic and without denial. Our scientists inform us that we have a window of opportunity of around ten years to step back from the edge. In this situation, we can no longer accept negative peace kept in place by systematic and systemic cogitocide, peace kept in place by military means, by the traditional male role script of uni-dimensional and unilateral strategies of competition for domination and control, by strategies of ‘fighting the enemy’ and ‘conquering the unknown’. In the interconnected world of today, seeking peace through armament amounts to *sociocide* at a global scale, the killing of the cohesion in the global community. It hastens global ecocide through global sociocide by maintaining the *security dilemma* (‘If you want peace, prepare for war’), by stoking *cycles of humiliation*, and by putting fuel into the *growth dilemma* (‘If you want wealth, invest in exploitation’). In an interconnected world, in which the promise of human rights ideals is salient, feelings of humiliation are the ‘nuclear bomb of the emotions’. Cycles of humiliation will turn the global village into a war zone if we do not step up to prevent it. Citizen-to-citizen trust building at a global scale is the only path to transcending the security dilemma and achieving lasting global peace in dignity.

The call must be: Let us celebrate respect for equal dignity for all as responsible individuals free to engage in loving mutual solidarity. Let us celebrate diversity through unity in equality in dignity without humiliation on this small and finite planet that is our common home.

This book explores the notion of dignity, the opportunities it offers, and how it can show us a decent path into the future. The book approaches dignity from all directions, also from its violation, humiliation. The book has three parts:

Part I: Humiliation and humility — A timeline from 1315 to 1948

Part II: 1948 and beyond — Equal dignity for all!

Part III: Where do we go from here? A future of solidarity?

The author of this book has been living on all continents for the past forty-five years. On her global path, she has witnessed how the promise that is entailed in the sentence ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ has become a foundational value, far beyond mere legal concepts. This promise seems to be a genie that, once it was unleashed, cannot be put back into the bottle anymore, and this despite the fact that it is betrayed widely and frequently. The promise has force now. Despite its complexity and despite its betrayal, the notion of dignity has found its way not just into hearts and minds but into the centre of many constitutional texts. It speaks to the deep human desire to rise up from being pushed down — it is an embodied longing, beyond language, beyond legal instruments. It is the simple and straightforward yearning to be respected as an equal human being among fellow human beings.

On dignity

The word *dignity* comes before *rights* in the sentence ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’. Since 1948, however, rights moved into the foreground and the term human *rights* became normalised. The message of this book is that the time has come to take dignity more seriously. As philosophers have pointed out, human dignity represents the moral source of human rights, which are merely specifications of human dignity. This book therefore speaks of human rights *ideals*, in an effort to point at both, dignity and rights.

Undeniably, rights have the advantage of being more easily definable and pragmatically applicable than dignity. Yet, that does not mean that the notion of rights is without problems. Some prefer the idea of human *needs* to *rights*, as needs are biologically anchored and socially and

culturally emergent, whereas rights draw on conceptual authority that is disputable. Worse, some argue that the officialisation, professionalisation, and institutionalisation of dignity as an international and universal human right may even unintentionally undermine the essential sense of dignity.

Worse even, what if dignity is a useless concept altogether? The book explores also this criticism. What if dignity is merely the need to obtain voluntary and informed consent from people and the requirement to protect confidentiality? Perhaps *autonomy* is a more practical and specific term than dignity? Or, what about replacing the terminology of dignity with that of *respect* or *pride*?

If we consider human dignity to be a useful concept and we seek its guidance for human rights, we face new complexities. Neglecting rights can violate dignity, yet, it can also be the other way round, rights can violate dignity when they are insufficiently anchored in dignity. This means that both neglecting and heeding rights can violate dignity. We cannot leave the nurturing of dignity to the legal field and its professionals alone, dignity needs intentional and pro-active conceptualising and nurturing.

As soon as we have a serious look at dignity, more questions arise: Is it possible to define dignity? Or at least describe it? What we learn is that the word dignity alone is insufficient. Dignity is an *enthymeme* (Greek: ἐνθύμημα, *enthumēma*). *Enthymeme* means that a speaker spells out only certain aspects of an argument and leaves other parts out because she assumes that the audience holds those parts in their minds (*en thymo*). In a broader usage, the term *enthymeme* describes all incomplete arguments. In the case of dignity, it is not autonomy, nor respect or pride, nor simply dignity alone that describes the core of the new moral universe built on human rights ideals, it is *respect for equal dignity for all as responsible individuals free to engage in loving mutual solidarity with each other and with our ecological foundations*.

