

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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Introduction

The book *From humiliation to dignity: For a future of global solidarity* is unique insofar as it widens the concept of academic work by combining what usually is separate, namely, scholarly work and lived experience. The book came into being as part of the author's many decades of working with dignity in all parts of the world.

The author was born into a family that was deeply affected by war and displacement, and therefore 'never again' became the motto of her life. She considers the world her 'university' and looks back on almost fifty years of living globally as a lifelong sense-making project, at home on all continents, always embedded in families and family-like contexts. For the past twenty years, she has helped gather a global community of academics and practitioners dedicated to furthering dignity in the world.

Through her global life, the author has developed a *big history* view on the human condition, a view that embeds the current historical moment in the entire journey of our species *Homo sapiens*

sapiens on planet Earth and extrapolates from there what is needed to create a dignified future. This book therefore takes a step back to evaluate humanity's situation in its larger historical context, and, equipped with the insights from this evaluation, makes suggestions for a roadmap into a future of global dignity in solidarity.

This book offers a complex analysis, and this synopsis attempts to highlight, abbreviate, and simplify certain aspects.

This is the author's summary of where we stand and what is needed to create a dignified future:

We live in a historical moment that is unparalleled in terms of both crisis and opportunity. We live in times that are *better than ever* and at the same time *worse than ever*. History does not go in circles. Our crises inform us that we need to arrange our affairs on this planet in profoundly new ways. Some changes are overdue since decades, others since centuries or even millennia. Presently living generations have access to a knowledge base their forebears did not have, even their immediate grandparents knew much less. For the first time in our history, we, as humanity, have all the knowledge and skills required to bring about any necessary changes.

The most important novelty of our time is that we can appreciate our 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 have the privilege of experiencing the *overview effect* with respect to our planet — we can see it from outside. This makes our horizon large enough to understand that we humans are only one species among many species who all share the same small planet and that only global cooperation can save us. We 'earthlings' can feel 'the ecology of the living' taking place within *one* circumscribed *biopoetic* space that is shared between all beings, we can embrace *biophilia*. For the first time, we are equipped to build the trust needed for solidarity at a global scale, we have all the resources required to reap the benefits that the global ingathering of humanity provides. We can draw on all experiences, past and present, from the oldest Indigenous wisdom to the newest scientific knowledge. Short, the co-creation of a decent global village is within our reach.

In this situation, where do we stand as humanity? Are we capable and willing to use the historical opportunity that stands open before us and cooperate globally? Or does our human nature condemn us to hate, fight, compete for dominance, and exploit each other and the planet? Reason tells us that no single country, no single region, can tackle global challenges alone, do we have the emotional resources to act on this insight? '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? Or not? Is it a valid promise or empty rhetoric when we say, 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'? Can equal dignity and equal rights serve as a moral compass for a decent future in solidarity for humankind? Or not? Is there hope for a 'global democracy and human self-transcendence'? Or will parochial pride always stand in the way? Will we be part of the mass extinction of species that we have unleashed in the past decades? Are we, as humanity, in 'hospital' or already in 'hospice'? Is our only option a ramshackle global village?

If we wish for decent life on Earth, it is not enough to hope for hope, we have to take action to create this hope, and this book aims at inspiring this action. The book calls on the reader to let pessimism be the force that inspires the optimism that is needed to take this action. The best of optimism and the best of pessimism, when they combine, can bring about the best of action — the courage of pessimism to imagine the worst can inspire the optimism to aim for the best. Embracing the anxiety and despair that goes with being a vulnerable human being is the necessary precondition for the kind of dignifying constructive action that is needed to avoid destructive optimism or pessimism. Optimism is destructive when it is only another word for self-congratulatory and delusionary hubris, and pessimism is destructive when it means faint-hearted and gloomy inertia. As we live in a world where hubris and gloom are increasingly being amplified for ulterior goals — 'drama and fear sell' — this book asks its readers to 'cool down' and come together as responsible

visionary pragmatists in global solidarity, as equals in dignity, to lovingly create global unity in diversity.

The book aims at holding the space needed for a very large vision of a dignified future for humanity to flourish, space that can serve as an incubator for creative future-oriented ideas and action. The book refrains from spelling out in too many details how this future may be reached because the main aim is to inspire ideas and action to emerge that may be so innovative and novel that no one has thought of them so far, not even the author of this book.

The author's particular family background has inspired this book. As the author's family lived through the most painful experiences in connection with German history, this has brought the vulnerability of our human-made world to the author in the starkest of ways. As a result, she is sensitised to looming crises more than many others are, and also more aware of the need to prevent crises systemically rather than responding to them haphazardly and post-hoc. The point is to prevent the 'Hitlers' of this world from rising, rather than having to defeat them when they have become too powerful. In 1945, Germany was defeated — the author wonders, is humanity defeating itself now?

Since childhood, the author's life mission has been to learn whether there is hope for 'never again', never again mass destruction of war and genocide, never again systemic humiliation. Since childhood, she works to understand the range of what we humans are capable of in terms of hatred and love, of violence and peace, of competition and cooperation, or shortsighted foolishness and farsighted wisdom.

At the age of twenty-one, she began her 'global living' project, immersing herself into different cultural realms all around the world, much more deeply than through mere 'travel', instead considering herself a sedentary citizen in the global village.

