

From Humiliation to Dignity: For a Future of Global Solidarity

Narratives in Times of Radical Transformation

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Painting by Lisbeth Vilkan Glad created for the cover of the book

Short abstract

The coronavirus pandemic represents an important turning point in the way human activities unfold on our planet. The virus makes it more palpable than ever before that we are all interconnected and interdependent. Never before has it been so clear that we must act together, and fast.

Abstract

The coronavirus pandemic that unfolds as we speak represents an important turning point in the way human activities unfold on our planet: For the first time, everyone is affected simultaneously. The virus makes it more palpable than ever before that the world has become a village, that we are all interconnected and interdependent. Never before has it been so clear that we must act together, and fast.

The pandemic comes on top of a list of crises that gets longer by the day: Financial crisis, credit and banking crisis, environmental and ecological crisis, biodiversity crisis, housing crisis, well-being crisis, education crisis, spiritual and moral crisis, trust and trusting crisis, indifference crisis, fake news and faking crisis, reality crisis, populism and fascism crisis... all leading to a generalised ‘time of crisis’.

It is always a shock when limits are reached that hitherto were imperceptible. Sudden tipping points change conditions so fast and drastically that it is difficult to bring about equally drastic adaptations. We, as humankind, have the choice of proceeding unimpeded with ‘business as usual’ towards the global depletion of planet Earth’s last resources, or we can rethink and shape our future path by inventing new ways of arranging our affairs on this planet. Never in our species’ history have we encountered more serious challenges. The generations alive now carry more responsibility on their shoulders than any generation before. The presently unfolding coronavirus crisis is likely to be only a small prelude. We stand at historically unparalleled crossroads.

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Introduction

My name is Evelin Lindner, and I send you a very warm greeting!

I would like to begin by thanking Erinn Cameron for inviting me into this panel, and the organisers of this conference for making such a brilliant gathering possible.

Now, I would like to welcome you to this presentation of my thoughts on narratives in times of radical transformation. I have made a shorter version of 25 minutes and a longer version of circa one hour for those who would like to delve deeper.

We human beings need narratives that anchor us in the world, that tell us where we come from and where we are going, that provide us with long-term explanations about life’s meanings and what our true significance is.¹ Religions, family legends, or clan and national myths, usually provide such all-encompassing meta-narratives, narratives that are so important that people are willing to die for them.

We live in times now, where there is a dire need for a new meta-narrative, one for our entire shared living Earth community rather than just for one group, a meta-narrative that is credible, convincing, and inclusive, a narrative that explains why humanity stands at the abyss, a narrative that points at what we can do.



The Blue Marble

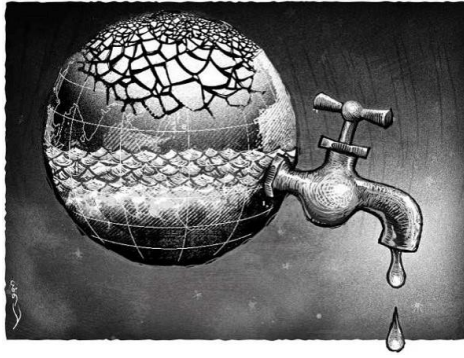
Throughout the past millennia, since the Neolithic Revolution, one narrative has become increasingly salient, a narrative that indeed leads to the abyss, namely, that of human *exceptionality* and *superiority*. It is a narrative that says that we, the species *Homo sapiens*, have reason to be proud of our ability to be in control, to dominate, to win victories. Throughout the past centuries, and particularly the past decades, we have continuously increased competition for domination and control over people and planet — nations against nations, citizens against citizens, and all against nature. At the same time, we regarded dialogue, mutuality, and nurturing as secondary.

I was trained in medicine and psychology, and therefore I like to use the image of the human body to illustrate my point. Since the Neolithic Revolution, the co-called *dominator model of society* became prevalent all over the globe,² where elites — usually men — were allowed to use the right arm, the sword arm, to devise strategies and give orders, to prepare for war if needed, representing the sympathetic system of the body that prepares for flight or fight. Their left arm, the one that stands for maintenance and care, akin to the parasympathetic system of the body, was bound behind their backs. Their subordinates — women and lowly men — suffered the inverse infliction, they were expected to exhaust themselves in service. None could use both arms, none could reach an inner balance, none could unfold their full potential.