This equal dignity is an embodied sense, a sense of being able to stand tall and carry one's head high. It means looking into the eyes of fellow human beings as equals, rather than being humiliated and bowing down in submissive humility. At the same time, it is not sticking one's nose up in haughty arrogance. Some describe dignity as an 'orthopaedic challenge' — the art of walking upright. It is a posture of dignified humility — or humble pride — neither looking down on others with arrogant superiority nor looking up from humiliated inferiority. Equal dignity means that superiors stop arrogating supremacy and refrain from humiliating inferiors and that inferiors become aware that they need not accept humiliation in docile meekness.

Mere equality is not enough though — it needs more. Human rights ideals invite everyone to open their arms for the other in loving acceptance and respectful solidarity, they invite everyone to stop having their elbows sticking out in divisive rivalry, or smothering others with choking embraces. Everyone is invited to meet in the middle between top and bottom, at the level of equal dignity in shared humility and solidarity, so as to lovingly join hands in building a decent future together.

Human dignity is thus not merely a philosophical abstraction or a legal construct. It is a phenomenological reality that has its basis in human consciousness and in the body, more precisely, in the bodymind. Dignity is a relational concept that is at the same time a radical individualised and radical socialised moral concept, influenced by its social, political, and cultural context — dignity is both inherent to every human being *and* requires affirmative action and recognition from others. In this sense, dignity is much more than individual autonomy, it speaks to philosopher Martin Buber's notion of *I-Thou* relationships, to dialogical encounters that entail a dimension that is larger than life, encounters that are so awe-inspiring that the word divine is warranted.

In her work, the author speaks of the *literacy of love*, with love as the very foundation for human dignity. She values the following words, 'Our emotional life, in the tension between passion and suffering, confronts us with love as the basic premise of human life in all its complexity.'

On humiliation

What are the best ways to global cooperation, and what are the most significant obstacles? The author's insight is that our historical era is different from past epochs in that cycles of humiliation will become the most significant obstacles to global cooperation.

In the English language, the concept of humiliation has traversed a fascinating journey throughout the past centuries. The year 1757 is of particular significance. From 1757 onwards, at least in the English language, humiliation is no longer the pro-social duty of superiors to show inferiors their due lowly place, it is the anti-social violation of dignity. The year 1757 thus provides an important historical linguistic marker, a marker that signals a remarkable transition of the *Zeitgeist*, first in the European cultural realm, then globally. Broadly speaking, it reconnects to a *Zeitgeist* that might have existed prior to the Neolithic revolution. It points at a very particular form of how we imagine a person and society, namely, at the ideal of equality in worthiness for all people, free to connect in mutual care and responsibility, embedded in the larger planetary ecological context of which we all are only a small part.

The notion of humiliation is part of an intricate web of related phenomena and concepts, as there are, for instance, honour and dignity. The author of this book came to study dignity through researching humiliation. Only later did she understand the historical path that went from 'mask-like' collectivist and ranked honour to equal dignity for individuals. Only through writing this book did she come to appreciate the notion of *decorum* and how it forms a bridge between honour and dignity — in 1757, *decorum* began to be bestowed on the individual, albeit still remaining inscribed in the context of collectivistic ranked honour. Still today, the word *dignitary*, by signifying a 'higher being', betrays the hierarchical root of dignity. Only after the Second World War do we see the historical path of the *Zeitgeist* proceeding to the ideal of equal dignity for all individuals as adopted in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948.

Nowadays, we could say that the *Zeitgeist* is divided: One group strives for equal dignity for all as responsible individuals free to engage in loving mutual solidarity, while others aim to re-create a world where 'dignitaries' are granted the 'freedom' to preside over lesser beings. Many members of the latter group openly reject the idea of equal dignity as a humiliating project — after all, it means that dignitaries lose their privileges — all forms of open supremacy fall into this category. Other resisters of equal dignity use a more subtle strategy and strive to preserve a might-is-right context through interpreting dignity as nothing more than individual autonomy — rugged individualism falls into that category.

The philological journey retraced in this book — with the generous support of peace linguist Francisco Gomes de Matos and peace philosopher Howard Richards — shows how the notion of *humiliation* follows the same division and has a radically different meaning in a context where human rights ideals are salient as compared to an honour context. There is a fundamental difference between what the author calls *honour humiliation* on one side and *dignity humiliation* on the other side. When equality in dignity is promised but withheld, *recognition gaps* open, *dignity gaps* — or *indignity traps* — that are more hurtful than 'honour gaps'. A person who experiences being ranked lower than expected in a ranked honour system may feel hurt, still, she is not immediately exiled from the human family. In contrast, being ranked lower than expected in a context of equal dignity immediately evicts one from the human family entirely, an experience that assaults one at the core of one's being — one is no longer part of humanity. To recognise a person's humanity and then hypocritically betray the promise of dignity, humiliates in the most devastating way by denying the very humanity professed.

