The Need to Avoid Humiliation and Create Equality of Dignity

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'If you want peace, prepare for war'—this cruel motto dominated the past millennia of human history almost everywhere on the globe. The phrase was coined by Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus in the 4th or 5th century: 'si vis pacem, para bellum' (Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus and Reeve, 2004). The motto has its origin in the tragedy of the *security dilemma,* a term used in political science to describe how mutual distrust can bring polities who have no intention of harming one another into bloody war (see, for instance, Herz, 1950). The security dilemma is tragic because its logic of mistrust and fear is inescapable: 'I have to amass weapons, because I am scared. When I amass weapons, you get scared. You amass weapons, I get more scared'.

Throughout the past millennia, the security dilemma was strong. People around the globe lived in constant fear of being raided or conquered. The Huns, the Vikings, the Mongols caused mayhem as terrible as devastating hurricanes and their names instilled terror. Arms races were the result of the security dilemma, with the Cold War as its most recent large-scale expression. And the security dilemma is still with us: 'At its core, the Iranian nuclear conflict is about trust. The U.S. does not believe that Iran's intentions are purely peaceful, while Iran believes the nuclear issue is simply a pretext for regime change'.[1]

I am writing this paragraph in Norway, at the mouth of the Oslo fjord, where Adolf Hitler's battle ship Blücher steamed up during the night of April 8, 1940, completely unexpectedly. The King of Norway had only a few hours to flee, and Norway was occupied for the rest of World War II. Norwegian novelist Sigrid Undset wrote, 'When Norway was ripped apart by the Nazis in 1940, peace-loving Norwegian citizens were mentally and militarily unprepared for the relentless assault which devastated their country and their souls' (Undset, 1942).[2]

In other words, as long as the security dilemma is strong, love for peace does not offer protection. And love for one's enemy does not bring honour, on the contrary, it produces scorn and humiliation: during the Second World War, a number of women in countries that were occupied by Nazi Germany—France or Norway, for instance—fell in love with German soldiers. When the war ended in 1945, these women faced cruel public humiliation. Lack of patriotism was also what Margaret Thorp was accused of, Australian 'peace angel' of World War I, when she spoke of peace rather than busying herself with knitting socks for 'our soldiers' (Summy, 2006). In the context of a strong security dilemma, if you speak of peace and love, including love for your enemy, you are worse than an enemy: you are an unpatriotic traitor.

A strong security dilemma pushes people into accepting strong-men as protectors against neighbours—as neighbours could be allies in one moment but turn into enemies the next (Lindner, 2010). Strong-men were often accepted even if their protection became oppressive. Social scientist and social activist Riane Eisler describes how otherwise widely divergent societies all around the globe employed what she has named the *dominator model* of society,

[1] 'The Neuroscience Guide to Negotiations With Iran', by Nicholas Wright and Karim Sadjadpour, *The Atlantic*, January 14, 2014, www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/01/the-neuroscience-guide-to-negotiations-with-iran/282963/.

[2] Undset was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1928. In her autobiography she describes her painful flight from Norway to Sweden, across Russia to Japan, and finally to the United States, describing her passion for freedom, and her vision for an unknown future.

in contrast to the *partnership model* (Eisler, 1987). The dominator model uses ranked honour as structuring principle for society—which means that *higher* beings preside over *lesser* beings. Underlings, when unhappy with their superiors, had little choice but either to acquiesce with their masters' domination, or stage a revolution and replace their oppressors. Masters, on their part, usually made sure to keep their underlings in submission, in addition to increasing their numbers by conquering and subjugating neighbouring groups.

Humiliation in honour societies—we may call it *honour humiliation*—can be categorised in four variants (Lindner, 2006, pp. 28–29).[3] A master uses *conquest humiliation* to subjugate formerly equal neighbours into a position of inferiority. When the hierarchy is in place, the master uses *reinforcement humiliation* to keep it in place. The latter may range from seating orders and bowing rules to brutal measures such as customary beatings or killings. A third form of humiliation, *relegation humiliation*, is used to push an already low-ranking underling even further down. *Exclusion humiliation* means excluding victims altogether, exiling, or even killing them.