When she was forty years old, after twenty years of global living, she felt she had learned enough to embark on an ambitious plan. She wanted to outline in one single paragraph the path that would carry her until the end of her life. For three years, she reflected deeply and dialogued with many people. This is the paragraph:

We, the species *Homo sapiens*, face global challenges — from the destruction of our ecospheres to the degradation of our sociospheres — and we must cooperate globally if we want to address these challenges. Question: What is the most significant obstacle to successful global cooperation? Answer: Cycles of humiliation are the greatest obstacle, and this problem will increase the more the world interconnects, the more its finiteness will make itself palpable, and the more human rights ideals of equal dignity will become salient and create expectations that were absent before. For global cooperation in responsible solidarity to succeed, the highest goal must therefore be to dismantle existing systemic humiliation, to end and heal present cycles of humiliation, and to prevent new ones from emerging in the future.

The author had two sources of information for this conclusion, first, her own experience, and, second, lessons from history. First, through working for many years as a clinical psychologist, both in Western and non-Western contexts, she had learned that humiliation has the potency to create the deepest of rifts between people, so deep that cooperation becomes impossible. She had learned that this effect amplifies when resources get scarcer and conflicts arise, and even more so when human rights ideals of equal dignity raise expectations as to how these conflicts ought to be addressed.

Second, the historical argument has found its way into common knowledge that the Versailles Treaties at the end of the First World War were intended to humiliate Germany to teach it humility, yet, that this 'lesson' backfired in the most horrible ways. After the Second World War, Germany was included as a respected member in the European family, and this led to peace. In short, history appears to hold the lesson that humiliation risks leading to war while respect can lead to peace.

With these pieces of information and intuition in mind, she went to the library expecting to find abundant literature on humiliation. This was in 1996. She found that the phenomenon of humiliation itself indeed was ubiquitous in all literature on war and aggression, yet, to her great surprise, there was almost nothing on humiliation as a separate theme. She found only one single academic book

with the phrase ‘humiliation’ in its title, a book from 1993 by a professor of law, William Ian Miller, who explores ancient codes of honour and shows how virulent these codes still are.

While the psychological literature on emotions did mention humiliation, it subsumed it under the heading of shame, with humiliation as part of the shame continuum. To the author, this felt wrong. Not least her many years of experience as a psychotherapist in diverse cultural realms had taught her that it is absolutely possible to feel humiliated without feeling shame. She had learned that humiliation and shame can only be placed in the same continuum as long as a mindset of honour reigns, and that this is no longer valid in a context where the ideal of equal dignity is salient.

Starting from these reflections and findings, she planned her doctoral research in social psychology with the title *The psychology of humiliation: Somalia, Rwanda / Burundi, and Hitler’s Germany*. She defended this doctorate in 2001.

By now, in 2022, her global ‘never again’ mission has provided her with more and deeper insights. After almost fifty years of global experience, she feels she can contribute with relevant reflections on humanity’s most existential questions. Therefore, she dares writing this book, with love and passion, as her gift to humanity.

Even though it is not very advisable to provide overly simplified abbreviations, particularly not in times of polarisation, the following is a tentative summary of the author’s view on *big history*:

We, the species *Homo sapiens*, live at a historical turning point that is so important that only a long view on our history can help. We, as humankind, 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 degrade our ecospheres and sociospheres at a global scale, we shred our relations with our habitat and with each other. The suffix *-cide* comes from *caedere* in Latin and means ‘killing’. We catalyse this degradation by damaging our *cogitosphere*, the realm of thinking and reflection, and we damage it to the point of *cogitocide*. As a result, we risk sliding sightlessly into collective *suicide* as a species, more, even towards *omnicide*, the annihilation of all life on Earth. We as humanity stand at the edge of a *Seneca cliff*, the kind of rapid collapse that characterises the disintegration of complex systems.

If we, as humanity, wish to heal *ecocide* and *sociocide* and survive in dignity, the first step must be to overcome *cogitocide*, the destruction of our thinking. We need to face our calamity with an equanimous mind, not with panic nor with denial. Our scientists inform us that we have a window of opportunity of around ten years to step back from the edge, and that all the knowledge to do so is available.

Unfortunately, so far, instead of recognising the depth of the existential crises we are in and grasping the historic opportunity to exit, it seems that too many of us choose to stay myopic. This is why a look at *big history* is helpful. It provides a wide lens that makes primary problems visible that spawn secondary, tertiary, and quaternary ones.

What is known as the *Neolithic Revolution* therefore merits renewed attention. It was a turning point in human history that was as important as the present historical moment. Furthermore, it saw humankind’s primary problem emerge, namely, competition for domination and control as a strategy of survival. Due to its success, at least partially, this competition remained *Homo sapiens*’ master plan of action during the past millennia. It is a uni-dimensional and uni-lateral strategy that answers what political scientists call the *security dilemma* in that it seeks ‘negative’ peace by following the motto of ‘If you want peace, prepare for war’. It was in this context that the dominator model of society arose, with its double intervention, namely, keeping one’s ‘enemies’ out with weapons while holding one’s own down with routine humiliation. Until now, all systems — feudalism, communism, capitalism, democracy, modernity, post-modernity, to name just a few catchwords — played out competition for domination in their practice, if only in different forms and to different degrees, and this even while promising the opposite in rhetoric.