As a result, the violation of dignity smarts more than the violation of honour. In a system of honour, it is often regarded as utterly legitimate to lower the rank of a person, be it that the person herself comes to this conclusion or her peers. Wherever and whenever people accept their debasement quietly — they may think of debasement as nature's order or God's punishment — there is no apparent disruption of order. The situation changes radically, however, when human rights ideals become more known, because these very ideals stand in the way of such legitimising interpretations of humiliation. Human rights ideals offer the unconditional right to everyone to be

considered as equal in dignity, just for the sake of being born as a human being. The promise of equal dignity is thus much higher than that of honour, and breaking it humiliates much more intensely than when honour is being infringed. There is no legitimate ‘excuse’ for dignity humiliation, while the world of honour provides innumerable justifications for honour humiliation.

As the violation of dignity carries the potential to lead to more intense hurt than the violation of honour, also the responses can manifest in extreme forms. They can manifest in hatred and violence and escalate to dangerous levels of terror, war, or genocide, for instance, where only Gandhi-like figures can inspire the transition to peaceful social action that is consistent with dignity. They can also lead to extreme forms of depression and thus be endured as ‘quietly’ as feelings of honour humiliation, only for a different reason: While people subscribing to values of honour may tolerate honour humiliation in quiet acceptance because they think this is a legitimate arrangement of relationships, feelings of dignity humiliation stem from the betrayal of the promise of equal dignity in all relationships, and it may be the very intolerability of this betrayal that causes the response to appear quiet

Human rights ideals represent an act of universal love, they represent humanity’s loving invitation to all fellow humans into the human family as equal members. Millions of people all around the globe take this invitation seriously, and they respond with love. Love, however, is known to turn into the bitterest of hatred when threatened or betrayed — we only need to look at domestic violence to know how deep the wounds can be that are inflicted by thwarted love, and how horrific the outcomes can be.

Mohandas K. Gandhi and Nelson Mandela mobilised masses to rise from humiliation. Gandhi’s and Mandela’s names are known around the world for having inspired constructive social change, for having resisted the temptation to counter humiliation through unleashing ever new and more destructive cycles of humiliation. Adolf Hitler, as well, mobilised masses, however, he mobilised them into mayhem. In all cases, the immense strength and force of feelings of humiliation became exposed, and how this force can be used for construction, as by the Gandhis and Mandelas of this world, or for destruction, as by the Hitlers of this world. Therefore, the author calls feelings of humiliation, and feelings of dignity humiliation in particular, *the nuclear bomb of the emotions* — be they felt spontaneously or fomented by leaders. The genocide that the Hutu perpetrated in Rwanda against their Tutsi neighbours in 1994 showed how a sense of humiliation could be whipped up and weaponised in ways that surpassed traditional weapons. Some victims even paid themselves for bullets to be shot dead rather than hacked to death by the machetes of their neighbours.

Apart from dignity humiliation being more hurtful than honour humiliation, other factors aggravate the situation in addition. First, the promise of equal dignity democratises the right to resist. In the past, only aristocrats could call for a duel in response to assaults on their honour, the humiliation of honour could only be resisted with violence among masters who held equally superior positions in the social order. Slaves or servants could not engage in duels with violent masters — a beaten wife could not go to duel with her violent husband. Human rights ideals, in contrast, grant the right to resist humiliation to every single person. Whoever feels aggrieved or humiliated anywhere in the world may now ‘go to duel’.

Second, aspiring ‘duellists’ have now access to means of destruction that were previously unimaginable — a single angry hacker who feels entitled to seek retaliation for perceived humiliation can attack an entire country’s electronic infrastructure. Would-be Hitlers driven by a sense of humiliation can establish global dictatorial mafia-like structures with hitherto unseen ease.

The paths of Gandhi and Mandela also illustrate how difficult and sometimes incoherent the rise of awareness of dignity can be. The names ‘Gandhi’ and ‘Mandela’ are shining beacons of dignity outside of their countries, however, the situation becomes much more complicated the closer one gets to their inner circles. When the authors speaks about names such as Gandhi and Mandela in this book, she wishes to highlight the hope they brought to the world without discounting the imperfections and shadows that also are connected with their epochs.

In South Africa, apartheid means simply segregation, and when it was devised after the trauma of the Boer Wars, it was regarded as a thoroughly legitimate solution. It was void of any taste of violation, as painful as it was for those at the bottom. The global rise of the promise of equality in dignity gave this pain legitimacy, to the point that it had the strength to drive *conscientisation* — as Paulo Freire formulated it — the motivation to work for constructive social change. The anti-apartheid campaign led by African and Asian nations is often hailed as the earliest sustained international human rights struggle alongside decolonisation. The depth of the dignity humiliation that apartheid fomented could have led to horrific genocidal killings — similar to what happened in Rwanda at the same time — had not people as Nelson Mandela channelled its force into constructive societal change. I am among those who admire Nelson Mandela’s vision of uniting South Africa in dignity.

