

# **The Role of Dignity and Humiliation in a Globalising World: Reflections on Feedback from the Audience**

“The Role of Dignity and Humiliation in a Globalising World: New Forms of Cooperative Approaches to Solve New Social Dilemma Situations as well as Succeed in Intercultural Encounters.”

Workshop for graduate students, organised by Professor Hora Tjitra on the occasion of Evelin Lindner's visit to the Department of Applied Psychology, Zhejiang University, School of Psychology, Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, 13th April 2006.

## **The following points will be discussed:**

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## **Introduction**

When I give lectures on humiliation around the world, audiences react sometimes in different ways and sometimes similarly. It is very fruitful for me to think through my audiences' feedback and to connect it with the feedback that I receive in other parts of the world. I have the aim to assemble a collection of “misunderstandings” that arise when I give my talks. This text is the first attempt to create such a collection. The differentiation of humility versus humiliation, for example, is often unfamiliar, even in English speaking countries. And the idea that equal dignity is not to be confused with forcing everybody into sameness is another difficult concept. It is difficult to grasp *unity in diversity* (Bond, 1999). These are concepts that appear to be difficult wherever I give lectures. In contrast, the example of Hitler versus Mandela, for example, is easier to apply in some world regions than others. Also the status of human rights is not the same everywhere.

I would be very thankful to my audiences around the world, if you could provide me with more feedback and more examples that are more adapted to your cultural context!

## The Significance of Hitler versus Mandela

*Question: If Hitler was a mass murderer, why are there some right-wing voices, albeit few, who hail him as a great leader? What is the difference between Hitler and Mandela? What makes Mandela great?*

### **Hitler**

I worked in Israel in 1975 (and met many Israelis and Palestinians) and lived in Egypt from 1984-1991. I sometimes was confronted with the argument that Hitler was a great leader.

I tried to respond as follows: Egypt was a British colony and Egyptians did not at all enjoy being colonised. On the contrary, today, Egyptians celebrate their Independence Day with deep emotion. Being a free and independent country is very dear to every Egyptian. Egyptians would feel deeply insulted, if I praised British colonialism as a great achievement.

Similarly, what would my Chinese interlocutors feel if I praised the Japanese seizure of Chinese land as great achievement? They would feel deeply hurt.

Likewise, all of German neighbours in Europe (and far into the East of Europe toward the Caucasus, plus all Jews around the world, and the U.S. who entered World War II at some point, too) feel profoundly victimised by Hitler's Germany. Nobody praises Hitler as a great leader. On the contrary.

Yet, clearly, there are some right-wing voices, albeit very few, in Japan as much as in Europe and the rest of the world, who think in the old terms of honour. They hail manly prowess and glory in war, and think of national honour in terms of the capability of a nation to dominate others.

However, if we analyse what Hitler did, we have to admit that he did not even fulfil such criteria. A great warrior does not embark on suicidal missions. Hitler began wars that he could not win. He led his followers into suicide and murdered millions of innocent victims in the process. As I told you in my lecture: My parents, today, 60 years after the war, would exclaim: "Hitler has destroyed our lives!" Let me draw your attention in this context to an article that I recently wrote: "Humiliation and Reactions to Hitler's Seductiveness in Post-War Germany: Personal Reflections," in *Social Alternatives* (Special Issue "Humiliation and History in Global Perspectives"), Vol. 25, No. 1, First Quarter, 2006.

I recommend the documentary "The Truth of World War II" (on the website of CCTV9; I saw it on television in April 2006). "The Truth of World War II" most impressively portrays Fang Jun and Zhu Weiyi, two authors who interviewed German and Japanese veterans from World War II. Both wrote books that you might be able to get hold of and that surely are fascinating. The book on the Japanese veterans was a best seller. Interestingly, all veterans who were interviewed by these two authors professed that they do not want any more war.

Fang Jun interviewed Japanese veterans. He did this in the afternoon pauses, while he was working in a take-away restaurant in Japan. Zhu Weiyi interviewed German veterans, in Blomberg (Kreis Lippe, North Germany). The son of the mayor (Bürgermeister) of Blomberg was his friend, and the father arranged that Zhu Weiyi met with veterans.

In the documentary on CCTV9, Zhu explained that initial attempts to find interviewees failed. Zhu Weiyi believes that this was due to the fact that it is not easy to speak about defeat; people like to remember pleasant and proud memories, but not unpleasant memories of loss and downfall.

Fang Jun reported, in the CCTV9 documentary, that many Japanese soldiers individually apologise to China, by kneeling down at symbolic places and apologising with deep sincerity. However, German soldiers do not do the same. He wondered why. He explained that he sees several reasons at work. First, the German government has taken responsibility for the atrocities of World War II, and German chancellor Willy Brandt and all subsequent chancellors have knelt down and apologised to the victims of Hitler Germany on behalf of all Germans. Second, Germany is landlocked. People travel easily, and Germans recognise easier than the Japanese that their neighbours loath them. Japan is more isolated.

