

From Humiliation to Dignity: Building a Global Nest!

Lecture by Evelin Lindner

Founding President of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies
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Global Vulnerabilities — From Humiliation to Dignity and Solidarity
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<https://humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting/40.php>

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First, I would like to thank Professor Saulo Fernández for hosting this conference. He joined the Global Research Team of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies at the end of 2016, and here is his biographical summary:

Saulo is Assistant Professor of Social Psychology at UNED University in Spain. His current research interests focus mainly on the study of humiliation as a distinct emotional experience, aiming to identify the particular situational determinants and cognitive appraisals that predict humiliation, as well as the consequences that the experience of humiliation has for the victims. He is also interested in the study of the experience of the social stigmatization and humiliation among people with dwarfism and on the moral perceptions and expectancies that majority group members develop toward minority group members.

The current state of our world

This lecture starts with an inventory of the current state of our world. Most people are aware of the ongoing wars in the world, since they dominate the news. However, many do not know the latest research on the health of our planet, except for occasional news about extreme weather events.

I recommend therefore watching the 2024 Tyler Prize Conversation at the University of Potsdam in Germany from 4th June 2024 (<https://youtu.be/3UX7P0xEN5g>), with Professor Johan Rockström, who is the Director of the Potsdam Institute Climate Impact Research (PIK), Professor in Earth System Science at the University of Potsdam, and Chief Scientist at Conservation International. He offers the latest insights from scientists around the world.

Rockström concludes that ‘many people feel it’s pointless to do anything — what’s the point that I do anything if everyone else is doing the wrong thing’. ‘As a scientist’, he says, ‘I’ve never had reason to be so nervous as today when you look at all the data we have and how the world looks like geopolitically’. What is needed, he recommends, ‘is to start demystifying governing the planet, by bringing forward the good examples’. There is ‘overwhelming evidence’, he states,

‘that if we transition to a sustainable future, we get multiple benefits and these multiple benefits are not only about health, it’s also about security, it’s also about stability in societies, it is about dignity...’.

Rockström’s ‘vision for the future’ is ‘science on how to govern the Global Commons within planetary boundaries’. Rockström and his colleagues have sent a letter to secretary-general António Guterres on the occasion of the Summit of the Future coming up in September (<https://www.un.org/en/summit-of-the-future>), saying to him, ‘Fantastic that you’re holding your Summit of the Future at the first day of the New York Climate Week (in September 2024), but you cannot have a discussion on the future without starting with the planet, and you have to put the sustainable development goals inside the planet to be able to have a serious discussion on an equitable future for humanity!’ Rockström ends his report on this letter with a deep sigh, saying ‘...and so let’s hope that that occurs...’

The conundrum

Let us recapitulate: Here we have on one side geopolitics unfolding that are counterproductive and we have people that are discouraged. On the other side, we have science that is now perfectly equipped to provide the road map towards the dignifying stewardship of the Global Commons within planetary boundaries.

Rockström rightly points at the fact that the solutions are not new, they align with age-old indigenous wisdom that also Darcia Narvaez brings to us, who is part of this conference. Since I am embedded in Norway, you may also like to listen to Mari Boine and her TED talk ‘Unshaming My Indigenous Heritage’ on 7th February 2022 (<https://youtu.be/eDYZRGWMacM>), or to ‘Our Rights To Earth And Freedom’ by Sofia Jannok on 23rd February 2012 (<https://youtu.be/5GZu8xECodw>).

Travellers from other galaxies, if they were to travel to planet Earth, would be astonished by this conundrum. Here there is a lifesaving opportunity, and then it is not being grasped, and this by members of the species *Homo sapiens* who pride themselves of superior intelligence. The big question is: What stands in the way? What is the missing piece? Why is the world not moving forward, at least not concerted enough and fast enough, given all the scientific knowledge?

What is the missing link?

I contend that the missing piece is a deeper understanding of, and greater attention to, the psychological dynamics of respect and humiliation. Rockström reports on ‘the unique breakthrough’ that ‘the Earth commission has not only synthesised *safe* — which is the planetary boundaries — but also *just*’. My suggestion is: More than abstract justice, what is important is a *sense of justice*, and this sense, to manifest in the psyche of people, needs attention to the psychological dynamics of respect and humiliation.