Such cultures of ranked honour and war developed in the context of a strong security dilemma all over the world in various forms. Many religious founders throughout the times dreamt of a culture of equality in dignity and inclusiveness but as soon as their faiths were institutionalised into mainstream society they became hierarchical; staying in isolated niches was the only alternative. Even the term freedom became co-opted; a culture that defines liberty as unrestrained freedom to compete, including freedom for dominators to make might be right, tends to keep those dominators in power, dooming the broader masses to the role of exploited victims and installing the security dilemma between every individual. If we believe political philosopher Todd May, then we have to conclude that this is the case, for instance, for the United States: 'Competitive individualism, insecurity, neoliberalism: the triad undergirding our penchant for violence. This, as much as anything else, is the current exceptionalism of America. Others are not our partners, nor even our colleagues. They are our competitors or our enemies. They are hardly to be recognised, much less embraced. They are to be vanquished'.[4]

At present, the entire world is in the grip of a culture of domination and raiding that knows no 'enough.' Having escaped nuclear annihilation during the Cold War, the new threat is global plunder that is just as global, human-made, and potentially lethal. As it stands now, the striving for wealth has turned into a global 'doom machine',[5] a 'science of exploitation'.[6]

The security dilemma can also get weaker. This happens, when not only heads of states or few diplomats play a role, but more actors create webs of mutual trust across borders. Global civil society can weaken the security dilemma. When the human world community defines and structures itself as one single unit, the factual underpinnings for the security dilemma disappear and a global culture of peace can emerge, a culture of global unity in diversity, a culture where all unite to protect unity from degrading into uniformity and prevent diversity from becoming division. This is the unparalleled historic promise of *ingathering*, as anthropologists call the coming-together of humankind: 'For the first time since the origin of

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[3] See also Smith, 2001, whom I thank for coining the words conquest/relegation/reinforcement/inclusion humiliation.

[4] 'Is American Nonviolence Possible?', by Todd May, The New York Times, April 21, 2013, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/21/is-american-nonviolence-possible/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0. Todd May is Memorial Professor of the Humanities at Clemson University, and currently working on a book on the philosophy of nonviolence.

[5] Robert Monks, corporate governance advisor, in *The Corporation*, a Canadian documentary film from 2003 by law professor Joel Bakan, and directed by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, see www.youtube.com/watch?v=s6zQO7JytzQ. During the filming process, Bakan, 2004, wrote the book, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power*.

[6] Charles Kernaghan, director of the United Nations National Labor Committee, in *The Corporation.*

our species, humanity is in touch with itself', writes anthropologist William Ury, 1999 (p. xvii).[7] Globalisation is destructive when it serves global plundering, it is constructive when its citizens wake up from age-old submissiveness, hear Paulo Freire's message of conscientisation (Freire, 1970), and co-create a *great transition* (Raskin, 2012).

I have lived globally for the past forty years, and wherever I go, all over the world, people speak of *peace*, *love*, *harmony*, *reconciliation*, *forgiveness,* and *conflict resolution*. I have learned to qualify these terms very carefully, because, basically, they entail connotations at their core which stand in diametrical opposition to each other (Lindner, 2009a). In a dominator context, peace means keeping one's enemies safely at bay and one's own people firmly down—North Korea, for instance, applies this script overtly, others do so more covertly, hiding behind human rights rhetoric. In a partnership context, peace means respectful dialogue between equals, and from that point of view, the *peace and quiet* of successful oppression is just another word for masked violence, or *structural violence* (Galtung, 1969).