Equal dignity on the ground has been widely and systemically sold out, often even under the guise of dignity rhetoric.

Our Neolithic forebears could not know better, establishing a mindset of competition for domination was the best they could do. They did not yet have the information about the world that we have today. Over time, even a *growth dilemma* superimposed itself and merged with the classical security dilemma, and this is where we are today. The current motto is, 'If you want prosperity, invest in exploitation'.

The situation we live in now, while it is a result of our forebears' strategy of survival, becomes a strategy of collective suicide as the world interconnects and the Earth's carrying capacity becomes overstretched. Competition for domination as a mindset and as a social and societal order was always limited in its usefulness, by now, it fully outlives this usefulness. Even colonising other planets would not help, given this mindset, its resources would soon be depleted as well. This mindset drives systemic cogitocide and sociocide, it divides the global community just when it needs to come together, and by doing so, it hastens global ecocide.

As it stands now, the dominator mindset drives *cycles of humiliation* and *systemic humiliation* to hitherto unseen levels. This happens in a situation where human rights ideals promise equal dignity, which means that feelings of humiliation no longer translate into obedient humbleness but acquire hitherto unseen force. The author calls feelings of dignity humiliation the *nuclear bomb of the emotions*.

Clashes of civilisations are harmless compared with *clashes of humiliation*, because humiliation closes doors for cooperation that otherwise would stand open. In the absence of leaders of the calibre of a Nelson Mandela or Mahatma Gandhi, cycles of dignity humiliation have the potency to turn the global village into a global war zone. Nothing is therefore more important than halting and preventing these cycles of humiliation.

In this situation, ideas are realistic that hitherto were deemed unrealistic. Citizen-to-citizen trust building at a global scale is the only lifesaving strategy. Human rights ideals of global partnership in mutual solidarity offer the path to achieving lasting global dignity. The traditional role description for maleness, namely, bravery in competing for domination, is now obsolete. Our planet is burning and drowning, and at the same time it is filled with deadly arms, and this means that all, men and women united, are called to embrace a new kind of bravery, namely, the *bravery of building mutual trust, care, and solidarity in global partnership*.

The call must be as follows: On this small and finite planet that is our common home, let us bring our forebears' adaptations to a better completion. Nothing hinders us to honour our forebears' legacy even while we unlearn their adaptations. There is no shame in accepting new learning when realities on the ground change. We possess all the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed.

Let us nurture respect for equal dignity for all of us as responsible individuals, free to engage in loving solidarity with each other and with our planet. Let us celebrate diversity without humiliating each other, let us protect unity in equality in dignity. Let us turn *socio-cide* and *eco-cide* into what the author calls *socio-sanity* and *eco-sanity*. Let us embrace *socio-salvation* and *eco-salvation*.

Let us humanise globalisation through *egalisation*, a word the author coined to signify 'equal dignity for all in freedom', let us aim for *globegalisation*. More, let us do so in cooperation and

solidarity, let us work for *co-globelisation*. In this way we can co-create a decent global village.

We need the *heroism of care*, the *heroism of dignity*. We need what the author calls *dignism* as a vision for the future, dignism as a term formed from dignity and -ism.

Dignism describes a world where every newborn 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 basic needs are met.

As this simplified summary shows, this book calls on its readers to dare embrace eutopian imagination at an unparalleled scale, because the list of obstacles standing in the way is as unparalleled.

As for obstacles, the profit motive stands in the way when it fails to serve the common good and instead entraps the world in systemic humiliation. Academia becomes irrelevant and loses its ability to inspire new thinking when it allows itself to be blind, be it through siloisation or through letting market forces capture it, or both. Even the mindfulness movement — as valuable as its emphasis on the ‘present moment’ is — becomes counterproductive when it devolves into ‘McMindfulness’ and cultivates ‘social amnesia’ through ‘collective forgetting of historical memory’. Anger stands in the way when drama surrounding minor problems absorbs all energy and leaves urgent long-term systemic planning unattended. This is just the beginning of a long list of obstacles that stand in the way of a decent future. This book aims at showing a way out of gridlock into a decent future.

The first part of the book has the title ‘Humiliation and humility — A timeline from 1315 to 1948’. The second part looks at dignity under the heading ‘Equal dignity for all’. The third part wonders, ‘Where do we go from here?’, and discusses ways into the future and calls for action. The book weaves together a large number of diverse voices and offers an analytic overview over all of human history — where we come from, where we stand now, and where we go. It explores the notion of dignity, the opportunities it offers, and it delineates a decent path into the future. It approaches dignity from all directions, including from its violation, namely, humiliation.

These are the 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!

Half of the book is taken up by endnotes. As we live in times of ‘fake news’, it becomes ever more important to provide thick layers of references and links. In digital publications, length is not a problem, yet, this is different for printed volumes, and therefore the endnotes are shortened in the printed version of this book. The endnotes have two functions and address two readerships. Their first function is to embed the arguments presented in this book in their wider intellectual context and show their connections with the insights of other scholars. The second function is to interweave the book’s arguments so that it becomes clear that these arguments represent an interconnected web rather than a one-dimensional line. The first readership the endnotes address are researchers who wish to understand the author’s particular path of investigation and want to delve deeper into relevant academic research. The second readership addressed is a more general audience who might appreciate more accessible popularisations of the themes discussed. The book’s Appendix offers a condensed schematic overview over the flow of the argument in this book.