This is an injury that lasted for many millennia, I call it a ‘war injury’ — humanity suffered a millennia-long systemic war injury, and our forebears accepted it and lived with it, because preparedness for war had to be given priority in a world that was in the grip of what political scientists call *security dilemma*. This dilemma can be summed up with the motto of Roman thinker Vegetius, *If you want peace, prepare for war*.³ During the past three per cent of human history, the past twelve millennia or so, humanity lived in the grip of this tragic dilemma. It permeated all of society with an acute sense of fear as a background constant, fear of attack from outside.

By now, our biosphere, after having been treated by us humans as if it were just another enemy waiting to be conquered, is like a teacher who enlightens us that competition for domination is a sub-optimal strategy, at best, if not collectively suicidal. Negligence of maintenance and replenishment is a hideous killer, and also here, the human body can illustrate it: heart attack is the outcome, the typical emergency trouble-shooter disease.⁴ When nurturing is seen as negligible and victory as desirable, when the nurturing of relationships among ourselves and with nature is neglected, collapse is the result.

This collapse is now with us, it took many millennia to manifest. We can call it *sociocide* and *ecocide*. The suffix *-cide* means ‘killing’. Words such as genocide, suicide, or pesticide all end on *-cide*, stemming from Latin *-cida* and the verb *caedo, caedes, caedere, caedi, caedum*.⁵



This is what we do. We squeeze our planet to the last drop. Ecocide is the killing of our *ecosphere*, of our ecological world, of which we only are a small part, despite our belief to be its masters.⁶



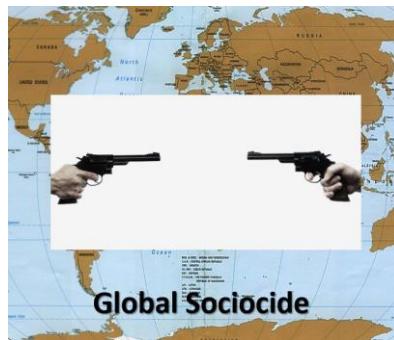
We poison our planet, and we drown it and burn it.



Sociocide is the killing of our *sociosphere*, of the cohesion in our human communities, local and global.⁷ We live in a world now, where hateful polarisation poisons our relationships.



We have a pandemic of disconnection and loneliness, particularly in the Western world, that will outlast the coronavirus pandemic. Britain had to appoint a special minister for loneliness in 2018.⁸



Not enough, the world is also armed to its teeth, nations against nations, citizens against citizens.

Now we are at a point where we risk dying of our war injury, of our misguided pride in domination that creates nothing but all-out heart attack. Sociocide and ecocide together are the outcome of systemic humiliation, humiliation congealed into systems, just like South Africa was in the grip of humiliation congealed into a system called apartheid, just like the world now is in the grip of global arms races by military-corporate-political systems.⁹



Cogitocide

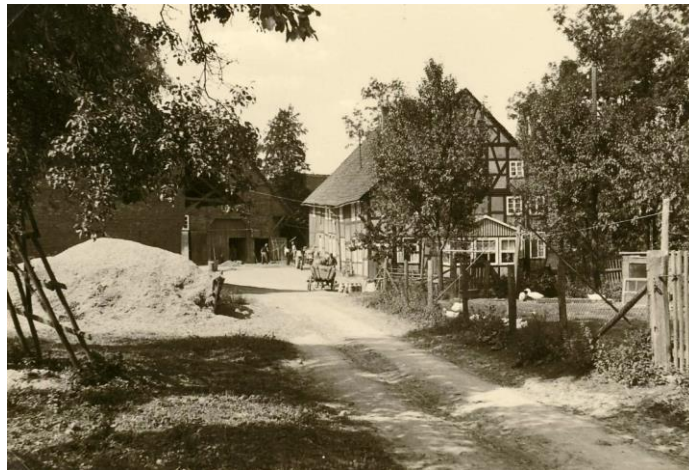
Ecocide and sociocide are driven by the same underlying catalyst, the very ‘weapon of mass destruction’ that systems of humiliation use, namely, *cogitocide*. This term was coined by the former head of the Club of Rome, Prince El Hassan bin Talal in 2020.¹⁰ *Cogito* comes from *cogitare* in Latin, ‘to think’,¹¹ and *cogitocide* is the killing of our *cogitosphere*, the killing of ‘the realm of thinking and reflection’,¹² it is the drowning of humanity in a sightless infosphere.¹³ I therefore fear that artificial *intelligence* may be a misnomer — in many cases, it may rather be artificial *sightlessness*, it may simply be the digitalisation of a kind of sightlessness that in former times was called *fog of war*, simply taking on a new shape and reaching new levels now.¹⁴ *Big data*, instead of becoming a big success, may turn out as *big disaster*.¹⁵