As a result, German textbooks are written in a way that everybody is included; they are not written for a German audience only. The aim is to draw lessons. Indeed, the last words of the CCTV9 documentary programme were: “It is important to remember, but even more important to draw lessons.” (I wrote to CCTV9, asking whether they have the email addresses of Fang Jun, Zhu Weiyi, and his friend in Blomberg, however, I have not yet received a reply. If you find out more, I would be very grateful!)

### ***Mandela***

Both Mandela and Hitler understood the strength of the feelings stirred up by humiliation and appealed to the deepest wishes of their audiences. However, they used their understanding in different ways. Hitler seduced the Germans into a disastrous strategy for restoring their national honour. Mandela gave the people of South African an ambitious strategy for gaining their human rights. In South Africa, the humiliators and the humiliated sat down together and planned a society in which “both black and white” could be “assured of their inalienable right to human dignity” (Nelson Mandela in his inaugural address as President, May 10, 1994). The world cannot afford the suicidal and murderous strategies of a Hitler. We need Mandelas.

I would be very thankful, if you could provide me with examples that bring the same message as the Mandela/Hitler example, but are more adapted to your cultural context!

### **Quantitative versus Qualitative Methodology?**

*Question: What is “right” for researching psychological phenomena, among them the phenomenon of humiliation: quantitative or qualitative approaches?*

### ***Triangulation***

Please have a look at [www.humiliationstudies.org/research/methods.php](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/research/methods.php) for a discussion of quantitative versus qualitative methodology for research on humiliation. I personally believe in “triangulation.” I believe that we need to adapt our methodology to the

circumstances we face. To use an example, winter clothes are both “good” and “bad,” they are “good” in winter and “bad” in summer. Likewise, quantitative and qualitative approaches to methodology are both “good” and “bad.” In situations where a phenomenon is not yet researched in sufficient depth, we need more qualitative inquiry, later, when we have a rich database of descriptions of a phenomenon, we can embark on more quantitative approaches. However, always, a sound combination is advisable. To stay in the above example, on cold days we need warmer clothes and on warm days less. It would be unwise to reject warm clothes altogether and equally unwise to use them always. What is needed is a wise combination of different approaches, or “triangulation.”

### ***The need to adapt methodology***

Jan Smedslund, international acclaimed psychology professor from Norway, teaching both in Norway and at Stanford University, warns psychologists against trying to appear “scientific” by mistaking ‘scientifically looking” methods for sound science. He writes: “The finding that all bachelors are in fact unmarried males cannot be said to be empirical.” Smedslund warns that a lot of psychological research is as pointless as trying to make surveys in order to find out “whether bachelors really are all males” (Smedslund, 1988, 4). This, Smedslund states, would be an inexcusable waste of time and resources, and in addition a basic confusion of “the *ontological* status” (4, italics in original) of psychology’s research object.

I have discussed this topic for years, as recently as October 2006 in Norway, among others with Ragnvald Kalleberg, Sociology Professor at the University in Oslo (please see some of his writing on [www.humiliationstudies.org/publications/publications.php#kalleberg](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/publications/publications.php#kalleberg)), and in November and December at Columbia University in New York.

I believe it would be beneficial for psychologists in academia to be aware that they face a certain amount of contempt, among others from sociologists and anthropologists. What is said about the field of psychology sounds as follows: “The field of psychology has traditionally had problems with being acknowledged as a serious field of academic inquiry – together with psychiatry it is the target of stigma and prejudice – and therefore psychologists suffer from an ‘inferiority complex’ and from ‘physics envy.’ They attempt to gain acknowledgement by churning out mathematical models and numbers, whether these numbers are meaningful and entail any validity or not. They publish articles that nobody understands, except a handful of fellow scholars. The problem with this approach is that psychologists, instead of gaining recognition, make themselves irrelevant. Through their attempt to express their findings in ways that are unintelligible (except for a few), they remove their field from real life and from being of any significance to society.”

I suggest that this view on the field of psychology from outside – albeit to a certain degree unfair, simplified and overstated – merits to be listened to by psychologists. I believe that psychologists need to open up to other fields. The “religious” war against qualitative approaches in methodology has nowhere been as heated as in the field of psychology. Sociologists laugh and shake their heads in disbelief when they hear about the enmity that the discussions about qualitative versus quantitative methods have created within psychology.

I was told the following: “If you psychologists cannot even recognise that you have a psychological problem that blinds your choices of methodology, you are not worth much as psychologists. You are the last ones in science who believe that ‘absolute neutrality’ can be attained through quantitative approaches and ‘absolute objectivity’ is at all possible. Nobody believes this anymore, including physicists. Just remember the particle-wave duality in physics. To sum it up, you psychologists overlook a core problem that is deeply relevant for your own field. If anybody of us wants to know anything about the phenomenon of consciousness, for example, we better ask physicists, or sociologists, or political scientist – see a discussion of this in Wendt, 2005 – but the ones who ought to be the most competent, you psychologists, you do not even think about this and we better do not ask you!”