At the present point in historical time, humankind finds itself in between a fractured world in the grip of the security dilemma and mutual distrust, and the promise of a dignified future for a world united in respect for its diversity. It is a large-scale transition from conceptualisations of the world as a battlefield to an alternative reality of global cooperation. This transition is extremely challenging, as it has to move between two normative and cultural universes that are irreconcilable at their core, if analysed with the Weberian *ideal-type* approach (see Coser, 1977): on one side there is the traditional world of ranked honour and on the other side the new era of equal dignity; on one side there is a worldview where honour-humiliation is a legitimate tool, and on the other side a worldview that outlaws the very same practices as illegitimate dignity-humiliation. These two normative and cultural frameworks are diametrically opposed and stand at the centre of today's transition. They clash head-on. At the core, it is not a gradual transition but a qualitative leap, like changing from right-hand driving to left-hand driving. Ranking people and unranking them cannot coexist, as much as right-hand driving and left-hand driving cannot be realised at the same time. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) goes as follows: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.' In traditional ranked societies, it is: 'Some human beings are born free, others unfree, and all are unequal in worthiness and rights.'

The transition from unequal worthiness to equal worthiness began several centuries ago. The concept of humiliation provides a linguistic marker. 'The earliest recorded use of *to humiliate* meaning to mortify or to lower or to depress the dignity or self-respect of someone does not occur until 1757' (Miller, 1993, p. 175). In other words, in the English language, until around two hundred fifty years ago, the verb *to humiliate* did not signify the violation of dignity. *To humiliate* meant merely *to lower* or *to humble*, 'to remind underlings of their due place', and this was widely regarded as a prosocial activity. The connotations of the verbs *to humiliate* and *to humble* parted around two hundred fifty years ago, going into opposite directions. In a human rights context, humiliation is antisocial, it is a violation of dignity and rights. 'To humiliate' is to transgress the rightful expectations of every human being and of all humanity that basic human rights will be respected. Honour humiliation is replaced by dignity humiliation, which is much more painful than honour humiliation, as it does more than lower within a ranking order, it excludes from humanity.

Also our concepts of human nature are affected by this transition. The so-called *correspondence bias* indicates that we tend to believe that others do what they do because

[7] See also 'William Ury: The Walk from 'No' to 'Yes'', TEDxMidwest, 2010, www.ted.com/talks/william_ury.html, where he speaks of the 15,000 tribes of the human family who now come together.

they believe in it; our mind has a tendency to overlook that others might have been forced by external circumstances to act against their will (see, among others, Gilbert, 1998). The correspondence bias might have lured us to trivialise the problem of violence as a psychological problem of human nature and overlook that the security dilemma represents a frame that is tragic. This frame spawned strategies of domination and a culture of war that even the most peaceable leader could not withstand. Leaders who refused to invest in the "art of domination'[8] were toppled, either by their own people or by their enemies. As long the security dilemma was strong, reality lent itself to committing the correspondence error, to believing that others hurt and humiliate us because it is in their evil nature. In an interconnected world, in contrast, it is not as easy to uphold the correspondence bias. One may be confronted with explanations coming from the other side: 'they' might insist that they are not acting out of free-floating unmotivated hatred or lust to unfold their evil nature, on the contrary, that they are re-acting to feelings of hurt and humiliation. The rise of interconnectedness, of ingathering, draws attention to the fact that human nature is primarily social, that 'cultures' are not closed containers, and that one's love for one's fellow victims of disrespect and humiliation might motivate one's desire for revenge rather than one's evil nature (Lindner, 2009c).