All those *-cides*, all those killings, amplify each other. As a result, we risk *omnicide* — the killing of everything, the annihilation of all life on Earth.¹⁶ This is where we are. We live in times of systemic decline where the old order is disintegrating, as environmental and political disruptions amplify each other. We are at the end of a lavish party of exploitation, for which our children, if they survive, will have to pay. Natural historian Sir David Attenborough said in 2018, ‘Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale. Our greatest threat in thousands of years’.¹⁷ I call it *systemic madness* waiting to be transformed into *systemic sanity*. Cultural historian Thomas Berry concurs, ‘We cannot have healthy people on a sick planet’.¹⁸ This is where we stand.

Global living as a path to theory and practice in times of global challenges

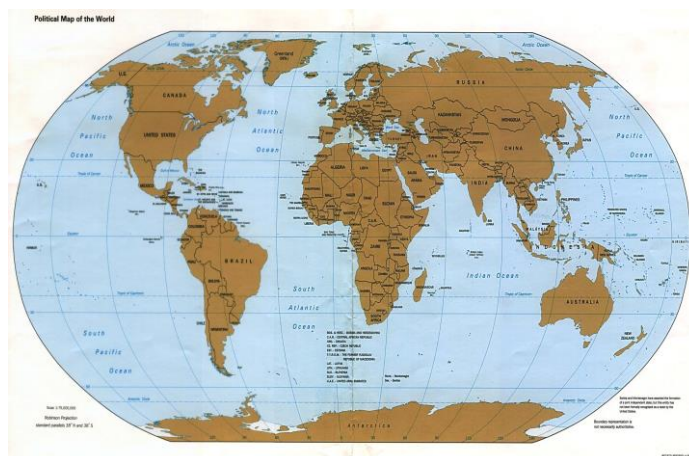
In this situation, what would a non-toxic meta-narrative for a transition towards a shared living Earth community be? Is it possible to forge one that unites all citizens of the world into one goal rather than pitting them against each other? Is it worth the effort to try? Can we go from ‘more and me’ to we? Peace philosopher Howard Richards faults post-modernist critics for leaving us with a cruel choice in this dire situation: either no meta-narrative or a toxic meta-narrative. Richards fears

that the discrediting of modernity has favoured the rise of fundamentalisms around the world.¹⁹ Can we do better?



This is the rural context in which I grew up. This was when our planet was still blue and green...
This was the place where my parents were displaced to after World War II.

Coming from a rural background, and from a family that is deeply traumatised by war and displacement, I have invested my entire life into exploring possibilities for viable meta-narratives. As a methodology, I have developed a very specific global life design where I invite everyone I meet to be my fellow co-researcher.²⁰ I see it as my responsibility, my duty, to use the privileges I have been offered in life, together with the technological opportunities of our times, to try to understand our world so I can suggest viable paths into the future. This is my life mission since childhood.



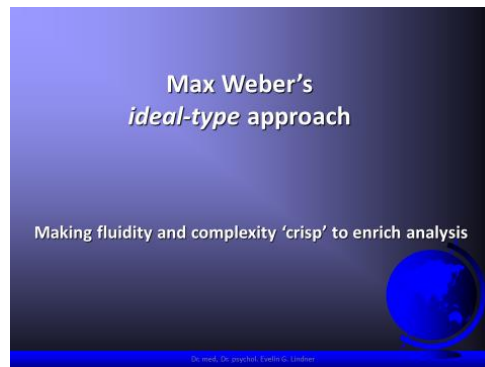
By now, I look back on forty-five years of being at home on all continents.