Apartheid demonstrates also how newly emerging feelings of dignity humiliation in subordinates have the potential to trigger a sense of honour humiliation in masters and their successfully indoctrinated followers. For many in the South African white elite it felt humiliating to be asked to step down from arrogating superiority. People who are beholden to a ranked honour system are likely to perceive the call for the wise humility needed to embrace equal dignity as humiliation rather than as liberation. The very notion of equality in dignity feels humiliating for *rankists*, those who essentialise difference. Therefore, feelings of dignity humiliation professed by the downtrodden risk unleashing raging anger in masters who feel entitled to their privileged supremacy.

Examples are not confined to politics. A husband who feels justified in beating his wife to teach her humble respect for his superiority will get angry with the social worker who hinders him. The social worker — or any defender of equal dignity ideals for that matter — risks being accused of being a humiliator who creates conflict where there was ‘peaceful order’ before. So-called honour killings provide an even starker illustration. In an honour context, a raped girl might be perceived of having brought dishonour upon her family and might be killed in order to restore humiliated family honour. In a dignity context, in contrast, the very idea that killing can heal humiliation is humiliating for the dignity of all involved.

Cross back is the term the author uses when she sees feelings of dignity humiliation being acted on not with dignity but with the toolkit of revenge for honour humiliation that was formerly reserved for aristocrats. Cross back happens when the ‘Hitler path’ is chosen in response to feelings of dignity humiliation, even though dignity calls for the Mandela path. The Hitler path follows the traditional strategy of removing tyrants while keeping tyranny in place and the formerly oppressed becoming the new oppressors. Human rights ideals introduce a second transformation after the first — after deposing a tyrant, what must follow is the dismantling of the very system of tyranny, and this must be done with peaceful means, without violence and humiliation.

It follows that if humankind wants to achieve a dignified future, we need to engage in much more inclusive and sophisticated peace making and bridge building than in the past. The formerly oppressed cannot become the new oppressors. Oppressors and oppressed need to come together and join hands, just like Nelson Mandela envisioned when he aimed at including all South Africans into their shared home country.

Humiliation entrepreneurs, as the author calls them, drive cross backs to perfection when they use feelings of dignity humiliation brewing in populations to exploit the script of the heroic and glorious warrior, the script of aristocratic elites who have power over obedient underlings. In Norway, a young man, Anders Behring Breivik, felt he was a ‘Templar Knight’ when he shot his ‘enemies’. In Rwanda, radio propaganda from ‘above’ brought subservient masses to use their household machetes to commit horrific genocidal killings.

Human rights defenders need to learn from such examples to be careful with ‘empowerment’ — it can go too far. A social worker should not ‘empower’ a beaten wife to humiliate her husband — let alone kill him — even though the husband humiliates her. Instead, the social worker should encourage the wife to engage in constructive action, such as securing her personal safety and seeking support from surrounding social networks to change the husband’s outlook on honour and

dignity. The self-esteem movement in Western societies may have suffered such an overshoot of empowerment. Some say it has created a social climate of solipsistic narcissism characterised by chronic indignation and anger entrepreneurship all against all. This is the result when aggressive ways of turning the tables on humiliators are being democratised, when license is given to everyone to arrogate the former elite sense of entitlement to privilege.

This is why this book avoids using the term *empowerment* and replaces it with *entrustment*. Entrustment suggests that there are limits to uprisings. ‘Lesser beings’ should not become ‘higher beings’. The traditional notions of ‘top’ and ‘bottom’ are to be transcended. Everyone is called to meet in the middle between the top and the bottom — at the level of equal dignity — and shoulder the responsibility for nurturing a better world together, in mutually dignifying humility.

Where do we go from here?

This book is written to chart a path towards a world of dignity in solidarity, towards a world where all stand together in loving and wise humility rather than a world where ‘honourable dignitaries’ apply humiliation as a tool to force subordinates into the meek and submissive kind of humility. It calls on everyone to regard humiliation as an unacceptable violation of dignity and draws attention to the fact that humiliation can violate dignity so gravely that fatal division may be the result rather than dignified diversity in solidarity.

In the third part of the book, the author asks ‘Where do we go from here?’ One of the chapters offers a list of factors and circumstances that make the present historical juncture more challenging than any crisis humankind ever faced before in its history. The author predicts that our time will once be called ‘the dark era of the twenty-first century’, an era when the dominator approach to living in this world overstayed its *raison-d’être*, when social and ecological resources were sold out, sometimes even under the cover of human rights rhetoric. The generations alive now carry more responsibility on their shoulders than any generation before.