I studied psychology first and thereafter medicine. And, indeed, I quickly learned to hide the fact that I was a licensed psychologist from my medical colleagues. Psychology was regarded as a field that lacked academic seriousness. Psychiatry, as a specialisation within medicine, was barely accepted, however, only as long as it refrained from “psychological” explanations and concentrated on neurophysiological approaches.

My conclusion is that, indeed, psychology has a credibility problem that is deeply rooted in the larger historical and cultural contexts into which academic work is embedded. Still today, many parents are prouder of a child who becomes a medical doctor or an engineer than of a child who chooses psychology as a field of study. However, to remedy this problem, psychologists ought not to adopt “solutions” that deepen the problem instead of solving it. To make psychology irrelevant for real life and for society at large is not the way to go.

### ***The “reflective equilibrium”***

Therefore, triangulation of methodology is important, or the application of the “reflective equilibrium” (also the concept of the “hermeneutic” circle is related). Dagfinn Føllesdal is a renowned Norwegian philosopher (see for his publications, among others, Føllesdal, 1988, Føllesdal, 1996a, and Føllesdal, 1996b). I had the privilege to participate in his “Ethics Programme” in 1995 and 1996 and listen to his brilliant presentations, among others at Det Norske Vitenskaps-Akademi (Norwegian Academy of Science) on 30th January 1996. Føllesdal points out that Aristotle rejected “circular thinking” as “circular fallacy,” and that philosophy subsequently concentrated on deduction, but that precisely this circular thinking is “en vogue” since the nineteen-fifties. He explains that the “circular thinking,” or the “reflective equilibrium” approach has been employed, among others, by John Rawls, in *A Theory of Justice* (Rawls, 1971), and has been defended, for example, by Nelson Goodman.

Føllesdal explains that the “reflective equilibrium” has six features: it is 1) a method of justification (or at least a method to settle disagreement; this was the position to which Rawls later retreated, a move that is not shared by Føllesdal), 2) it emphasises coherence, 3) it entails total corrigibility, 4) it includes different fields of academia (not just mathematics), 5) it does not exclude pre-reflective intuitive acceptance, and 6) it draws on different sources of evidence.

***My experiences***

When I began with my research on humiliation in 1996, I planned to use the questionnaire that Linda Hartling has developed (Hartling and Luchetta, 1999). Hartling and Luchetta pioneered a quantitative questionnaire on humiliation (Humiliation Inventory) where a rating from 1 to 5 is employed for questions measuring “being teased,” “bullied,” “scorned,” “excluded,” “laughed at,” “put down,” “ridiculed,” “harassed,” “discounted,” “embarrassed,” “cruelly criticized,” “treated as invisible,” “discounted as a person,” “made to feel small or insignificant,” “unfairly denied access to some activity, opportunity, or service,” “called names or referred to in derogatory terms,” or viewed by others as “inadequate,” or “incompetent.” The questions probe the extent to which respondents had felt harmed by such incidents throughout life, and how much they feared such incidents.

I value this questionnaire highly and believe that it is a very important instrument. However, I had to retreat from my plan to use this questionnaire, due to the cultural differences that I met in Africa (Hartling’s questionnaire has been developed in the U.S.).

Let me explain: Imagine the case of “honour killings,” for example. A family whose daughter was raped may try to regain its honour by killing the girl; advocates of human rights (like me) are appalled by what they regard as a humiliating devaluation of women, while defenders of family honour are offended by what they regard as the advocates’ humiliating devaluation of their culture.

There are three dynamics of humiliation intertwined in this case (at least three): The humiliation of honour felt by the family of the raped girl, the humiliation felt by the therapist (me) on behalf of the dignity of the girl and her family, and the humiliation felt by the family at the hands of me, whom they perceive as “arrogant” westerner. Clearly, these kinds of humiliation are qualitatively different. Measuring them with the same quantitative instrument would hide differences that are crucial and should not be overlooked. Consequently, I had to attempt to explore and describe these differences in more depth first and could not embark directly on quantitative measuring.

Another problem that arose in the course of my field work in Africa (that started in 1998) was my realisation that my “scientific” approach destroyed any validity in my results. I simply did not get truthful accounts but was told what my interlocutors thought I wished to hear or what they wanted me to believe (please read more in “How Research Can Humiliate,” Lindner, 2001).

In my research, I finally “journeyed” through many “hermeneutic circles,” which illustrated the interdisciplinarity of the concept of humiliation. Humiliation grows out of historic roots and is deeply culture-dependent and therefore I describe it initially within academic fields such as history and anthropology, then I take the viewpoint of political science and sociology, and finally I inscribe psychology into those other discourses.

***Quantitative research on humiliation and policy planning***

As you see on our website, we do indeed envisage to triangulate and going Hartling’s way and doing quantitative measuring is part of triangulation. In December 2005, this topic was discussed in more depth with Alan B. Slifka, the founder of the Coexistence Initiative and promoter of research, among others, in the Middle East.

Alan B. Slifka reflected on how the notion of humiliation can help improve public policy planning. Alan B. Slifka believes that humiliation and coexistence may be deeply connected with humiliation hampering coexistence. He urges that we need a *Humiliation Survey*, and a *Humiliation Index* for every country, in extension of the important work that has already been done at the University of Haifa.