Already as a child, I wanted to understand what we humans are capable of in terms of hatred and love, of violence and peace, of competition and cooperation, of foolishness and wisdom. Humanity's foundational questions always inspired me: How do people in different cultural realms conceptualise life and death and peace and war? How do they live love and hatred? Are we an anti-social or a pro-social animal?²¹

At the age of twenty, I began with what I call 'living globally', 'being sedentary in the global village', immersing myself into different cultural realms all around the world, much more deeply than through mere 'travel' (as I have not yet met another person who lives in this way, I have composed a longer explanation that you can download from my website²²).

Since forty-five years now, I live globally, I am at home on all continents and have collected experiences and insights that underpin my message with a substance that few, perhaps nobody, has

been able to gather before, a substance that encompasses the entire globe. I live globally and locally at the same time, deeply rooted in many local places, binding them together with love and tenderness into lived cosmopolitanism. Through living in the global village, I am neither a Western nor non-Western person, I am simply a global citizen in practice, not just in theory. I am a patriot of *Earthland*, including all its living beings.



In my work, I use the *ideal-type* approach of sociologist Max Weber.²³



These are my books, and you are warmly invited to write to me to receive review copies.

My interest in the topics of dignity and humiliation emerged from my family background and my subsequent global experience. I see humiliation as an interpersonal act, an emotional state, and a social mechanism, and therefore, it is relevant for a wide range of academic fields of inquiry, among them history, social philosophy, political science, sociology, global studies, anthropology, neuroscience, and, not least, psychology. Humiliation is relevant for all branches of psychology — clinical, health, developmental, cultural, community, social, and political psychology — altogether for any integral psychological perspective whose theoretical lenses span all ‘life-centred psychologies’.²⁴ The phenomenon of humiliation is everywhere, yet, interestingly, it had not been studied much on its own account before Linda Hartling, a relational psychologist,²⁵ and I began attending to it, and one reason may precisely be due to this need for trans-, multi-, and cross-disciplinary approaches.

In my writing, I attempt to bridge academia’s siloisation by striving to understand the core messages of various fields of academic inquiry, then I try to bring them together on different levels of abstraction, using precisely the *ideal-type* approach of sociologist Max Weber, and finally, I attempt to reconstruct them from the perspective of dignity and humiliation. So far, I have done so with war, genocide, and terrorism (2000, 2017),²⁶ international conflict (2006 and 2009, translated into Chinese in 2019),²⁷ gender and security (2010),²⁸ and economics (2012, translated into Brazilian-Portuguese in 2016).²⁹