Since 2001, the author has had the privilege of nurturing a global network of academics and practitioners who wish to bring more dignity into the world, and the name that emerged for this initiative is Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS). It is important to clarify that the author, while she is the founding president of this global fellowship, is also a researcher in her own right. What is presented in this book does not define any official position of the HumanDHS

network. On the contrary, the author wishes to inspire her readers to forge their own pathways to exploring the themes of dignity and humiliation. Together with Linda Hartling, who is the director of the HumanDHS community, the author nurtures unity in diversity by holding space for diversity in this global dignity community. Linda Hartling and the author are also part of this diversity.

Please be invited to get an impression of this book by perusing the three sections of this synopsis:

On dignity
On humiliation
Where do we go from here?

On dignity

The author of this book has been living on all continents for the past forty-seven years. On her global path, it always astonishes her to see how much the promise entailed in the sentence that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’ has strength despite having been undermined and violated so ruthlessly over such a long time. The promise seems to be a genie that, once unleashed, cannot be put back into the bottle anymore. It has force now. It induces hope and has become a foundational value far beyond mere legal concepts.

The reason for the strength of this promise, even in the face of the most callous betrayals, appears to be that the promise speaks to a deep human desire, the desire to rise from being pushed down, the desire to stand upright — an embodied longing, beyond language, beyond legal instruments. It is the simple and straightforward yearning to be respected as an equal fellow human being among fellow human beings.

The word *dignity* comes before *rights* in the foundational sentence ‘All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’. Is this an accident? Why have rights been foregrounded since 1948, why has the term human *rights* been normalised much more than the phrase human *dignity*? The message of this book is that the time has come to take dignity more seriously — or, to be more precise, *equality in dignity in solidarity*. 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, particularly negative rights that guarantee ‘freedom from...’ rather than positive ‘rights to...’. 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 question. What if dignity has no meaning beyond 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, and rights can violate dignity when they are insufficiently anchored in dignity. This means that both neglecting and heeding rights can violate dignity. This means also that we cannot leave the nurturing of dignity to the legal field and its professionals alone, dignity needs intentional and proactive conceptualising and nurturing.

As soon as we take dignity seriously, 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 nor pride, nor simply the word dignity alone that describes the core of the new moral universe built on human rights ideals. Dignity is a lived experience along the lines of *respect for the equality in dignity of all individuals as free persons, free to engage in loving dialogue and responsible mutual solidarity with each other and with our ecological foundations* (not free to humiliate people or exploit our natural surroundings).

This equal dignity is an embodied sense, a sense of being able to stand tall and hold one's head up high. It means looking into the eyes of one's fellow human beings as equals, rather than being humiliated and bowing down in submissive humbleness. 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 from arrogant superiority nor looking up from humiliated inferiority. Equal dignity is for inferiors to become aware that they need no longer accept humiliation in docile meekness, and for superiors to learn to refrain from arrogating supremacy, to refrain from humiliating inferiors.

Mere equality is not enough though — more is needed. Human rights ideals represent more than an invitation to keep our heads straight as equals, they invite us also to open our arms and offer respectful solidarity to the world. They ask us to refrain from sticking our elbows out in divisive competition, just as much as we should not smother others with choking embraces. Everyone is invited to protect unity in diversity through avoiding hostile division as much as avoiding suffocating uniformity. All are invited to meet in the middle between top and bottom, at the level of equal dignity in shared humility and solidarity, so that we all can join hands in building a decent future together. Dignity is the ability to stand upright with open arms, lovingly welcoming all others into mutual responsibility as equals in worthiness.

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 that is influenced by its social, political, and cultural context — dignity is both inherent to every human being *and* it 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, it speaks to dialogical encounters that entail dimensions that are 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 obstacle to global cooperation.

In the English language, the concept of humiliation has traversed a fascinating journey throughout the past centuries, with the year 1757 of particular significance. Since 1757, humiliation is no longer connoted in the English language as a pro-social duty of superiors to show inferiors their due lowly place, it is now 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 inscribed into an intricate web of related phenomena and concepts,

with honour and dignity as cornerstones. The author of this book came to study dignity through researching humiliation. Only later did she understand the longer historical path and how it 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, while still remaining inscribed in the context of collectivistic ranked honour. Still today, the word *dignitary* signifies a ‘higher being’, and thus betrays the hierarchical roots of dignity. Only after the Second World War do we see the *Zeitgeist* embracing 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, for them it is 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 a similar division insofar as it 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. The latter is much more hurtful than the first. 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 placed lower than expected in a ranked honour system may feel hurt, still, she is not immediately exiled from the human family. In contrast, being placed 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. This is why the violation of dignity smarts so much 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, and even the debased person may agree that it is legitimate — she may think of debasement as God’s due punishment or nature’s unshakable order. Wherever and whenever people accept their debasement quietly, there is no apparent disruption of order. The situation changes radically, however, when human rights ideals become salient, because these ideals stand in the way of such legitimising interpretations of humiliation. Human rights ideals offer everyone the unconditional right 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 therefore hurts so much more 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 more extreme forms. They can manifest in hatred and violence and escalate to dangerous levels of terror, war, or genocide. Only Gandhi-like figures can inspire peaceful social action that is consistent with dignity. Feelings of dignity humiliation may also lead to extreme forms of depression that are endured as ‘quietly’ as feelings of honour humiliation, only for different reasons: While people who subscribe 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 the very intolerability of this betrayal may cause the quietness, a quietness of deep despondence.