Slifka reported that a survey had been carried out by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Haifa in Israel. People were asked whether they felt “at home.” Slifka explained that initially it was expected that Arab Israelis would indeed feel at home in the Middle East. However, the results were astonishing. 85 percent of Israelis felt at home, however, only 33 percent of Arab Israelis. Slifka asked: “Why do so many Arab Israelis not feel at home? Perhaps they feel humiliated? If so, by what exactly?”

Slifka suggested that it would be fruitful to carry out surveys that include questions related to humiliation and that we should begin with a pilot study with questions probing the exact point of humiliation, whether it is the government, or specific ministries, or the police, or the neighbours, or civil society, or attitudes in general that have a humiliating impact.

I reported to Slifka that I usually end my papers and articles by calling for a “Moratorium on Humiliation.” He rightly pointed out that this can only be done if we have operationalised what exactly causes humiliation and where the points of improvement can be identified.

I furthermore reported to Slifka on two large research projects that HumanDHS has assembled, “Refugees and Humiliation,” and “Terrorism and Humiliation” ([www.humiliationstudies.org/research/projects.php](http://www.humiliationstudies.org/research/projects.php)). He proposed to build a third one, “Minorities and Humiliation,” with a focus on public policy planning for minorities. He suggested that governments would be interested in funding such projects. He recommends studying minorities such as the Arab Israelis in Israel, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Catholics in Northern Ireland, the Algerians in France, the Afro-Americans in the US, the Aborigines in Australia, the Maoris in New Zealand, the Muslims in Russia, and so forth.

To conclude, triangulation, in the spirit of the “reflective equilibrium,” seems to be the methodology that is suitable for research in the Social Sciences, including psychology and research on dignity and humiliation. What certainly is unhelpful is a “religious” war that demonises either qualitative or quantitative approaches. All approaches are useful if well designed and adapted to the circumstances and the situation. Blindly idolising one single approach is not useful.

### **What about the Personal Background of the Researcher?**

*Question: Should the personal background or the researcher of psychological phenomena be disclosed, or not? Should a researcher in psychology explain his or her personal motivation for doing research, or not? Does not the introduction of the personal background undermine scientific credibility?*

The particle-wave duality that characterises the nature of an electron reminds us that even in physics the perspective of the observer influences results. The nature of an electron can

only be described by also telling how the measurement was arrived at. The electron is a wave in one set-up and a particle in another. There is no “undisturbed” measurement of the electron. It is an illusion to believe that researchers can sit on the “fence of the world” so to speak, and observe the world in a detached manner that keeps the world “undisturbed.” Good research is not aided by clinging to such an illusion. The illusion must be exposed and the problem that is introduced through “subjectivity” must be tackled with creative methodology, not by denying the problem and pretending that it does not exist.

Indeed, when we look at the biographies of researchers, for example, researchers who focus on genocide, we find Holocaust survivors. Does this mean that their research is useless? Shibley Telhami is the Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, U.S. He argues that:

I have always believed that good scholarship can be relevant and consequential for public policy. It is possible to affect public policy without being an advocate; to be passionate about peace without losing analytical rigor; to be moved by what is just while conceding that no one has a monopoly on justice (quoted from [http://www.bsos.umd.edu/sadat/people/shibley\\_telhami.htm](http://www.bsos.umd.edu/sadat/people/shibley_telhami.htm)).

The creative methodology that can help us tackle the problem of “subjectivity” is precisely what I have described earlier, namely the “reflective equilibrium.” We have to build rich descriptions of problems, repeat the journey from observation to theory building and back to observation again and again, while applying a rich variety of methodological approaches (triangulation, everything from qualitative to quantitative methods).

The greatest scholars of our times support this view. Morton Deutsch, for example, one of the world’s most respected scholars and the founder of the International Center for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution (ICCCR), supports it. I invite everybody to join in.

I choose to introduce my personal background (to various degrees) to my audiences, among others because I believe that it is the duty of a researcher to show that he or she has understood that absolute neutrality and detachment are illusions. Furthermore, I believe that research, particularly on topics such as dignity and humiliation, is profoundly important for building a sustainable future for this world. Researchers, to my view, carry a significant responsibility in this respect, for the entire world society. Important insights need to be communicated. When the Titanic goes down and a researcher knows how to avoid it, it would be irresponsible not to say anything. Therefore I try to connect to my audiences. And, given that we all are human beings, the best way to connect is to present myself as the authentic human being that I am, with my biographical background and all my weaknesses and strengths.

Only by global cooperation can humankind create a future world that is worth living in. And who else but psychologists ought to try out how to best forge cooperation. Authenticity, openness, mutual recognition and connection, willingness to err, ability to be patient even in situations of uncertainty, the list of necessary skills is long. Psychologists have an important responsibility to explore global cooperation and I try to contribute at best ability.