The historical transition to equal dignity

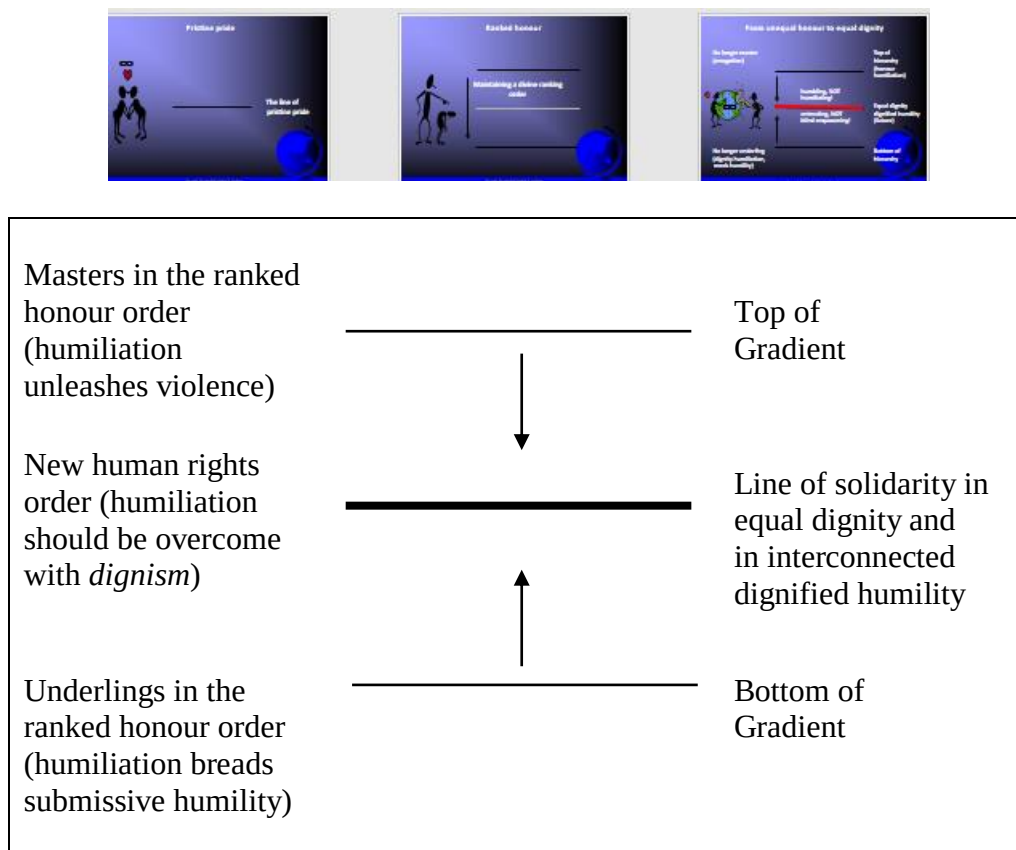


Figure 1: The historical transition to egalisation

Now I would like to explain to you how I see the promise entailed in our historical transition towards ideals of equal dignity, and the dangers and pitfalls that need to be avoided.

If we look at the maxim of the French Revolution, *liberté, égalité, fraternité* — liberty, equality, and solidarity, cooperation, and care — then all three goals are lost if only liberty is aimed at. Sociocide and ecocide are the result when empowerment becomes narcissism, when liberty is overdone so to speak. The self-esteem movement in Western societies may precisely have suffered such an overshoot of empowerment. Research suggests that it has created a social climate of solipsistic narcissism characterised by chronic indignation and anger entrepreneurship all against all.³⁰

Liberty, to truly manifest itself, requires the generosity and dignified humility of solidarity, of responsible mutuality embedded in equal dignity. I have coined the word *egalisation* to connote equal dignity that is free of humiliation, free of forced hierarchisation, as much as free of forced equalisation. If we imagine the human world as a container with a height and a width, then *globalisation* addresses the horizontal dimension, the shrinking width, while *egalisation* speaks to the vertical dimension, the degree of power differentials and inequality. Egalisation is a process that moves away from a very high container with superior masters at the top and inferior underlings at the bottom, towards a flat container where all enjoy equal dignity as individuals free to engage in loving solidarity with each other, and in mutually dignifying connection with all life on this planet.

The horizontal line in the middle of this Figure represents the line of equal dignity in shared humility. It illustrates a worldview that refuses to essentialise and rank secondary differences into primary differences at the core of human worthiness, in other words, it resists *rankism*.³¹ A passenger in a plane is equal in dignity with the pilots, the passengers' essence as human beings is untouched. The middle line in this Figure does not signify that all human beings should be the same. Being forced into uniformity is the opposite of equality in dignity. Passengers in a plane can

be very different, this is not a problem, equal dignity can unite them all. What is a problem, however, is when rankists abuse the notion of equal dignity to undermine equality with the argument that inequality is nothing but freely chosen diversity.³² The middle line reminds us that the pilots are part of a highly functional hierarchy without which the plane would not fly, however, that the plane has no difficulties flying without a first class and offering every passenger the same quality of care.

Egalisation invites masters to step down from arrogating superiority and it encourages inferiors to rise up from humiliating subordination, up from being held down, released from having lesser value and worth ascribed to them. Overlords are humbled and underlings elevated, and all are entrusted with the co-creation of a new future of equality in dignity for all, as responsible individuals in solidarity, in this way nurturing *true* freedom.

Today's global interconnectedness is a radical game changer. Combined with the fact that this world is also finite, this represents the ultimate deterrent for traditional power-over competition, be it power over others or over nature. This means that first order change is not enough, second order change is needed. Linear, transactional, partial, and quantitative change of behaviour within an existing system is insufficient when causes call for qualitative discontinuous leaps, for multi-dimensional and multi-level transformations of the system itself.

While in former times only the tyrants were removed and tyranny was kept in place, so that the formerly oppressed became the new oppressors, a dignified future requires a level of peace making and bridge building that goes further. Former oppressors and former oppressed need to come together, just as Nelson Mandela strove to include all South Africans into their shared home country.

The global ingathering of humanity, the shrinking of the world that brings us all together, gives us the unprecedented opportunity to succeed with second order change, to overcome hitherto unsolvable dilemmas, and to dignify globalisation.