Human rights ideals are a message of universal love, they represent humanity’s promise that

there is only one human family and that all humans are equal members in this one family. Millions of people all around the globe take this promise 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 go that are inflicted by thwarted love, and how horrific the outcomes can be. Dignity humiliation is embodied to the extent that people often cannot find words to speak about it, that it is easier to express it in other mediums, such as drawings or photography. ‘Humiliation is hard to understand until one is humiliated’, but ‘then its impact can be devastating’.

Mohandas K. Gandhi and Nelson Mandela mobilised masses to rise from humiliation. The names of Gandhi and Mandela 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 apparent and that this force can be used for construction, as by the Gandhis and Mandelas of this world, or for de-struction, 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* — independently of whether they are fomented by leaders or arise from personal circumstances. 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 made traditional weapons seem pale. Some victims even paid for bullets to be shot dead rather than be hacked to death by the machetes of their neighbours.

Apart from dignity humiliation being more hurtful than honour humiliation, other factors aggravate the situation as well. 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 fellow aristocrats, among those 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, to millions of people who did not have this right before. 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. Cheap drones can make the most expensive war equipment obsolete. Would-be Hitlers 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 dignity awareness can be. Outside of their countries, the names ‘Gandhi’ and ‘Mandela’ are shining beacons of dignity, however, the situation becomes 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 are connected with their epochs as well.

In Afrikaans, apartheid means simply segregation, literally ‘aparthood’, and when it was devised after the trauma of the Boer Wars, it was regarded as a thoroughly legitimate solution 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 strive for 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 created could have led to horrific genocidal killings — similar to what happened in Rwanda — had not people such as Nelson Mandela channelled its force into constructive and dignified societal change. The author is among those who admire Nelson Mandela’s vision of uniting South Africa in dignity.

What apartheid demonstrates also is how feelings of dignity humiliation professed by the downtrodden risk unleashing raging anger in masters who feel entitled to their privileged supremacy. Newly emerging feelings of dignity humiliation in subordinates are likely to trigger a sense of honour humiliation in their masters and their successfully indoctrinated followers. For many among 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 to *rankists*, those who essentialise difference.

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.

At their core, honour and dignity are incompatible. What is often referred to as honour killing provides an even starker illustration. In an honour context, a raped girl might be perceived of having brought dishonour upon her family and she might be killed with the aim 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. At meta-levels, a family who believes that the killing of the girl is a sacred customary duty will feel humiliated by the human rights defender who condemns this ‘duty’ as harmful traditional practice. At the same time, the human rights defender will feel humiliated by the very idea that killing shall heal. In other words, the universes of dignity and honour clash head-on and exclude each other — the girl cannot die and live at the same time — while both universes are embedded in overlaying cycles of humiliation. As a psychotherapist, the author has always attempted to solve this situation in dignified ways.

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, of enthroning the formerly oppressed as new oppressor. 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, it needs to engage in much more inclusive and sophisticated peace making and bridge building practices than in the past. The formerly oppressed cannot become the new oppressors. Oppressors and oppressed need to manifest a second order transformation by coming together and joining hands, just like Nelson Mandela envisioned when he invited 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’ made subservient masses take their household machetes and commit horrific genocidal killings.

Human rights defenders need to learn from such examples and 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 from 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 indeed 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.

The author avoids using the term *empowerment* and replaces it with *entrustment* and *stewardship*. Entrustment and stewardship suggest 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 of 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, wise, and dignified humility, rather than a world where ‘honourable dignitaries’ use humiliation to create submissive humbleness in their followers. The book calls on everyone to regard humiliation as an unacceptable violation of dignity. It draws attention to the fact that feelings of humiliation have the force to lead to hostile division where dignified diversity in solidarity would otherwise be possible.

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 other time of crisis in humanity’s history. The author predicts that our time will once be called ‘the dark era of the twenty-first century’, an era where the dominator approach to our human condition overstayed its *raison-d’être*, an era where 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 other generation before.

In feudalism, communal resources were appropriated for an aristocracy who relied on what they perceived as 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, however, we are at a point where avarice has taken over to the point that there is neither full state control nor is the market free — ‘private government’ reigns. 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. Many people trust that the existing systemic rules are inherently dignifying and would function well if only left to their own devices, that any malfunction has its origin at the level of the individual, and that only uninformed or immoral people could doubt such a supreme system. Few consider that the truth may be the other way round — the constitutional rules of our world-system may be the ones that undermine dignity systemically. They may lead to cogitocide, from there to sociocide and ecocide, ultimately risking omnicide. Instead of inspiring the creation of new systemic solutions, frustration is being captured by unsocial media that gain profit from amplifying frustration, fuelling hatred, and merging New Age and far-right ‘Nazi hippies’ into ‘conspirituality’.