## Should Strong Images Be Used?

*Question: Should strong images be used in lectures on humiliation? Or not?*

### ***How do we learn?***

The power of humiliation to destroy everyone and everything in its path makes it “the nuclear bomb of the emotions” (a term that I coined). The goal of my work is to explore the explosive role this seldom-studied emotion plays at every level of human conflict, from global politics to private lives.

I indeed resonate with the fear of Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon that four years and two wars after the attacks of September 11, 2001, America (and the world) is heading for a repeat of the events of that day, or perhaps worse (Benjamin and Simon, 2005). My international experience and research on humiliation has revealed widespread simmering rage. In 2000, prior to the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on September 11, 2001, I wrote in an article entitled *What Every Negotiator Ought To Know:*

#### *Understanding Humiliation:*

Fortunately for the West, human rights-humiliation in the Third World has not yet found its Hitler. It would be disastrous if such a leader created a global following among the humiliated by arguing, for example, that the West’s human rights’ rhetoric was merely a hypocritical device to divert attention from the fact that the divide between rich and poor is greater than before. In view of the danger that a new Hitler would present, the West is fortunate that the influence and prestige of Nelson Mandela are so great (Lindner, 2000, p. 19).

The two world wars may be taken to support the proposition that humiliation can lead to war, Holocaust, genocide, and ethnic cleansing, while respect can facilitate peace – the humiliation entailed in the Versailles Treaties led to war, while the respect entailed in the Marshall Plan led to peace. Those very issues are still all very high on the world’s political agenda. In recent years, genocide has occurred in Rwanda and Burundi, ethnic cleansing has occurred in ex-Yugoslavia, atrocities have been committed in East-Timor and many other places, until 9/11 awakened the world to “global terrorism,” which in turn led to the “war on terror.” Usually local cycles of humiliation do not stay local. They tend to bring insecurity to neighbours and can contaminate the highest international levels. Monty Marshall, 1999, has written most remarkably on protracted conflict and how *insecurity gets diffused*. Global terror is the ultimate diffusion of insecurity.

Also Japan helps illustrate this point. If Japan were isolated from the world – as it was when its Tokugawa Shoguns closed it to the outside – Japanese current “inner affairs” would not be known to anybody else. However, in an interdependent world, in 2005, modifications in Japanese school textbooks (“in order to make our children proud of Japan”) trigger enraged mass demonstrations in China and Korea, who feel that Japan tries to “gloss over its past.” Floyd Rudmin explains what happens (personal message, April 11, 2005): “It is the humiliation of history. Japan’s neighbors are furious because Japan has again tried to gloss over its history of humiliating its neighbors, but Japan in

turns finds it humiliating that it alone is required to continually account for and atone for its past.”

And Japan also illustrates the problem with help. John W. Dower (1999), in his book entitled *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II*, vividly describes what I have observed during my conversations in Japan as well: A person might be convinced, deeply, to offer noble help, and overlook that this help does not render thankful recipients, but profoundly humiliated victims. Dower writes about the shock that befell Japan when the war was lost:

Acknowledging defeat *was* traumatic, and this trauma found immediate expression in a rhetoric of despair. People spoke of the “shame and dishonor” of unconditional surrender. For many, sudden confrontation with the hitherto unspeakable words *maketa senso* - “lost war” was almost stupefying. Since the early 1930s, the Japanese had been told they were fighting for the purest and most noble of objectives that they were a “great country” and a “great empire,” a “leading race” destined to overthrow Western imperialism and bring about a “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere,” a people possessed of a unique and indomitable “Yamato spirit” (Dower, 1999, p. 104).

In sum, humankind can build a safe world only by preventing cycles of humiliation. In an interdependent world it is no longer feasible to neglect local dynamics that begin with feelings of humiliation and end with retaliatory acts of humiliation. Humankind urgently needs to better understand the phenomenon of humiliation and recognise its destructive force in order to prevent it.

However, what is the best way to wake up the world to this message?

### ***The dead American soldier***

In my lecture on humiliation, I sometimes (not always) show the picture of the dead body of the American soldier, who, in 1993, was dragged through the streets of Mogadishu in Somalia by an angry crowd. On December 9, 1992, *Operation Restore Hope* had been launched, by the United States, as a response to the failure of the first United Nations operation *UNOSOM*. However, *Operation Restore Hope* failed, as did *UNOSOM II*.

The humiliating ending of the UN operation in Somalia had profound effects at the global multilateral level for which another country in agony, Rwanda, paid a high price. When the genocide started in Rwanda in 1994, the international community left Rwandans to slaughter each other because nobody wanted a “second Somalia” (see, for example, O'Halloran, 1995).

This example illustrates one of the most difficult lessons that humankind must learn, namely that even good intentioned help can have humiliating effects and may set in motion destructive cycles of humiliation. Good intentions do not automatically protect against the pernicious outfalls of humiliation. The offer of help to an impoverished and ravaged country, Somalia, was greeted by “disrespect” and “lack of thankfulness,” with acts of humiliation perpetrated against the helpers. Helpers are often blind to the fact that their help has humiliating effects.