In feudalism, communal resources were appropriated for an aristocracy who relied on a supposed divine right of kings. Then came entrepreneurs who did the same, only that they relied on the guiding hand of the free market and claims of equality of opportunity. Moral philosopher and pioneer of political economy Adam Smith was an egalitarian who hoped to heal the ills of his time by elevating avarice from a vice to a virtue, from sin to ‘advantage’ and ‘interest’.

By now, we are at a point where avarice has been let loose to the degree that ‘private government’ has taken over — there is neither full state control nor is the market free. In this situation, many people still hope that the system as a whole is functional and inherently dignifying if only left to its own devices, that it will be able to solve its imperfections, except for those of human nature itself, such as slothful or immoral people who choose to refuse dignity. Perhaps it is the other way round and the constitutional rules of our world-system systemically undermine dignity and lead from cogitocide to sociocide and ecocide, ultimately risking omnicide.

The author has coined the term *dignism* (dignity + ism) to describe a world where every new-born finds space and is nurtured to unfold their highest and best, embedded in a social context of loving appreciation and connection, where the carrying capacity of the planet guides the ways in which everybody’s basic needs are met. It is a world, where we unite in respecting human dignity and celebrating diversity, where we prevent unity from devolving into oppressive uniformity and keep diversity from sliding into hostile division. It is a world of *unity in diversity* manifested through *subsidiarity*.

Dignism means ending the cycles of humiliation that emerge when human rights are promised but not delivered, it appeals to the enormous power entailed in the hope for equal dignity that modernity created but left unfulfilled. Dignism means loving care for the common good of all of humankind as co-inhabitants in a finite habitat. It means creating governance structures that dignify globalisation.

The author has also coined the phrase *egalisation* to mean *equal dignity for all* and call for the ending and healing of existing cycles of humiliation as well as preventing new cycles. The term aims at distinguishing equal dignity from notions such as equality, equity, egalitarianism, or

identicalness, while at the same time avoiding claims that there should be no differences between people. Egalisation is the opposite of the imposition of uniformity, while at the same time guarding against attempts to legitimise differences that humiliate. To be dignified, *globalisation* needs to adopt *egalisation* to become *globegalisation*.

When we look at *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, then we see that globegalisation can draw together the first two, liberty and equality, yet, only in an incomplete way. A world full of lonely disconnected individuals cannot be our aim, as equal and ‘free’ as they may be, they also need to lovingly connect and collaborate. We need to include *fraternité*/sisterhood, or solidarity. The task of our time is *co-operative globegalisation*, or in one single short word — *co-globegalisation*.

In a world of threadbare commons, co-globegalisation is both more difficult than ever and more needed than ever. We must prepare for what game theorists call lose-lose impasses as this is what the future will likely bring, meaning that we need to find better ways than the competition for domination strategies we used for the win-lose dilemmas of the past millennia.

In this situation, looking at the Neolithic Revolution can help. The author follows Max Weber’s *ideal type* approach when she conceptualises two main turning points in human history. She sees the Neolithic Revolution — or the rise of complex agriculture from the foraging and gardening cultures that existed before — as the endpoint of humanity’s first round of globalisation. It was the time when the species of *Homo sapiens sapiens* had completed its campaign of populating all easily accessible lands on planet Earth and had arrived on the last so far untouched continent. For the first time in history, human beings walked on all continents. At that point what anthropologists call *circumscription* began to make itself palpable — Latin *circum*, around, and *scribere*, ‘to write’ — meaning limitation, enclosure, or confinement.

The author uses the term circumscription to capture the astonishment that arises when something that hitherto was believed to be unlimited reveals itself to be finite. If planet Earth were larger, we might still live as migrant foragers, still follow the wild plants and animals that nature provides, and still populate one new continent after the other. Around the time of the Neolithic Revolution, the fact that planet Earth has a finite surface began to make itself palpable, and from then on, circumscription affected all world regions.

The Neolithic Revolution can thus be understood as the first major turning point in human history, the one that ended the win-win situation of abundance our ancestors experienced during the longest part of our species’ history, the one that rang in the circumscribed win-lose situation of the past millennia. Now the second turning point has arrived, as we are heading towards ‘lose-all’ if we fail to create a new kind of win-win. We live in times of ‘hyper-circumscription’, of ‘peak everything’, from minerals to clean water and clean air to biodiversity.

War was one of the ways in which we, as humankind, adapted to circumscription throughout the past millennia, and this led to the kind of political integration that we are proud of — we call it *civilisation*. So-called dominator societies emerged, led by strongmen who eventually formed ever-larger political entities and finally states. What became definitorial was what political scientists call the *security dilemma*: ‘I have to amass weapons, because I am scared. When I amass weapons, you get scared. You amass weapons, I get more scared’. The guiding motto was *If you want peace, prepare for war*. This motto transmuted in *If you want wealth, invest in exploitation* when geographical imperialism moved towards unrestrained capitalism. By now, unrestrained competition for domination has produced hyper-circumscription and lets humanity’s ‘partying’ in a world of seemingly unbounded abundance end in all spheres of life. The last rounds of globalisation reach now the limits of planet Earth’s carrying capacity.