As a result — and the author observes this all around the globe — people are becoming morally and psychologically so crippled that they lack the courage to envision new ways of living together, let alone create new systemic frames that invite pro-social behaviour with ‘visible hands’.

The author has coined the term *dignism* (dignity + ism) to replace the terminology of capitalism, socialism, or communism as catchwords, because they drive cycles of humiliation that are so emotionally loaded that enraged adherents divide the world without even knowing what these catchwords mean. The aim is to point at a positive goal that can unite all:

Dignism describes a world where every newborn 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 basic needs are met. It is a world where

unity in diversity reigns, where we unite in respecting human dignity and celebrating diversity, where we prevent unity from devolving into oppressive uniformity, and where we keep diversity from sliding into hostile division. It is a world where we protect diversity from being levelled out through uniformity and prevent unity from being broken down through division. Dignism means avoiding ‘uniformity without diversity’ as much as ‘division without unity’. It means transforming everything into loving global unity in diversity.

Dignism means ending the cycles of humiliation that emerge when human rights are promised but not delivered, dignism appeals to the enormous power of hope for equal dignity that was created by what we call modernity, only to be left unfulfilled. Dignism means loving care for the common good of all of humanity as co-inhabitants in a finite habitat. Dignism means establishing governance structures that dignify globalisation and manifest *co-globelisation*. Dignism realises unity in diversity through *subsidiarity*, through weaving together all dignifying aspects of all of the world’s cultures into one decent global village.

The author has coined the phrase *egalisation* to match the term *globalisation* and make it linguistically possible to merge both into one word, namely, *globelisation*, and, by adding cooperation, into *co-globelisation*. Her aim is to turn the focus away from the destructive aspects of the presently unfolding globalisation of exploitation and to open space for a future globalisation of care in solidarity.

Egalisation is her short form for *equal dignity for all in freedom*, a short form for the call to dismantle existing systems of humiliation, to end and heal present cycles of humiliation and prevent new ones from occurring. The term egalisation aims at distinguishing equal dignity from notions such as equality, equity, egalitarianism, or identicalness. It rejects claims that there should be no differences between people, on the contrary, it even affirms differences. It affirms differences that dignify, while rejecting differences that humiliate. To be dignified, *globalisation* needs to adopt *egalisation* to become *globelisation*.

When we look at the maxim of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, then *globelisation* can draw together the first two, liberty and equality, yet, *fraternité*/sisterhood/solidarity is missing. A world full of lonely disconnected individuals cannot be our aim, as equal and as ‘free’ as they may be. They need to connect and collaborate caringly, lovingly, and responsibly, in mutual consideration and solidarity. The task of our time is to co-create *co-operative globelisation*, or in one word, *co-globelisation*.

The book spells out that *co-globelisation* is needed more than ever now, and this fast. In a world of worn-down commons filled with experiences of humiliation, where authoritarian narratives offer dangerous relief, we must prepare for what game theorists call lose-lose impasses. We are in a hurry to find solutions that are superior to the competition for domination strategies that we used to apply to the win-lose dilemmas of the past millennia.

In this situation, the author recommends looking at the Neolithic Revolution, the period in history when complex agriculture emerged from the foraging and gardening cultures that existed before. The author follows Max Weber’s *ideal type* approach when she conceptualises two main turning points in human history. As to the first turning point, she sees the Neolithic Revolution 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, when it had arrived on the last so far untouched continent, when, for the first time in history, modern humans walked on all continents. From then on, a phenomenon began to make itself increasingly palpable that anthropologists call *circumscription* — 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 limited. If planet Earth were larger, humans 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's surface is finite became salient, and from then on, circumscription affected all world regions in ever increasing ways.

The author thus understands the Neolithic Revolution as the first major turning point in human history, the one that ended the win-win situation of abundance that our ancestors enjoyed during the longest part of our species' history, namely the first 97 per cent (if we calculate that modern humans began to walk planet Earth around 300,000 years ago). Now the second turning point has arrived, after roughly ten millennia of circumscribed win-lose conditions, and humanity heads towards 'lose-all'. We live in times of 'hyper-circumscription', of 'peak everything', from minerals to clean water and clean air to biodiversity. We understand that the adaptations our forebears shaped at the first turning point were infeasible in the long run, and that the long run has arrived now.

As the most recent rounds of globalisation reach the limits of planet Earth's carrying capacity, solutions wait to be enacted that our forebears could not implement. The book highlights the 'good news' that this feat can succeed. It highlights that it is crucial to understand that it is not disrespectful to transcend our forebears' adaptations that are now anachronistic. At the time of the Neolithic Revolution, our ancestors simply did not have the global overview that we have now.

Pressed by circumscription, our ancestors adapted, among others, by waging wars. *Dominator societies* emerged, led by strongmen who created ever-larger political entities, which we proudly refer to as *civilisations*. In that context something that political scientists call the *security dilemma* emerged — 'We have to amass weapons, because we are scared. When we amass weapons, you get scared. You amass weapons, we get more scared'. The guiding motto was *If you want peace, prepare for war*.

More recently, as 'geographical imperialism' moved towards 'overshoot capitalism', this motto became overlaid and enmeshed with the *growth dilemma* of *If you want prosperity, invest in exploitation*. By now, unrestrained competition for domination produces hyper-circumscription as humanity's domination campaign reaches its limits in all spheres of life.