For humiliation’s role in conflict, the most hideous link lies in the connection between help and humiliation. Everybody associates help with benevolence and gratitude. Yet, the

problem is that helping can be both, an expression of caring and a demonstration of superiority. It can be an instrument of dominance in the hands of a more advantaged group. As a result, help may be resented and felt to be humiliating by its recipients (Nadler, 2002, see also Rosen, 1983).

If humankind had been aware that help may have humiliating effects, and that this can be avoided, it would not have retreated from help when hundreds of thousands of Rwandans were slaughtered. Because humankind was unprepared, it withdrew from helping altogether. Humankind ought to be better prepared.

And who is best positioned to explain this hideous connection between help and humiliation? Psychologists. Psychologists have a responsibility to educate the world. Therefore I choose to shock those audiences who, according to my opinion, carry particular responsibility, like psychologists. I choose to shock them with the stark and gruesome picture of the dead American soldier, in order to wake them up to their duty and responsibility for the world.

Humankind's blindness was particularly sad when we realise that as few as 5000 troops may have saved almost a million Rwandan lives:

A modern force of 5,000 troops... sent to Rwanda sometime between April 7 and April 21, 1994, could have significantly altered the outcome of the conflict... forces appropriately trained, equipped and commanded, and introduced in a timely manner, could have stemmed the violence in and around the capital, prevented its spread to the countryside, and created conditions conducive to the cessation of the civil war.... (Feil, 1998, p. 3, quoted from The International Panel of Eminent Personalities to Investigate the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda and the Surrounding Events, 2000, chapter 10, paragraph 9).

The image of the falling Twin Towers in September 2001 shocked the world. Worse images might be in store. Do we really want to wait for reality to provide them to us? I think that we ought to wake up earlier. I use stark pictures in front of audiences with particular responsibility in order to make clear that mayhem might be the result if we do not wake up now.

Currently, China is occupied with catching up with the world. However, China also begins to understand the fact that the world has shrunk to a degree that global cooperation is the only option to build a sustainable future. "Global warming" and "global terrorism" are but two buzzwords. Thomas L. Friedman, 2005, vividly describes how the world shrinks, in *The World Is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century*. Given that cooperation is urgently needed, dynamics of humiliation – the strongest obstacle to cooperation – need to be prevented, avoided and healed. Chinese citizens have as much global responsibility as any other world citizen.

### **Does Humiliation Not Increase Excellence?**

*Question: Is it not sometimes beneficial to humiliate people? Does it not motivate people to aspire to excellence and work harder?*

Please let me quote from chapter 8 of my book *Making Enemies Unwittingly, Humiliation and International Conflict* (Lindner, 2006). Particularly Solow's insights are very important for China, I believe:

***Creativity can be a Trojan horse for equal dignity***

Robert M. Solow, 1957, used *growth accounting* mathematics to analyse historical GDP data and found that *technological innovation* and *know-how* were much more important for growth than such variables as capital and labour input. These are good news. Because new ideas are urgently needed for the long-term sustainability of the Earth. Creativity is essential to our future and that of our children.

However, creativity is an extremely tricky phenomenon. It cannot be forced. It must be elicited with care. It is often spontaneous and not easily planned. You can force yourself as hard as you want; the best ideas will still most probably come when you relax in the bathtub. Creativity cannot be increased by oppressing people. Oppressed underlings may very well develop a creativity of their own, but it probably will not benefit the oppressor. More likely it will work to sabotage the oppressor's aims. A corporate manager or a mother who wants her children to succeed in life needs to extend respect to employees or children and open up spaces of relaxation and freedom.

Creativity and creative self-realisation represent *pragmatic* calls for equal dignity. Being treated as somebody of equal dignity, as somebody whose views have weight, opens space for creativity. People are much more creative when they feel well-treated than they are when they experience humiliating lowliness. The old practice of ranking human worth resembles Chinese foot binding. Both incapacitate, at least partially. Women with bound feet were reduced to the status of dependent and helpless toys. Likewise, underlings in coercive hierarchies are usually forced into artificial incapacitation. For creativity to flourish, all this has to be undone. Morton Deutsch quotes Lichtenberg (1990) who suggests that dominators must withdraw from processes of domination, and re-own and resolve their feelings of vulnerability, guilt, self-hatred, rage, and terror, and undo the projection of these feelings onto the oppressed:

Psychologists, in their roles as psychotherapists, marriage counselors, organisational consultants, and educators have a role to play in demystifying the psychological processes involved in the dominators. So too, I believe do the oppressed, by not accepting their distorted roles in the distorted relationship of the oppressor and the oppressed (Deutsch, 2002, p. 35-36).

Indeed, in the early twenty-first century the world finds itself in transition from an ancient *culture of coercion* to a *culture of creativity*, though still in its infancy. In a culture of coercion, underlings are punished simply for being underlings. In contrast, the culture of creativity regards everybody as being fundamentally equal, interdependent, as well as a potential resource. The key to releasing that resource is persuasion, and the basis for persuasion is respect for equal dignity. Cultures today fill less of a preserving function than formerly, acquiring instead a propelling role. Everywhere there is movement towards innovation and towards the creation of new

ideas, new theories, new products, and new lifestyles. In the past, change occurred in spite of the efforts of established power elites to stop it, while today the established elites depend on a culture of change. Established elites used to preserve their power by preserving the status quo; now they expect innovation to preserve it.