Humanity stands at a sweeping turning point, and we have the choice of proceeding unimpeded with ‘business as usual’ towards the total depletion of planet Earth’s last resources, or we can rethink and shape our future path by inventing new ways of arranging our affairs on this planet. The significance of the Neolithic transition matches the significance of present times and we need to bring about adaptations of similar significance as our forebears, only this time more intentional and better planned. Evidently, this task is hard. Never in our species’ history have we encountered challenges that are more serious.

It is always a shock when limits are reached that hitherto were imperceptible, sudden tipping points change conditions so drastically that it is difficult to bring about equally drastic adaptations. It is hard to accept, for instance, that after millennia of hierarchical domination, suddenly the practice of subjugating people and nature represents a collective suicide strategy. It is hard for those who feel entitled to exclusive privileges and regard themselves as superior ‘dignitaries’ to step down, it is difficult for them to learn dignified humility and stop exploiting, oppressing, and humiliating allegedly ‘lesser’ fellow human beings and non-human species. In an interconnected world, long-term demise for all is the result when a few strongmen elites strive for domination over the rest and engage in the exploitation of humanity’s common planetary resources. The *Humilocene* waits to manifest, the ‘epoch of humility’.

In this situation, few people seem to be aware that *Homo sapiens* lives in a historical moment that is unparalleled not just in terms of crisis but also of opportunity. History does not go in circles. For the first time, humanity can fully appreciate its place in the cosmos. Unlike our ancestors, we can see pictures of our Blue Marble from the perspective of an astronaut. Unlike our forebears, we can feel ‘the ecology of the living’ taking place within *one* circumscribed *biopoetic* space that is shared between all beings. We have access to a much more comprehensive knowledge base about the universe and our place in it than our grandparents ever had. We have everything needed to humanise globalisation and reap the benefits that flow from the global ingathering of humanity.

The book therefore draws attention to the fact that in an interconnected world, it is not only essential for our continued existence on our planet, but also practically possible to move towards a world-system that enables trust and mutual solidarity to emerge both locally and globally. It is feasible to attenuate the *security dilemma* and overcome the *commons dilemma*. It is feasible to create global *human* security rather than *military* security and turn the *tragedy* of the commons — when people’s short-term selfish interests to exploit resources destroy long-term group interests — into the *blessing* of the commons.

The book highlights that only *clashes of humiliation* are dangerous, while *clashes of civilisations* can be enriching. Clashes of civilisations enrich when they become ‘dialogues among civilisations’ and inspire the harvesting of all dignifying aspects from all cultures that ever existed, be it Africa’s *ubuntu* philosophy or the *likeverd* tradition in Norway. Clashes of humiliation, in contrast, are dangerous because they undermine and possibly reverse the global interconnectedness of humanity. Clashes of humiliation can re-divide the world and bring back the tragic dilemmas that held our ancestors in their grip, they can transform a potentially united ‘global village’ into a divided and ravaged war zone.

Unfortunately two historically new forces — globalisation and the rise of human rights ideals — increase the likelihood for clashes of humiliation. Globalisation and the rise of human rights ideals create expectation gaps — or *dignity gaps*, or *indignity traps* — that make feelings of humiliation arise more forcefully than ever before. Dynamics of humiliation will therefore become the strongest obstacle to a dignified future — this is why the author calls dignity humiliation the *nuclear bomb of the emotions*.

The book advises that the time has come to go beyond even ‘dialogues among civilisations’. In the ‘epoch of humility’, ‘healers’ of global inter-human relations will increasingly be in demand, more than diplomats negotiating inter-national relations. Diplomats are rational negotiators, no match for populist humiliation-entrepreneurs who are apt manipulators of mass psychology. A global citizenry of caregivers is needed who understand that humiliation can only be remedied through humble and respectful care and attention. Every single citizen who wishes to become such a global caregiver is called on to engage in global human-to-human trust building rather than abandoning the world to be abused by the Global North as ‘business opportunity’ or ‘leisure park’. To support this goal, the various fields of psychology will and must gain significance and political science will have to take a step back.

We know from research that human nature is neither ‘good’ nor ‘evil’ but social, and that much of human action depends on the ways constitutive rules frame relational contexts. As it stands now, current systemic frames incentivise selfishness and cast suspicion on selflessness in the belief that

Adam Smith's invisible hand will come to rescue, worse, that solidarity would do harm through enabling the lazy to free-ride on the efforts of the hard working. As a result — and the author observes this all around the globe — people are being morally and psychologically crippled to the point that they lack the courage to envision new ways of living together and new systemic frames that would invite pro-social behaviour with 'visible hands'.