Humanity thus stands at a fundamental turning point — either we proceed unimpeded with 'business as usual' towards the global depletion of planet Earth's last resources, or we rethink everything and shape our future path by inventing radically more sustainable ways of arranging our affairs on this planet. Never in our species' history have we encountered challenges that are more profound. The presently unfolding coronavirus crisis is likely to be nothing more than a small prelude. We stand at historically unparalleled crossroads. The author deems the profit-driven amplification of vaccine hesitancy, together with the profit-driven failure to provide the entire world with sufficient vaccine doses, to be a crime against humanity perpetrated by all power holders and their supporters who still cling to the mindset of competition for domination, just like it is a crime to keep the planet awash in weapons and drowning and burning it.

We know from research that it is counterproductive to idealise human nature or to demonise it, because much of human action depends on the ways constitutive rules frame relational contexts. Human nature is neither 'good' nor 'evil', rather, humans are capable of the most loving goodness and the most horrifying evilness, whereby violence, hatred, and terror are deeply entangled with notions of honour, heroism, glory, and loyalty. Research shows also that nurturant parenting can strengthen the intrinsic motivation in children to act pro-socially, and when these children grow up, they will need no carrots nor sticks to be responsible citizens, they will fill their communities with dignity out of their own volition. Transgenerational transmission of loving empathy is possible — the transgenerational transmission of trauma can be left behind. All this is good news. It means that cooperation and solidarity can be nurtured systemically, through building appropriate societal frames.

It lies in the nature of sudden tipping points that they change conditions so fast and drastically that it is difficult to bring about matching adaptations, yet, it has to be done. The book highlights that it is crucial to be aware that we have everything needed to build mutual trust and responsible solidarity at a global level. We have everything needed to create a global community that heeds the fact that we are *one* single species of *Homo sapiens* on *one* single vulnerable planet, that we are one humanity on one planet. For the first time in human history, it is no longer an unrealistic dream to

transcend competition for domination and instead embrace dialogical partnership globally and locally. Now we *can*. We *can* leave behind the idea that freedom is only secured through maintaining a Hobbesian ‘Wall Street world’, in which ‘competitiveness’ means having the most fear-inducing weapons and the strongest bullies as leaders, where selfishness is virtuous and selfless service is deemed to be a psychological deficiency. We have everything needed to make multi-lateralism work and build a global village that deserves its name.

By building global trust, we can prevent cycles of humiliation from re-stoking the *military* security dilemma that kept the world divided for the past millennia, so we can finally enjoy the blessings of *human* security. Likewise, we have all the necessary knowledge and skills to turn the *tragedy* of the commons — when people’s short-term selfish interests to exploit resources destroy long-term group interests — into the *blessings* of the commons.

Human rights ideals represent global in-group ethics, the very ethics that the global village needs if it wants to heal its divisions and create a decent future for itself. The scope of ethics and 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 *can* now encompass all human beings in global connectedness and compassion. 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’.

Already in her first book in 2006, the author pointed out that what stands in the way are *clashes of humiliation*. Such clashes have the force to re-divide the world and bring back the tragic security and commons dilemmas that held our ancestors in their grip. Clashes of humiliation are dangerous because they lead to hostile standoffs that undermine and disrupt global interconnectedness and its promise of global solidarity, they can transform a potentially united global village into a divided and ravaged war zone. *Clashes of civilisations*, in contrast, are enriching when they become ‘dialogues among civilisations’ and inspire the harvesting of all dignifying aspects from all cultures that ever existed — be it the *ubuntu* philosophy from South Africa or the Norwegian cultural heritage of *likeverd* and *dugnad*.

Unfortunately, we live in times where the likelihood for clashes of humiliation increases. Two new phenomena — global interconnectedness and the rise of human rights ideals — play a particular role. They create expectation gaps — or *dignity gaps*, or *indignity traps* — that heat up feelings of humiliation as never before. Globalisation connects people so they are better informed of how globalisation exploits them, and in the light of human rights ideals, this exploitation transmutes from divinely ordained fate that has to be endured into human-made humiliation that has to be fought. This is why the author speaks of dignity humiliation as the *nuclear bomb of the emotions* — in short, the downtrodden might use their proverbial pitchforks.

On the other side are those who fear the pitchforks. It is hard to accept that after millennia of hierarchical domination, suddenly, the practice of subjugating people and nature no longer means ‘victory’ and ‘progress’ but collective suicide. It is hard for those who feel entitled to exclusive privileges, those who regard themselves as superior ‘dignitaries’, to learn dignified humility and refrain from exploiting, oppressing, and humiliating allegedly ‘lesser’ fellow human beings and non-human species.

The book makes clear that the *Humilocene* waits to manifest, the ‘epoch of humility’. In an interconnected world, demise for all is the result when a few players arrogate superiority and engage in the exploitation of humanity’s common social and ecological resources. Pitchforks are no solution, as they are informed by the same sense of self-righteous entitlement that drives their opponents. A second order transformation is needed, a new level of loving care in shared humility is the antidote.

