

## Can Human Solidarity Globalize?

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(See also [www.greattransition.org](http://www.greattransition.org)

or [www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/evelin/ReflectionsonFalk2021.pdf](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/evelin/ReflectionsonFalk2021.pdf))

Evelin Lindner's contribution to the Great Transition Initiative (GTI) Forum  
in response to

Falk, Richard (2021). *Global solidarity: Toward a politics of impossibility*  
(Boston, MA: Great Transition Initiative.

<https://greattransition.org/gti-forum/global-solidarity-falk>)

We, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, 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*. Our crises inform us that the time has come to arrange our affairs on this planet in profoundly different ways. For the first time in our history, we have all the knowledge and skills required to bring these changes about — we have access to a knowledge base our forebears did not have, even our immediate grandparents knew much less. The most important novelty 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 helps us understand that we humans are *one* species living on *one* tiny planet, and this makes our horizon large enough so we can fuse the best of our newest scientific knowledge with the best of our age-old wisdom. In this way, we are equipped to build mutual trust and solidarity at a global scale, in this way, can we humanise globalisation and reap the benefits that the global ingathering of humanity provides. We 'earthlings' can now feel 'the ecology of the living' taking place within *one* circumscribed *biopoetic* space that is shared between all beings, we can embrace *biophilia*. Short, we can create a decent global village.

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? We know cognitively 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? 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?

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. 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 foundation for the kind of dignified and dignifying constructive action that avoids destructive optimism or pessimism. Optimism is destructive when it is yet another word for self-congratulatory and delusionary hubris, and pessimism is destructive when it means faint-hearted and gloomy inertia.

Fortunately, we know the root of our problems. We, the species *Homo sapiens*, 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*, the degradation of our ecospheres and sociospheres at a global scale — we shred our relations with our habitat and with each other. This degradation is catalysed by damage to our *cogitosphere*, the realm of thinking and reflection. 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.

If we, as humanity, wish to survive in dignity, the first step must be to overcome cogitocide, the destruction of our thinking. We as humanity need to face the fact that we stand at the edge of a *Seneca cliff*, the kind of rapid collapse that characterises the disintegration of complex systems. Our scientists inform us that we have a window of opportunity of around ten years to step back from the edge, and that the necessary knowledge and skills 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, most of us choose to stay myopic. To counter this trend, a look at *big history* is useful. A wide lens makes primary problems visible that spawn secondary, tertiary, and quaternary ones.

What is known as the Neolithic Revolution merits renewed attention. It was a definitorial turning point in human history and it saw humankind’s primary problem emerge, namely,

competition for domination and control. Due to its success, at least partially, this competition remained Homo sapiens' master survival strategy during the past millennia. It is a uni-dimensional and uni-lateral strategy that is at the core of what political scientists call the *security dilemma*. It seeks 'negative' peace by following the motto of 'If you want peace, prepare for war'. The dominator model of society works through a double intervention, on one side by keeping one's 'enemies' out with weapons, while on the other side holding one's own down with routine humiliation.

Our forebears could not know better, this was the best they could do, they did not yet have our information about the world. Over time the *growth dilemma* of 'If you want prosperity, invest in exploitation' superimposed itself and merged with the classical security dilemma. This is where we are today.

Competition for domination is a mindset and social and societal order that outlives its already limited usefulness the more the world interconnects and the Earth's carrying capacity becomes overstretched. As long as such a mindset is upheld, even colonising a new planet would not help, as its resources would soon be depleted as well. It 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.

The dominator mindset now drives *cycles of humiliation* and *systemic humiliation* to hitherto unseen levels. At the same time, feelings of humiliation no longer translate into obedient humbleness but acquire hitherto unseen force, as human rights ideals concurrently promise equal dignity. In the absence of leaders of the calibre of a Nelson Mandela or Mahatma Gandhi, cycles of dignity humiliation have the potency to close doors for cooperation that otherwise would stand open. The endgame may be a global village as a global war zone.

In this context, ideas that hitherto were deemed unrealistic and wishful dreaming are the only realistic ones. Human rights ideals of global partnership in mutual solidarity represent the only lifesaving strategy. Citizen-to-citizen trust building at a global scale is the only path to achieving lasting global dignity. All, men and women together, are called to embrace a new kind of bravery, namely, that of building mutual trust, care, and solidarity in global partnership.

Let us nurture respect for equal dignity for all as responsible individuals, free to engage in loving solidarity with each other and with our planet. Let us celebrate diversity without humiliation, through unity in equality in dignity.