To counter this widespread faintheartedness, the book highlights that for the first time in human history there is a practical possibility to transcend competition for dominance and embrace dialogical partnership globally and locally. We *can* make multi-lateralism work by building a *global village* that deserves its name. We *can* leave behind the idea that freedom is only secured through maintaining a Hobbesian 'Wall Street world' where 'competitiveness' means having the most horrific weapons and the strongest bullies as leaders, where selfishness is a virtue and selfless service is regarded as a psychological deficiency.

Human rights ideals represent global in-group ethics, the very ethics that the global village needs if it wants to create a decent future for itself. The scope of ethics and of empathic identification that a village usually reserves for itself within its borders *can* now include the entire global village. The care and loyalty that we usually offer to fellow members in an extended family or in a traditional tribe, this care *can* now encompass all human beings. We *can* rescue and protect basic decency, the decency of 'protecting the essential needs and conditions of upholding the dignity of all persons'. We *can* turn our planet into a planetary 'territory of life'.

The book calls on everyone to join a global citizens movement that envisions deep transformations — *dignity transitions* towards new global *generative mechanisms* and new *constitutive rules*. *Convivialism* and *inclusionism* can make us embrace our planet as *We the planet* with sustenance for all species. We can heed the African adage that 'it takes a village to raise a child' and become a global community of unity in diversity that raises its children to be stewards of our planet as our shared commons. Small indigenous groups have shown us how to protect commons, and research demonstrates that also larger groups can do it.

We have learned that nurturant parenting instils the intrinsic motivation in children to act pro-socially, and when these children grow up, they will need no carrots and sticks to be responsible citizens, they will fill their communities with dignity of their own volition. Transgenerational transmission of loving empathy is possible — no longer the transgenerational transmission of trauma.

A future of dignity, a future without systemic humiliation is within our reach. Equal dignity in solidarity — in short, *dignism* — can become reality. It may sound like utopia and it is utopia. Global dignism is, however, a necessary utopia, \ it remains necessary even if the probability of its realisation may be small. Humankind's survival depends on this utopia. The alternative is environmental collapse and a militarised world that ends in mutual destruction until the entire population of the Earth is dead. The list of dignifying peacebuilders such as Bertha von Suttner, Mohandas K. Gandhi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Eleanor Roosevelt, Rachel Carson, Paulo Freire, or Nelson Mandela waits to become much longer. The book's call is: Let us roll!

A few words to the work the author of this book is involved in: As she sees humiliation as an interpersonal act, an emotional state, and a social mechanism, it is relevant for a wide range of academic fields of inquiry, among them history, social philosophy, political science, sociology, global studies, anthropology, neuroscience, and, not least, psychology. Humiliation is relevant for all branches of psychology — clinical, health, developmental, cultural, community, social, and political psychology — altogether for any integral psychological perspective whose theoretical lenses span all 'life-centred psychologies'. All perspectives are important that allow 'for consciousness in all its forms, flavours and shades, for our embodied humanness and unavoidable finiteness, and for our inescapable responsibility to all living beings'. In her writing, she attempts to bridge academia's siloisation, striving to understand the core messages of various fields of academic inquiry, bringing them together on different levels of abstraction using the *ideal-type* approach of sociologist Max Weber, and reconstructing them from the perspective of dignity and

humiliation. So far, she has done so with war, genocide, and terrorism (2000, 2017), international conflict (2006 and 2009, translated into Chinese in 2019), gender and security (2010), and economics (2012, translated into Brazilian-Portuguese in 2016).

Together with Linda Hartling, a relational psychologist, and a dedicated core group of scholars and educators, the author nurtures a global collaborative fellowship of people who walk the talk of dignity. Since the idea for this work was born in 2001, the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship (HumanDHS, humiliationstudies.org) aims to convene a global dignity community. It is a global transdisciplinary network of concerned scholars, researchers, and educators of all academic fields, together with practitioners, creative artists, and many others, who share a wish to stimulate systemic change, globally and locally, to open space for dignity, mutual respect and esteem to take root and grow. Their goal is to foster healing from cycles of humiliation throughout the world, ending systemic humiliation and humiliating practices, and preventing new ones from arising. The wish is to open space for feelings of humiliation to be transformed into action that dignifies the lives of all people and replenishes our planet. A frame of cooperation and shared humility is needed — rather than a mindset of humiliation — if we wish to build a better world, a world of equal dignity for all in solidarity.

The HumanDHS network has convened more than 30 conferences all around the world since 2003 — two conferences per year — and wishes to invite also the reader of this book. One global conference takes place at a different location each year, so far in Europe (Paris, Berlin, Oslo, Dubrovnik), Costa Rica, China, Hawai'i, Turkey, Egypt, New Zealand, South Africa, Rwanda, Chiang Mai in Northern Thailand, Indore in Central India, and the Amazon in Brasil. Then there is the Workshop on Transforming Humiliation and Violent Conflict at Columbia University in New York City each December, with late Morton Deutsch as honorary convener. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 workshop takes place online.