The appraisal of nonviolence is another marker of this transition. In a compartmentalised world with a strong security dilemma, the choice is between dependence and independence, and this is relatively simple to navigate. It is much more difficult to make interdependence work. Nonviolence defined as cowardice or subservience and subduedness, with violence as its opposite, is a definition stemming from the dependence/independence context, and it becomes unusable in a world of interdependence. When dependence oppresses, and nonviolence does 'not work' to achieve independence, violence is seen as 'the next step' that will be more effective. This may indeed be a feasible strategy in a context of dependence/independence, while it turns unfeasible in a globally interconnected world, where violence risks coming back like a boomerang. In the new context, Martin Luther King Jr. is right when he says: 'The choice is not between violence and nonviolence but between nonviolence and nonexistence'. Interconnectedness requires heroic nonviolence, nonviolence that is much more courageous and radical than nonviolence understood as subservience, or violence, could ever be, and the only effective strategy in a context of interconnectedness.

On August 13, 2014, two Norwegian politicians discussed the tragedy under way in Northern Iraq, where the Islamic State (IS) has been persecuting religious minorities.[9] The representative of the conservative camp, Kristian Norheim, said: 'IS must be crushed once and for all!' He accused the left-leaning politician's calls for more humanitarian help of irresponsibly overlooking 'hard' instruments and reducing their tool kit to 'soft' solutions. Clearly, Norheim's parlance is 'security dilemma talk', which once might have been appropriate, but turns counterproductive in a globally interconnected world. No longer can isolated manifestations of ideas and their promoters be 'crushed' in one single isolated locality 'once and for all'. Today, ideas go around the world and inspire movements that replenish in one place after being 'crushed' in another. The only long-term solution is to change the soil from which such ideas grow, which, in practice means the large-scale

[8] See more in "How the 'Art of Domination' Was Perfected in Systems of Ranked Honor" in Lindner, 2009b, pp. 60–64.

[9] Audun Bjørlo Lysbakken and Kristian Norheim on *Dagsnytt Atten* (*Daily News Eighteen*), *NRK* (an abbreviation of the Norwegian: Norsk rikskringkasting AS, generally expressed in English as the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation), August 13, 2014. Audun Bjørlo Lysbakken is the leader of the Socialist Left Party (SV). Kristian Norheim is a member of the conservative Progress Party (FrP) and its expert on international relations.

transition to a world with neighbours, rather than ‘enemies’. More even, humankind will not survive on planet Earth, if we do not find a way to unite as stewards of our planet.

Marshall Rosenberg worked as a ‘peace leader’ in the most volatile areas of the world and is the creator of *nonviolent communication*, a conflict resolution approach centred on compassion. His words are: ‘Sometimes we need to use force to restraining others using violence, to prevent violence, but not in the form of punishment to make them suffer’.[10]

Also the usage of terms such as *nonviolence* or *nonkilling* is embedded into the transition from a culture of mistrust and competition to a culture of trust and cooperation, from a culture of *uniformity in division* to a culture of *unity in diversity*, from a language of posturing and putting others into place with ‘but’ and ‘not’ to a language of correlative expressions such as ‘and’, from *separate knowing* to *connected knowing* (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1997). In an article titled ‘The Most Dangerous Word in the World’, we read that dozens of stress-producing hormones and neurotransmitters are released when the word ‘NO’ is flashed even for less than one second. ‘These chemicals immediately interrupt the normal functioning of your brain, impairing logic, reason, language processing, and communication’.[11] Psychologists Barbara L. Fredrickson and Christine Branigan, in their research, focus on positive emotions (Fredrickson and Branigan, 2001, p. 123).[12] Fear and anger shrink our thought-action repertoire; what negative emotions are to threat, positive emotions are to opportunity.

