

‘From humiliation to dignity: For a future of global solidarity’ A Summary

This is the final part of Evelin Lindner’s talk titled
‘From humiliation to dignity: For a future of global solidarity’
on Day Three of the 2021 Workshop on Transforming Humiliation and Violent Conflict,
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Now, I am coming to the end of my talk, and even though it is not very advisable to provide overly simplified abbreviations, particularly not in times of polarisation, I would like to share with you a tentative summary of my view on *big history*.

I will be reading to you pages 17 – 20 of the Preface of my book *From humiliation to dignity: For a future of global solidarity* that will come out early in 2022. It will take about 10 minutes, and it will require a very high degree of concentration from you to follow this very complex argument, because it is a highly condensed summary of the message of my book. (The full references can be found in my book.)

I very much hope I am not asking too much from you by reading this summary to you now. You will find it also on the webpage to download. I start by summarising the present state of affairs of our world, then I analyse the problem, and at the end I will come to my suggestions for solutions.

Again, I hope I am not asking too much from you by reading this summary aloud to you now.

Where do we stand?

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 ‘cutting down, killing’.

We catalyse the degradation of our ecospheres and sociospheres 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 what is being called 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 our existential crises, 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 problems.

How did we get here?

What is known as the *Neolithic Revolution* 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 when 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 social and societal order has always been limited in its usefulness, but 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. It manifests systemic humiliation.

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 to all, which means that feelings of humiliation no longer translate into obedient humbleness but acquire hitherto unseen force. I call 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.

What is the way out?

The situation is so new that ideas become 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 that link back to conceptually pre-Neolithic Indigenous Knowledge Systems and models of gift economy 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 have ten years to outgrow twelve thousand years of behaviour. 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 I call *socio-sanity* and *eco-sanity*. Let us embrace *socio-salvation* and *eco-salvation*.

Let us humanise globalisation through *egalisation*, a word I 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-globegalisation*. In this way we can co-create a decent global village.

We need the *heroism of care*, the *heroism of dignity*. We need what I call *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.