The book calls on all the *healers* of this world to step up. The epoch of humility will need healers of inter-human relations on this globe to join the diplomats who negotiate inter-national relations. Diplomats are rational negotiators, they are no match for populist humiliation-entrepreneurs who manipulate the psychology of masses. Likewise, the climate and biodiversity

crises cannot be tackled by climate scientists alone. Political scientists and climate scientists will need all fields of psychology that offer healing-centred care to help cultivate global connectedness and compassion. We can no longer abandon the world to be used and abused as ‘business opportunity’ or ‘leisure park’ by the Global North. Every global citizen is called to become a global caregiver and engage in global human-to-human trust building. Humiliation can only be remedied through humble and respectful attention offered by all involved.

The book calls on everyone to join a global citizens movement that envisions deep transformations. *Convivialism* and *inclusionism* can make us embrace our planet as *we the planet* with sustenance for all species. We can jointly envision a *dignity transition* towards new global *generative mechanisms* and new *constitutive rules*. We can heed the African adage that ‘it takes a village to raise a child’ and co-create a global community of nurturant parents who raise their children to be stewards of our shared social and ecological commons. We can apply the Indigenous seven-generation rule and protect our global commons — small Indigenous groups have shown us how to, and research demonstrates that also larger groups can do it.

A future of dignity, a future beyond 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, however, is a necessary utopia, a *eutopia*, and it remains necessary even if the probability of its realisation may be small. Humankind’s survival depends on this eutopia. The alternative is environmental collapse and a militarised world that ends in mutual destruction.

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’s roll!

A few words to the work in which the author of this book is involved. She sees humiliation as an interpersonal act, an emotional state, and a social mechanism that 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 all integral psychological perspectives whose theoretical lenses span all ‘life-centred psychologies’.

In her writing, the author attempts to bridge separate disciplines and overcome academia’s siloisation by striving to understand the core messages of various fields of academic inquiry, bringing them together on different levels of abstraction by using the *ideal-type* approach of sociologist Max Weber and reconstructing everything 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). 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’.

After a lifetime of observation, research, and reflection as a global citizen, on the background of her family’s trauma from war and displacement, the author concludes that humanity’s greatest problem — and it might mean our demise — is our current inability to unlearn the dominator mindset and to leave behind the dominator model of society. The author suggests that there is no shame in accepting, with loving compassion, that our ancestors learned this mindset during the past millennia as they were caught in an unforgiving systemic threat called security dilemma. Our ancestors could not do better, they did not yet have our knowledge of the world. There is no shame in accepting that new realities call for new learning. The author therefore works for a world culture of unity in diversity, of dialogue and partnership in equal dignity, for a mindset that transcends the dependence versus independence dichotomy and lets us join hands in turning global social and ecological interdependence into loving mutual interconnectedness.

Together with Linda Hartling, a relational psychologist, and a dedicated core group of scholars and educators, the author nurtures a global collaborative movement of people who wish to walk the

talk of dignity. Since the idea for this work was born in 2001, the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network (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, in collaboration with practitioners, creative artists, and many others, all of whom 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. They suggest that 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 35 conferences all around the world since 2003 — two conferences per year — and wishes to invite also the reader of this book to participate in the future. One global conference took place at a different location each year, so far in Europe (Paris, Berlin, Oslo, and 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 that takes place at Columbia University in New York City each December, with late Morton Deutsch as its honorary convener. During the coronavirus pandemic, this workshop took place online.

A new educational effort emerged from the network in 2011, namely, the World Dignity University Initiative, and all learners and educators are invited for whom dignity is central. Dignity Press is in existence since 2012 with its imprint World Dignity University Press. All efforts are a pro bono labour of love and entirely maintained by wealth measured in gifts of time, energy, and talent, all creatively shared by the network's members and supporters.

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, namely, 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 author herself, of course, is only a learner as well, all are perpetual apprentices.

The HumanDHS fellowship members think very long-term and plan their collaboration to last throughout their lifetimes. Everyone who strives to embody and cultivate the language of dignity is welcome in this dignity family. Its work is not about money, power, or other quantifiable markers of success, the dedication to dignity is its 'dignity credential'. The author is aware that many of those who live by material markers look down on this work and dedication and discard it as 'humiliation credential'. The nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, 2016, and 2017 gave great courage and has been lifesaving for many network members around the world who stand up for dignity often under the most adverse conditions, in circumstances where they put their lives on line. The hope is that this recognition can be an inspiration also for the reader and the many others who work for dignity throughout the world.

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, the 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. When she writes books, articles, or give lectures, she is part of the diversity of the network. In this book, 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 family that 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.

When Rachel Carson published her book *Silent Spring* in 1962, many were full of hope for a substantial turn-around. Many ‘yes we can turn around’ moments followed, starting with the Brundtland Commission of 1987, then the Earth Summit of 1992, the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), as well as the 2015 Paris Agreement on global warming. Yet, in the end, short-term corporate interests always were stronger. They are still winning out, not least when we look at the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations General Assembly for 2030 — 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, environmentalism turned into ‘sustainability’ around 1987–1997, and finally into ‘market environmentalism’ from 1998 to 2018. In 2019 came Greta Thunberg. Since 2020, we have the Covid-19 virus. What comes next?

The book asks: Why have we, the human family, missed so many invitations to unite while we face 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: Even as we watch cascading crises unfold around the world, our shared 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, as humanity, 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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