The effects of the current transition towards a *culture of creativity* are visible everywhere and permeate all our daily lives, locally and globally. I use the term *custom-tailoring* to capture what is needed, namely a constant *pendulation* that includes checking the situation, adapting perceptions, deciding what to do, acting, and beginning again to check and explore. *Custom-tailoring* describes the effort to interlink abstract concepts (theories, world views) with “reality” in ever more dynamic, flexible, and differentiated ways. “*Custom-tailoring*” is another term for a method of justification in science, called *reflective equilibrium*, which means going in circles, again and again, to arrive at ever denser understanding.

In the corporate sector, openness to change, flexibility, and creativity have been elevated to the status of “official” agendas. Training, learning, openness, flexibility, malleability, and questioning are taught in seminars to prepare modern managers for work in a global world. Terms like rigid system, secure knowledge, and fixed identity are old-fashioned. Adaptability, not rigidity, is valued in a rapidly changing environment. Small units are more effective than huge inflexible organisations, too. In the language of economics: Profit in a market economy is secured only if the clients’ needs and wishes are taken seriously and satisfied, when the right niches for products are found (or created). And since the world is globalising, this extends to the global market place.

Democracy is a design that intends in-built mechanisms to ensure that the overall system stays flexible. One of its primary aims is to *custom-tailor* its mechanics to its “users,” its citizens. *Sustainability for our biosphere and sociosphere* is nothing else but a *custom-tailored* long-term linkage between the theory and practice of this biosphere and sociosphere.

### **Humiliation versus Humility**

In my work, I follow modern linguistic definitions and differentiate between *humbling* and *humiliating* and between *humility* and *humiliation*. I understand humility to be positive, a valuable virtue, and humiliation to be negative, a hurtful violation.

It is interesting to note that this differentiation is historically new. Until 1757, in the English language, both words meant the same. William Ian Miller informs us that “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, italics in original).

In other words, humiliation was not seen as hurtful until about 250 years ago. And this was not restricted to English-speaking people. For millennia, people around the world believed that it was normal and morally correct to have masters and underlings, and that masters were entitled to be treated as *higher* beings and underlings deserved to be shown *down*, “where they belonged.” Even when underlings rebelled, it was to replace the master rather than to dismantle the hierarchy.

The emergence of the modern meaning of the word *humiliation* (1757), namely that it is a violation of dignity, co-occurs with a number of other transitions. The author of *The Invention of the Self*, John O. Lyons, 1978, for example, analysed travellers’ descriptions of their experiences and found that around 1750 the authors began to insert themselves as subjects with a personal perspective on what they observed. This change closely preceded the American Declaration of Independence (July 4, 1776) and the French Revolution (August 4, 1789), rallying points for the development of the human rights movement. Undoubtedly, the ideas that culminated in today’s concepts of human rights predate 1757. However, these ideals did not move to the forefront of Western consciousness until about 250 years ago. At present, human rights ideals are in the process of permeating the normative frames of the entire *global village*.

In short, in the old hierarchical societies, prior to the start of the human rights revolution, showing underlings their due lowly place was seen as legitimate. The illegitimacy and the violation that is entailed in the modern understanding of the word humiliation, was not yet there. Today, in contrast, most people would no longer accept that humiliation has any positive outcome. In today’s globalising world, we need strong and creative individuals. Humiliation, however, does not create strong individuals, but weak individuals. This has been well explained well by Lakoff and Johnson (1999) in their discussion of parenting styles, a discussion that is relevant also for pedagogy and organisational psychology.

### ***Strict Father Model***

Parents usually reproduce the cultural orientation into which they were born in their children. In hierarchical settings parents tend to reproduce obedient underlings. Alice Miller, 1983, spelled out how, in the period that lead up to the two World Wars, leading pedagogues of the time regarded *breaking the will of the child* as essential for childrearing. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) describe the underlying framework with what they call the *Strict Father model* (as opposed to the *Nurturant Parent model*):

The father has authority to determine the policy that will govern the family. Because of his moral authority, his commands are to be obeyed. He teaches his children right from wrong by setting strict rules for their behavior and by setting a moral example in his own life. He enforces these moral rules by reward and punishment. The father also gains his children’s cooperation by showing love and by appreciating them when they obey the rules. But children must not be coddled, lest they become spoiled. A spoiled child lacks the appropriate moral values and lacks the moral strength and discipline necessary for living independently and meeting life’s challenges. The mother has day-to-day responsibility for the care of the household, raising the children; and upholding the father’s authority. Children must respect and obey their parents, because of the

parents' moral authority. Through their obedience they learn the discipline and self-reliance that is necessary to meet life's challenges. This self-discipline develops in them strong moral character. Love and nurturance are a vital part of family life, but they should never outweigh parental authority, which is itself an expression of love and nurturance – tough love. As children mature, the virtues of respect for moral authority, self-reliance, and self-discipline allow them to incorporate their father's moral values. In this way they incorporate their father's moral authority they become self-governing and self-legislating (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, pp. 313-314).

