

## ON HUMILIATION

Dear Dr. Evelin Lindner,

You asked for a pre-publication endorsement of *Gender, Humiliation and Global Security*? Instead, here is a heartfelt statement in recognition of the engaging lesson represented by your book.

“Eyes they have, but they do not see;  
They have ears, but they do not hear.”

These verses from Psalm 115, and their perennial wisdom which accompany home the faithful after the Passover meal, feature vividly a symbolic, helpful entry to the lines of your exhortations and their skillful growth-oriented perspectives in a “globally interdependent knowledge society.”

Eloquent, compassionate, *Gender, Humiliation and Global Security* escorts the reader in most tangled paths aimed at an “I-Thou relationship of mutual respect and equal dignity,” through questions about the safety of the world of tomorrow. The paths are individual, they are collective. They are regional, and at the same time they transcend all differences and borders.

“This is a book by a Master.”

The predicate entails orders of semantic restrictions, and their rapport to portraits. The recognition, a paradox, could also serve as an entry to this uncommon book. In flame-touches, it uncovers disquieting correlations between cultural economies of gender relations and everyday humiliation politics. Designating patterns from a good worked out induction, as the book does, is an achievement in its own right. Clearly defining objectives, a contribution.

What’s the price in confronting an assertion about a “Master” that seems to relativize the property it grounds? Should one eliminate a semantic ambiguity by modifying words, specifying their contexts, in order to assume the insecurity induced by a predicate? Such a process would simply be displacing a linguistic constraint it needs to question, and not erasing it.

Here is another entry:

*Gender, Humiliation and Global Security*, is indeed a master book.

Authoritative, responsible, meticulously based on research, interviews, and clinical analysis, Dr. Lindner's book is a comprehensive approach to a universal phenomenon, humiliation, assessed in its expected and unexpected effects, as well as their risks. Culturally determined, these effects refer back to a line of alienation, attested in all human experience. That is the point of departure of this project that pays attention to features in the human condition, the singularity of its regional distinctions, and the ambition for a "world without humiliation that would dignify us all," as Professor Linda M. Hartling writes in the Foreword.

Preceded by her Foreword, the book has three chapters, three privileged angles. They decode humiliation in "times of transition," in "the world today," in "the future." Angles, they are designs planning ventures in understanding. A historical dominated approach structures the first chapter, a more synchronic description rolls the last two. They circumscribe the being of the humiliation phenomenon. Revelation of a reality, it manifests itself to the critical consciousness of the reader. One recalls, on the one hand, Hobbes' dread on "the natural condition of mankind, as concerning their felicity, and misery." As it expresses itself in *Leviathan*, there is, on the one hand, an affirmation on equality of minds, but difference of bodies' strength, and a remark about the human being prone to conflicts and wars. And, there is, on the other hand, Hobbes' plea for a strong governing power to civilize communities. The vision of the philosopher had to accent the fact that "man" is an enemy to "another man."

In the modernity of such a thought that judges the barbarism of the English civil war, Hobbes was reformulating the old paradigm of Simonides of Ceos (c. 556-468 BC); *πολις διδάσκει ἄνδρα* (*polis didaskei andra*), namely that it is the city that educates "men." Like the Greek, Hobbes was concerned about the pervasive masculine violence in nature that the rule of law should domesticate. A wolf to another human, *homo homini lupus* [ital.], according to a popular saying. Is there a reason to believe also, according to some theorists, that the male throughout all species is prone to disorder?"

In the variety of fields assumed by Dr. Lindner's inquiry, signs and sites of humiliation refer to the same "natural body," the gendered body of the individual, also the cultural body of a community. "You give me your body, I shall inscribe on it the law of the tribe," from which one could evaluate the fact that we inhabit our cultures in the manner we inhabit our bodies. Grounded judgments justify cultural models. "Waging good conflict," to use Professor Hartling's words for this book's aim, means to deconstruct even apparently stable paradigms. Consider the Athenian grid of the "good woman" that a Judeo-Christian tradition has universalized. She is the daughter of a citizen, the spouse of a citizen, the mother of a citizen. This is a theoretical definition. It is equally an explanation, insofar as it answers the why and how of the adjective "good." The notion of "intension," from logic, contributes to symbolics of whatever must have a woman to be part of the class of good women. Including, the "intension" excludes also. To use Dr. Lindner's word, a "female script" stands there. In languages in which exists a

grammatical gender system, the feminine is a marked form vis-à-vis a regular masculine one, functioning in this manner as a perfect metaphor of the “female script.” It assesses rules of inclusion and exclusion, total or partial. Politics of separation, politics of humiliation, are often motivated within this “female script.” In our time, they have been allowing catastrophes like the holocaust in Germany, the Rwandan genocide, all impurity-impetuses in ethnic cleansings, from the Balkans to Africa, to Southeast Asia, for example.

