

Preface by Jingyi Dong to the Chinese Translation of *Making Enemies: Humiliation and International Conflict*

Ancient Chinese always attach great importance to the issue of humiliation, honor, and dignity. *The Book of Rites* (1st Century), a Confucian classical work, defines a true Confucianist as one who “prefers death to humiliation.” Contemporary China still sees the motto that “a gentlemen prefers death to humiliation.” Su Shi (11th Century), a famous poet and politician, wrote a master piece entitled “Liu Hou Lun,” which contrasts a man of mediocrity with a true hero and how both would respond differently when exposed to humiliation. Considering self-cultivation and refinement with respect to accomplishments and success, he suggests that a man of great ambition should “refrain from shock and anger when confronted with unexpected and unreasonable humiliation.” However, refraining from shock or anger does not mean refraining from resentment and hatred. Patience and restraint in the short term can be a preparation for a long-term strategy. But exactly what is dignity, what is humiliation, what is the essence of all these? Few people touch upon such issues.

With respect to the topic of honor and dignity, China has a unique and widely known notion, that is “face.” This notion is frequently applied in everyday speech, yet very few people can accurately define it. In real life, whether a person has maintained her “face,” is often associated with status, wealth, achievement, and reputation. As a result, the focus on “face” is almost entirely concentrated on economy and power relations. Moreover, face seems to be relevant only in relation to acquaintances, not to strangers. If the concept of face is used to replace the concept of dignity, then the issue of dignity becomes superficial, ignoring its deeper foundations in the human existence. Thus we may see that giving “face” to people is fundamentally different from extending respect for equal dignity to every human being.

Dignity and humiliation can be seen as a contradiction which exists at all levels; at the micro level, it is related to individuals and families, while at the macro level, it is related to nations and states. By nature, every person, regardless of her status and wealth, is eager to receive respect from others. Thus, in all types of conflicts in the world, no matter how they are manifested, the most serious problems occur when human dignity is violated. In our highly commercialized society, in an era of diverse interests, when people increasingly overlook the essentials of human nature, we need to give more attention to the issue of humiliation and dignity. When dignity is violated, how may it influence our perceptions of ourselves and of others? What is our response to humiliation? Does our response depend on subjective aspects such as our character and culture, or on objective aspects such as economic, political, and social relations? Do our feelings vary if we are confronted with humiliation as individuals, groups, or nations? Once the humiliation-revenge cycle begins, how can we stop it? To all these burning questions, all of which can make us feel uneasy, upset, or even deeply hurt, Dr. Evelin Lindner gives us a systematic and profound analysis and interpretation in this book, and ultimately, she points out a way forward for us, which is not to overlook the problem of humiliation, not to deny it, nor react with violence, but to transcend humiliation and achieve what she calls *egalization*.

This book is a masterpiece which is foundational for Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS), covering the area of psychology, sociology, anthropology and other disciplines, involving the culture and history of many countries and nations. In this book, Evelin analyzes the effects and influences of humiliation from three aspects: the role of humiliation in the human mindset, the role in the world, and how good intentions may sometimes lead to humiliating outcomes; she discusses humiliation from the perspective of human nature, social hierarchy, historical evolution, culture difference; she touches upon concepts such as dignity, honor, humiliation, humility, shame, and so on; she presents a large number of relevant pieces of evidence which shock the human heart; she provides a convincing analysis and interpretation to show the destructiveness of humiliation in interpersonal relationships, intranational relations, and international relations; and she brought all this into a systematic theoretical framework. It should be noted that “humiliation” contains two meanings in this book, namely, to humiliate and being humiliated, relating to both the perpetrator and the victim. The author has proposed many thought-

provoking ideas and constructed a number of rigorous concepts. It is no exaggeration to say that this is a pioneering work that establishes humiliation and dignity as an independent academic subject.

This book brought fame to Evelin. As soon as it was published, it was widely noticed, and was honored as “Outstanding Academic Title” by the journal *Choice* for 2007. The uniqueness of this work is related to Evelin’s rich and legendary life experience. Evelin’s childhood and youth were full of hardship. Evelin was born in 1954 in what used to be West Germany. Her parents were German descendants living in Silesia, which became part of Poland in 1945, unfortunate enough to have their lives ravaged by World War II. After the war, together with many other German descendants, they were forced to leave Silesia where their ancestors had lived for many hundreds of years, and were transported to the strange land of Germany, without any property. Because of the macro background of those times and her unique personal experience, she can offer extraordinarily profound reflections on the issue of humiliation and dignity. In her career, Evelin has lived in many countries around the world, and has gathered in-depth and meticulous observations of social and human nature, including immediate experience of humiliation among individuals, groups, and nations. She has earned two doctoral degrees, one in psychology and one in medicine, and has been widely recognized and praised for her theoretical explorations and practice related to dignity and humiliation. Twice she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize (2015 and 2016).

This book abounds with wonderful comments related to humiliation and dignity, and these comments are closely related to the times and societies in which we live. Looking back on history, we may find that “what was accepted before as ‘normal’ should be rejected now as humiliating.” People’s “expectations of equal dignity and opportunity rise, and any attempt to lower the expectations of any one group becomes an offense against all groups, and a threat to the hope for a new and better social order.” The privileged groups’ “superiority may have humiliating effects on those who are less privileged and neglecting this phenomenon may be dangerous.” “The powerful remain blind to the feelings of humiliation they cause in their subordinates until those feelings reach boiling points.” This book gives a warning to be cognizant of these burning social phenomena.

Although this is a very serious academic work, and it explores such a heavy topic of such profound philosophy and psychology, it did not prevent the author from using the most popular language, and making use of intriguing stories to explain and elaborate her message. Moreover, the whole work is full of moral feelings which originate from her deep sorrow when seeing the world suffering so bitterly, feelings which originate from her love and devotion to all human beings, shining with the light of humanitarianism. When you are reading this book, every now and then you will be inspired to echo and feel associations, a smile of understanding may light up your face, or you cannot help cry out loud at the marvels of the work, or sigh with deep regret, or feel bitterness in your heart. Reading this book, people will gain social knowledge, and at the same time, be kindly alerted by the voice of an honest and benevolent elderly. Whether you are a major policy makers, or ordinary reader, this book will be your treasure for life. Especially at a time of transformation, when various conflicts become ever more manifest, this book comes just in time.

I have known Evelin for many years. I am deeply impressed by her extensive and rich learning and her devotion and love. Her versatility and rich imagination, as well as her kind consideration, ability to understand others, and nuanced tenderness when she relates to people are equally impressive. It is because of all those myriads of virtues and personal charisma that more and more people are deeply touched and inspired by her to participate in the discussions on humiliation and dignity. As a result, Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies now come into being as a new discipline full of vitality. Therefore, what is recommended here is not only a good book, but also a friend, who is very dear to your heart.

Jingyi Dong
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