Francisco Gomes de Matos, a professor and peace linguist from Brazil (in an email communication 19th April 2006) reports that being exposed to humiliation, in the past, was often taken as a kind of test of resilience, of endurance, and as a sacrifice for building ones character. The issue, he says, has to do with self-control, with how people control their emotions, feelings, sufferings, pains, anger, and tongue.

However, clearly, the results of this approach were rather lamentable, as is described by Lakoff and Johnson:

Evidence from three areas of psychological research – attachment theory, socialization theory, and family violence studies – shows that the Strict Father model ...tends to produce children who are dependent on the authority of others, cannot chart their own moral course very well, have less of a conscience, are less respectful of others, and have no greater ability to resist temptations (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 327).

Thus, the *Strict Father model* seems to produce what Theodor Adorno called the *authoritarian personality* whose principal characteristic is obedience and preparedness to blindly following orders, irrespective of their moral contents (Adorno et al., 1950). The promise that humiliation will render strong individuals is a false one; humiliation tends to render timid and broken individuals, particularly when humiliation is experienced during childhood.

### ***Nurturant Parent Model***

As explained above, around 300 - 250 years ago, the Human Rights revolution began to undermine the belief that it is “nature's order” to have *lower* and *higher* beings. Article 1 of Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” This declaration represents a revolution insofar as it upsets the hierarchical ranking of human worthiness that was in place for millennia and calls for a new order, namely the order of *equal dignity for all*. In this new order it is regarded illegitimate to put down people; putting down people, beating and punishing them cruelly, is no longer labelled as “prosocial humbling” but as abusive *antisocial humiliation*. As might be expected, this revolution has consequences also for parenting.

Lakoff and Johnson allude to this when they describe the *Nurturant Parent model* of rearing children. This model describes a parenting style that abides by the new Human Rights ideals. What formerly was regarded as “good” for children, turns into abuse and neglect in the new nurturant framework.

Many parents fear that being nurturant means being lenient and permissive. Yet, nurturant parenting has nothing to do with leniency. It combines firmness with respect for equal dignity. Lakoff and Johnson write, “Nurturant Parent morality is not, in itself, overly permissive. Just as letting children do whatever they want is not good for them, so helping other people to do whatever they please is likewise not proper nurturance. There are limits to what other people should be allowed to do, and genuine nurturance involves setting boundaries and expecting others to act responsibly” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999, p. 316).

The point with the Nurturing Parent model is that “lessons” are no longer taught by putting down children. “Breaking” children is no longer permissible. “Lessons” are now to be taught with firm love and humility, no longer by applying humiliation. The Strict Father model was adapted to old times where individuals were embedded into closed hierarchical societies of domination and submission. The Nurturing Parent model is suitable in times of globalisation, where strong and creative individuals need to navigate a global arena without needing orders from superiors.

To conclude, at the current juncture in time all world citizens – parents, teachers, psychologists, or corporate consultants – live in the midst of a historic transition from concepts of *ranked human worthiness* to visions of *equal dignity for all*. All world citizens are embedded in some way or another within this transition, either by welcoming it or resisting it, and in many cases by being confused by it.

However, this transition is a difficult one even for the most fervent human rights enthusiast because it is easy to lose orientation. We lose orientation not least because old recipes still sound so “right.” For example, is it so bad to sometimes hit a child? Have we not all survived such treatment? And was it not to our own good? And what about the treatment of women? Should not women be careful not to lose their “femininity” [= submissiveness as *lower beings*]? Many such questions confuse our minds in times of transition.

What we have not yet developed are new proverbs and new sayings that sound equally “right” as the old ones. The new world is not yet there while the old world disappears. We need to develop new language, new proverbs, and sayings that highlight that “lessons” are no longer to be taught by humiliation, but with love and humility.

Humility is the renouncement of arrogant domination that depends on submission from underlings. Humility is a virtue that entails dignified bowing. Arrogant people believe they can take down the sky and do the impossible. Humble people, on the other hand, recognise that there may be limits. Humility is the acknowledgement of the embeddedness of every living creature on Earth into fragile biospheres and sociospheres, both locally and globally. Humility is also the acknowledgement of equal dignity for every human being and the recognition that only in cooperation and mutual connection can humankind succeed in solving its local and global problems.

I personally stand in for human rights because I believe that we all, the entire human family on planet Earth, live in a new reality that cannot be tackled with old methods. We live in an increasingly interdependent globalising world, with the vision and emerging reality of a *global village*, and this new reality can, according to my view, best be tackled with human rights norms. Human rights with their call for equal dignity for all (who ought not be humiliated) represent a normative framework that is better adapted to an emerging *global village* than old hierarchical systems that produce meek underlings. We



need strong and creative individuals, who know about mutual connection in dignified humility, to tackle the new challenges of our time.

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