One readily agrees with Dr. Lindner in using the “female script” as a sign that could account for correlations between transcultural economies of gender relations and humiliation politics. Simone de Beauvoir is right in *The Second Sex*, demonstrating how the female “exists” her body in a transitive manner, being a body-for-herself, yet enclosed within the body-for-others, thus existing as the absolute experience of contingency.

Among many twentieth-century testimonies, in her *Meeting the Madwoman*, the Jungian analyst Linda Schierse Leonard has convincing case-studies. Casually informed, institutionally marked, or inflicted through abuse, a spirit may perfectly well identify in shame or in pride with a “Caged Bird” or the “Bag Lady,” a “Recluse” or a “Saint” woman.

In her ambition to account for the ordinariness of humiliation, Dr. Lindner brings together reasons to relate a priori cultural expressions and a gendered body, thus can name a produced assignation. In a sustained effort, she extracts the irony and imponderability of assumptions governing humiliation all around the world.

Beyond ways of doctrines, war-fighting zones of rights and security conflicts, from domestic to public, regional to global, yesterday and today, the body, any gendered body, stands as a facticity. It is the point of view by which anyone exists as being-for-other-people. Through humiliation, this body is reduced to contingency, even when attempts are made at recognizing its virtual transcendence. Dr. Lindner’s view, her whole book, is there, unique by her touches, the elegance of a style in grasping the immediacy of a utopian political economy. If it is difficult to provide a straight summary of it, for sure one can qualify it in its own task, a concrete obligation for the well-being of individuals, as well as for the security of the human race. In clear, an approach to everything for, and in equal dignity, Dr. Lindner’s view represents life altering principles for a way to live on this planet within a fraternal global culture, in “egalization” and “co-egalization.”

The book’s major assurance gives cause to empirical socio-psychology, and to ethics. In rethinking a total vertical and horizontal collaboration, the book makes a strong case. Accentuating that, Professor Hartling emphasizes both the “profit-motive and the love-profit, and entail the emotional power necessary for a re-calibration of world affairs and

the creation of a decent dignified future." The view seems simple, it is not. In effect, it measures an argument against a world of future violence. Arguing that, along with a better ethical management of technological resources, today's world on conflicts might become a better knowledge universe, a decent service world-village. Because of its fluidity, humiliation is likely a key to pass everywhere for what should be controlled throughout levels in all social formations. To begin with, there is the necessity of a new rhetoric of gender, ethnicity, religion, aimed at signifying a normative goal for mainly those held to contempt in a loveless hell. There is, equally, the necessity to invest this goal into a terminal goal of human dignity for everyone.

The challenge can be met, demonstrates Dr. Lindner. The evidence of a universal ideal stems from particulars. These are localized. As a matter of method, to treat humiliation and its relation to what it negates is to trace it back to its socio-cultural contexts. Societies, all cultural formations, have hierarchized expressions of humiliation. As they have, of sins and bad manners; in other words, explicit and tacit taxonomies. A medical doctor and psychologist, Dr. Lindner uses a classical approach. As the understanding of good health, basically deduces itself from a positive knowledge of a diseased body, a diagnosis of negative procedures in relation to systems of values is propaedeutic to any action, including thinking proactively a plan for a transcultural critique of regional systems.

In sum, an important lesson of the book is its philosophical statement about humiliation. Between the polarities represented by, on the one hand, the inward-oriented anxieties or apprehension of any individual, an institutional system, or a transnational corporation, and, on the other hand, the outward-oriented grids of fear, there is something like a space from which to understand humiliation, and work against its pervasiveness.

"Hell is other people," from Jean-Paul Sartre's arch-quoted *No Exit* ought to reflect its other side, which is, for instance reflected in Claude Lévi-Strauss' citation from South American Indians, "hell is me." In fact, the two French thinkers state the same evidence. To exist, to relate to other people, is simultaneously to see and be seen. This fundamental paradigm of phenomenology is of consequence. In effect, to apprehend oneself as subject, to posit oneself as an eye perceiving a something, a someone, equals prevailing in a dynamic with a full weight for reifying, alienating the perceived. At the same time, any perceiver knows that in return, the perceived can exercise the same capacity, look back, and stand as a subject having the same ability to alienate anyone else. And, writes a Jean-Paul Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, "this is the meaning of the famous line from Scriptures: 'They knew that they were naked.'" From this strictly agnostic approach, that is "the original sin," which is being named in a professional language. Adds Jean-Paul Sartre, "Thus original sin is my upsurge in a world where there are others; and whatever may be my further relations with others, these relations will be only variations on the original theme of my guilt."

No commentary is needed in order to highlight the connection between this metaphoric use of a biblical figure and the articulation of the prophetic voice of Dr. Lindner's on humiliation.

*Primum non nocere* (first of all do not harm), was the ethical instruction of Peter S. Drucker, deemed "the most important management-thinker of our time." The lesson comes down from the guiding rule of Hippocrates, the founder of scientific medicine. Proactively prophetic, in an abiding sense of urgency, Dr. Lindner makes a similar plea for a healthier global culture of solidarity.

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