The dilemmas I am speaking of, are the *security dilemma* mentioned before — as you remember, it says *If you want peace, prepare for war* — and the global *commons dilemma*. Ecologist Garrett James Hardin explained that 'an unmanaged commons in a world of limited material wealth and unlimited desires inevitably ends in ruin'.³³ Indeed, ruin is now global, after twelve millennia of humanity's campaign of depleting our planet's resources with ever increasing destructive efficiency, after even having compounded the security dilemma with a *growth dilemma* that says *If you want material riches, invest in exploitation*.

Our primary task now — and this is my meta-narrative — is to finally unite as human family so we can leave behind all destructive dilemmas, promote global *human* security, rather than *military* security, and realise what I call the *blessings of the commons*.³⁴

In this situation, we are extremely fortunate that our grandparents have enshrined human rights ideals, because these ideals offer pathways to survival on Earth in dignity, pathways to unite as a human family of equally respecting and responsible members who face their life-threatening global challenges together. These ideals offer the compass needed in a situation where war means all-out destruction rather than victory, where the dominator mindset has overstayed its viability, where competition for domination over people and nature is infeasible, practically, psychologically, and ethically, where the only solution is global cooperation.

The concept of dignity can bring together all religions, all faiths, and all life-giving ideologies of this world into one overarching meta-narrative, as long as the concept of dignity is defined as mutual solidarity in the global village rather than as the autonomy of lone heroes competing for domination and control.³⁵ Many can resonate with my definition of religion as 'love, humility, and awe for a universe too large for us to fathom'.³⁶ A culture of dignity can bring together traditional male and female role descriptions and merge the courageous heroism that formerly was reserved for males with the care work that was formerly delegated to women, the conceptually female approaches that maintain social cohesion through applying complex, relational, multilateral, foresighted, integrative, and holistic strategies.

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We, the global community, have everything required to manifest what I call *egalisation* — short for equal dignity for all in solidarity and freedom — and to dignify globalisation so it becomes *glob-egalisation*. By adding global co-operation, we can arrive at *co-globegalisation* as the shortest summary for the new meta-narrative that I suggest can work.³⁹

Dignity humiliation is the ‘nuclear bomb of the emotions’



In a world that is interconnected, a world where human rights ideals have touched hearts and minds, the most significant obstacle to global cooperation is the sense of humiliation that arises from perceived dignity violations.

Let me explain. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights stipulates that ‘all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights’. On my global path, I am often astonished when I observe the tremendous strength of this promise despite being undermined and violated so frequently and ruthlessly. The promise seems to be a genie that, once unleashed, cannot be put back into the bottle anymore. It has force now. It induces hope and has become a foundational value far beyond mere legal concepts.

The reason for the strength of this promise, even in the face of the most callous betrayals, appears to be that it speaks to a deep human desire, the desire to rise from being pushed down, the desire to stand upright — an embodied longing, beyond language, beyond legal instruments. It is the simple and straightforward yearning to be respected as an equal fellow human being among fellow human beings.⁴⁰



The strength of this yearning is also the reason for why breaking the promise of equal dignity humiliates so much more than when honour is infringed. It is the reason for why the violation of dignity carries the potential to lead to so much stronger reactions than the violation of honour. Not enough, the promise of equal dignity has also democratised the right to resist and given it to everyone, and, more even, we also live in a world where technology is global now, so that a single

lone hacker who feels humiliated can terrorise entire countries.⁴¹ Would-be Hitlers can establish global dictatorial mafia-like structures with hitherto unseen ease.⁴² All these factors together have the power to fill the world with hot cycles of humiliation.

	Honour Humiliation	Dignity Humiliation
(1) Conquest humiliation: A strong power reduces the relative autonomy of rivals who were previously regarded as equals, and forces them into a position of long-term subordination. A new hierarchy is created, or a new upper tier is forced upon an existing hierarchical order.	X	–
(2) Relegation humiliation: An individual or group is forcefully pushed downward within an existing status hierarchy.	X	–
(3) Reinforcement humiliation: The less powerful are routinely abused in order to maintain their self-perception of inferiority.	X	–
(4) Exclusion humiliation: An individual or a group is forcefully ejected from society, for instance, through banishment, exile, or physical extermination.	X	X

Table 1: Four variants of humiliation

I thank sociologist Dennis Smith for developing this conceptualisation together with me in 1997

So, why is *dignity humiliation* so much more painful than *honour humiliation*? Let me explain. *Honour humiliation* can be categorised in four variants, see this Table.⁴³ A master can use *conquest humiliation* to subjugate formerly equal neighbours into a position of inferiority. When the hierarchy is in place, *reinforcement humiliation* keeps it in place, ranging from seating orders and bowing rules to brutal measures such as customary beatings or killings. *Relegation humiliation* is used to push an already low-ranking underling even further down, while *exclusion humiliation* means excluding victims altogether, exiling, or even killing them. This is the worst fate imaginable.