A new educational effort emerged from the network in 2011, namely, the World Dignity University Initiative, all learners and educators are invited for whom dignity is central to contribute. Dignity Press, with its imprint World Dignity University Press, is in existence since 2012. All efforts are pro bono and not-for-profit endeavours. All works are a labour of love and maintained entirely by volunteers who give their time, energy, and talent as a gift.

Many people around the world are intelligent and diligent, hardworking and prolific. Few, however, are sensitive to humility, few understand the growing significance of dignity and the increasing threat from its violation, humiliation. This sensitivity is like a foreign language that some people speak and others not. This language is difficult to learn — some people seem to know it intuitively, perhaps through particularly harsh life experiences. This sensitivity is what is most valuable for this work, more important than any 'tangible product' or achievement. The network members wish to spell out in ever-more depths what the new language of dignity means, the language of which so few people have an inkling.

The HumanDHS fellowship members think very long-term and plan their cooperation to last throughout their lifetimes. The nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, 2016, and 2017 gave them great courage and has already been lifesaving for many of members around the world who stand up for dignity in the most adverse circumstances.

All people who embody and cultivate the language of dignity through their life path are welcome in this dignity family. Since this work is not about money, power, or other quantifiable markers of success, the dedication to dignity is the 'dignity credential'. The network members are aware that many of those who live by material markers look down on their work and dedication and discard it as 'humiliation credential'.

The dignity fellowship is a fluidly evolving cooperative community rather than a monolithic organisation that speaks with one voice, neither does it wish to be a monolithic organisation. Rather, they aim is to manifest dignity by holding space for unity in diversity. In this context, the author of this book wears two 'hats', one for unity and the other for diversity. When she convenes the global dignity family, she is a unifier who strives to protect the diversity of the entire fellowship so that everyone can forge their own path to dignity in their work and lives. On the other hand, she is also

part of the diversity of the network, for instance, when she writes books, articles, or give lectures. In this book, for example, she speaks only for herself as an individual researcher, and it is important for her to make clear that her views do not define any ‘official’ position of the dignity movement.

As the author hails from a displaced family who was deeply affected by the two world wars of the last century, she is particularly aware of the vulnerabilities of our human arrangements on this planet. All her life, she has been preparing for the next ‘Eleanor Roosevelt moment’ like in 1948, waiting for a new window of opportunity to open for dignity to regain the attention it deserves. Together with Linda Hartling and other close collaborators, she is helping to nurture a moment like this to manifest, ready to be among its co-authors if needed, ready to contribute with their approach of loving dignity.

While the author of this book is the founding president of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies, with Linda Hartling as its director, both are also researchers on their own account. This is a very important point, because what is presented in this book does *not* define any ‘official position’ of the HumanDHS community. On the contrary, the author wishes to inspire her readers to forge their own pathways to exploring dignity and humiliation. The maxim of the overall dignity work is unity in diversity and in their role as conveners, the author, together with Linda Hartling and all its members, attempt to nurture *unity* by holding *diversity* — the diversity of the network members’ views, of which the author is only one part in her role as a researcher.

When Rachel Carson published her book *Silent spring* in 1962, many were full of hope for a substantial turn-around. The Brundtland Commission of 1987, and the Earth Summit of 1992, the Nobel Peace Prize for 2007 to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as well as the 2016 Paris Agreement on global warming, all these were moments of ‘yes we can turn around’ enthusiasm. Yet, in the end, corporate interests won out. They still do, not least when we look at the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations General Assembly for 2030, where Goal 8 shows an exponential economic growth curve, a curve that represents an impossibility in a finite context. The world went from ‘Earthrise’ in the 1960s, to ‘profit versus planet’ around 1970–1987, then turned environmentalism into ‘sustainability’ around 1987–1997, and finally into ‘market environmentalism’ from 1998 to 2018. In 2019 came Greta Thunberg, and in 2020 the Covid-19 virus. What comes next?

The book asks: Why have we, the human family, missed so many invitations to unite when we faced global challenges? Why do we let grim and kind invitations pass alike? In 2001, we let the grim invitation of the September 11 attacks pass, in 2008 that of the enormous financial crisis, and we even turned down the kind invitation of the end of the Cold War.

This is the book’s last paragraph: As the world watches the heart-breaking coronavirus pandemic unfold, our hope is for an exponential change of heart so that global unity rooted in respect for local diversity becomes possible. The central question we face, which we must ask and answer together, remains: *How must we, humankind, arrange our affairs on this planet so that dignified life will be possible in the long term?*

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