Child psychology indicates that one ought to refrain from saying to a child ‘Do *not* hit your friend’ and should rather use positive, affirmative expressions such as ‘Treat your friend kindly’. Parenting advice is: ‘There is no doubt that if we say ‘Don’t drop that glass’ or ‘No running inside’ or ‘Don’t drag your coat in the dirt’ your child has that image and thought imbedded in their mind and more times than not, they will drop the glass!’ Instead, parents are advised to say, for instance, ‘Only walking inside please’ or ‘Hold onto that glass, it is a special one’ or ‘Hold the coat up so it doesn’t drag’.[13]

I follow Patricia Friedrich and Francisco Gomes de Matos’s advice to ‘activate life-affirming assertions’ (Friedrich and Gomes de Matos, 2012, p. 58). As founding president of a global movement of dignity, a movement that works *for* dignity rather than *against* indignity, I see the use of terms such as nonviolence or nonkilling as a very important transitional stage. I invite everybody into the next step of creatively coining affirmative words and phrases that avoid perpetrating with their own linguistics what they decry. Intercultural psychologist Anthony Marsella calls on everybody to move beyond all-too human dynamics, even beyond our identification and pre-occupation with humanity altogether (such as humanism, humanitarian, or humanistic) and to ‘move to an identity with life—*lifeism*.’[14]

The image of the Blue Planet from the astronaut’s perspective summarises, publicises, and symbolises this window of opportunity to profoundly change the constitutive rules (Taylor, 1992) of the world-system (Wallerstein, 1974). A sense of emergency befits humankind now,

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[10] ‘Nonviolent Communication with Marshall Rosenberg - a Brief Introduction’, www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgaeHeIL39Y, uploaded on 29 Jul 2010, see Transcript at http://www.upworthy.com/its-probably-one-of-the-best-reactions-you-can-give-to-someone-who-doesnt-like-you?c=upw1.

[11] ‘The Most Dangerous Word in the World: This word can damage both the speaker’s and listener’s brain!’, Mark Waldman and Andrew Newberg, July 31, 2012, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/words-can-change-your-brain/201207/the-most-dangerous-word-in-the-world. See also Newberg and Waldman, 2012.

[12] See also Lindner, 2009b, p. 105.

[13] ‘20 Ways To Talk So Your Kids Will Listen’, http://childdevelopmentinfo.com/how-to-be-a-parent/communication/talk-to-kids-listen/#ixzz3AYDeQ6dm.

[14] Anthony Marsella, in a personal communication, June 26, 2013. See also “Lifeism: Beyond Humanity,” Anthony J. Marsella, *TRANSCEND Media Service*, March 17, 2014, www.transcend.org/tms/2014/03/lifeism-beyond-humanity/.

so as to truly see and use this historically unique window of opportunity that may not remain open for long. The Blue Planet image provides a powerful frame for co-creating a future of dignity. None of our founders of religions, philosophies, or empires had access to the vast amount of knowledge about the universe and our place in it that we possess today. None of our predecessors was able to fathom in the same way as present-day *Homo sapiens* that we are one single family living on one tiny planet. Gandhi's tenet 'There is no path to peace. Peace is the path' (Gandhi, 1948) can only flourish in a global dignity world underpinned by a dignity economy (Lindner, 2012).

At the current point in history, the culture domination and war outstays its welcome, it outstays its anchoring in reality. Those who were socialised into it, and who profit from it, fire up the security dilemma artificially. The 2003 Iraq war may serve as regarded as an example. In this situation, the presently living generations carry more responsibility than any other generation ever alive on planet Earth before (Kaku, 2005). The global citizenry ought to stand *up* rather than stand *by* (Staub, 1989). It ought to unite and protect *human security* for us all, rather than *military security* for 'us' from 'the enemy'. Yet, most of us seem to overlook the message of the image of the Blue Planet, namely, that we live in times when, for the first time in human history, choices that were unthinkable before are not just hypothetical but real. The enormous novelty of this situation and thus its potential, seem to stay hidden, covered by a multitude of foreground details. It seems that business-as-usual is preferred simply because it is familiar, even if it is suicidal.

Philosopher Avishai Margalit wrote *The Decent Society* (Margalit, 1996), in which he calls for institutions that do no longer humiliate citizens—*just* societies no longer suffice; the goal should be *decent* societies that transcend humiliation. Global *decency* reigns when dignity for all is made possible throughout the entire world.

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