Most people are familiar with the intricacies of *paradigm change* (see Thomas Kuhn’s work), as incumbents are to be expected to stand in the way of change to the status quo, given that change would be contrary to their immediate short-term self-interest (even if it were in their long-term self-interest). More relevant than incumbents standing in the way of change may be people who feel humiliated, or, even more relevant, the influence of ‘humiliation-entrepreneurs’, as I call them. They use feelings of humiliation in their followership for the sake of their own

power strategies, enabled by economic environments that make humiliation-entrepreneurship profitable. In the U.S.A., for instance, followers of a former president proudly wave their fists, brandishing rings that combine the phrase ‘deplorables’ with the fierce face of a warrior. In other words, these people are ready to take revenge for perceived humiliations. In the context of planetary resilience, humiliation-entrepreneurs feed, not least, on the human tendency called *loss aversion* — humans want to avoid losses more than they seek gains and therefore easily feel humiliated by losses, oblivious of the gains. In Germany, for instance, the Green Party is in power and thus could drive important improvements, yet, the party is being punished for communicating their otherwise most well-intended ideas in ways that feed such backlashes.

As a result, Eugene O’Neill’s dark words are increasingly manifesting around the world now, ‘To hell with the truth! As the history of the world proves, the truth has no bearing on anything. It’s irrelevant and immaterial, as the lawyers say. The lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to the whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober’ (quoted from Eugene O’Neill’s *The Iceman Cometh*, <https://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks04/0400021h.html>).

Rockström’s advice is, ‘get on with it’! This is also the *raison-d’être* of this conference. Not only do we want to *reflect* on the benefits that flow from more dignifying approaches to life on Earth, we wish to already *manifest* these benefits in this conference. We do that, not least, by engaging in mutually enriching reflections in dignifying dialogues, or what we call Dignilogues, as explained by Linda Hartling in this little video: <https://youtu.be/0LqdStVnIjQ>.

Wishing you a wonderful conference!

The first three Dignity Dialogue Workshop days, 17th – 19th September, are in person. If you can’t be with us in person, you are warmly invited to attend via Zoom on the last day of the conference, 20th September, for our Public Event. Kindly let us know your preference when you register. Thank you for registering early! Registration will close Friday, 13th September 2024.

Kindly see all the links on
<https://humiliationstudies.org/howeare/annualmeeting/40.php>

We aim to collaboratively shape our conferences, drawing on the principles of Open Space and emphasising dialogue and dignity, which we term Dignilogue. All our events are part of an ongoing effort to nurture a global dignity community. You are therefore invited to join us for the entire conference, as we strive to focus on dignity-building, on nurturing a global dignity family.

You may like to read about the history of our work in this recently published blog by Exeter University.

Please visit this webpage regularly for the latest information, as plans for this conference unfold. You are invited to download the programme and to fill out our Appreciative Introduction form, if you like, print it out, and bring it with you. There is no registration fee, we share minimal cost according to ability at the end.

You might like to note that the 2024 Summit of the Future takes place in New York while we have our dignity conference in Madrid, and the World Tourism Day of 2024 takes place on 27th September and is titled ‘Tourism and Peace’ in Madrid, Spain.

Wishing you a wonderful conference!
Linda Hartling and Evelin Lindner

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- Founding President of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS, www.humiliationstudies.org), and Co-founder of the World Dignity University Initiative (WDUi, www.worlddignityuniversity.org, see also <https://youtu.be/qGyPwHC5JdU>), including Dignity Press, with imprint World Dignity University Press (www.dignitypress.org) (all initiatives are not-for-profit)
- Guest researcher at the University of Oslo, Norway, Department of Psychology (e.g.lindner@psykologi.uio.no, www.sv.uio.no/psi/personer/vit/evelin/, publications on <https://app.cristin.no/persons/show.jsf?id=601>)
- Affiliated with the Morton Deutsch International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (MD-ICCCR) as part of the Advanced Consortium on Cooperation, Conflict, and Complexity (AC4), Columbia University, New York City (<https://iccr.tc.columbia.edu/about-us/meet-our-team/>, egl2109@tc.columbia.edu), and with the Western Institute for Social Research (WISR), Berkeley, California
- Affiliated with the Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, Paris, France, www.msh-paris.fr, and the Royal Institute for Interfaith Studies (RIIFS), Amman, Jordan, <https://riifs.org/en/>
- Publishing and teaching globally, www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin.php
- Lectures on dignity and humiliation given at the University of Oslo in Norway (in English and Norwegian) also at www.sv.uio.no/tjenester/kunnskap/podkast/index.html (search for Lindner)
- Several awards, HumanDHS Lifetime Achievement Award 2014, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize 2015, 2016, 2017

 Linda Margaret Hartling, PhD (U.S.A.), Social Scientist and Humanist

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 - Director of the World Dignity University (WDUi, www.worlddignityuniversity.org) and Dignity Press, with imprint World Dignity University Press (www.dignitypress.org) (all initiatives are not-for-profit)
 - Research Scientist and Former Associate Director, Jean Baker Miller Training Institute (www.jbmti.org), Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College (www.wcwonline.org)
 - Several awards, HumanDHS Lifetime Achievement Award 2015, HumanDHS's work was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (2015, 2016, 2017)
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