What we see is that with the adoption of human rights ideals, all four types of honour humiliation turn into the last one, namely, exclusion humiliation. All human rights violations immediately exile the victim from humanity, all acts of humiliation in human rights based contexts have the psychological impact of excluding the victim from humanity. Since being evicted from the human family altogether is the worst fate imaginable, this violation produces the most intense pain and suffering. It is a deeply hurtful experience to be deemed unworthy of being part of humanity, it assaults people at the core of their being. I call this type of humiliation *human rights humiliation* or *dignity humiliation*, or, more precisely, *equal dignity humiliation*.⁴⁴

Ideally, anger in response to dignity humiliation should give rise to what educator Paulo Freire called *conscientisation* and be invested in trust-building dialogue that fosters the partnership and mutuality model of society locally and globally.⁴⁵ Yet, the problem is that this may not happen. People who suffer dignity humiliation may revert to the retaliatory toolkit of honour humiliation, the toolkit of duel-like violence. Instead of healing dignity humiliation through dialogue, they may *cross back* to the path of honour and unleash violent revenge. Instead of becoming a Mandela or

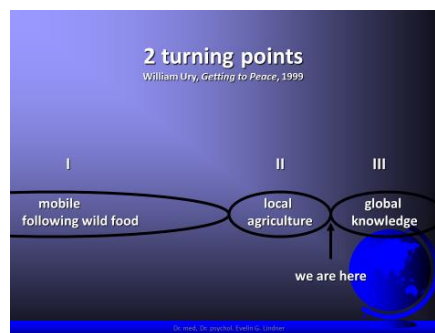
Gandhi, they may choose the Hitler path.

Human rights defenders need to be aware that the honour humiliation toolkit that was formerly reserved for aristocrats, the toolkit for revenge that grew out of honour humiliation, is still more familiar to many people than the toolkit of dialogue — after all, ranked honour was the norm during the past millennia in most societies. It is therefore easier for populist demagogues to mobilise people, particularly men, by promising them more firearms for new ‘victories’, than it is for a Gandhi or Mandela to mobilise people to engage in new arrangements of relationships.⁴⁶

In my work, I therefore avoid using the term *empowerment* and replace it with *entrustment*. Entrustment suggests a larger obligation, it suggests that liberation movements and uprisings need careful limits, that all should meet in the middle between up and down, between the top and the bottom of society, and together shoulder the responsibility for creating a better world in mutually dignifying and joint humility.⁴⁷

As feelings of dignity humiliation hurt deeper than those that flow from honour humiliation, they entail the potential to create the deepest of divisions, and this is why I describe dignity humiliation as the ‘nuclear bomb of the emotions’. *Clashes of civilisations* are harmless compared with *clashes of humiliation*. Clashes of humiliation can undermine our best chances for cooperation in a situation where mutual care and trust is needed more than ever — as now. Dynamics of humiliation, I fear, will become the strongest obstacle to a dignified future.

The four logics of the pie, the security dilemma, the future time horizon, and social identity



		The future time horizon		Social identity	
		Short	Long	Respect	Humiliation
The pie of resources	Fixed	(b)			(b, honour humiliation)
	Expandable		(a, c)	(a, c)	(c, dignity humiliation)
The security dilemma	Strong	(b)			(b, honour humiliation)
	Weak		(a, c)	(a, c)	(c, dignity humiliation)

Table 2: The human condition

This is the meta-narrative I developed in my first book in 2006. I suggested that there are *four basic logics* at the core of the human condition, logics that cover the entire history of *Homo sapiens* over the past three hundred thousand years, logics that draw on several academic disciplines and traditions and treat democracy, communism, capitalism, modernity, or post-modernity as epiphenomena. This table displays these four logics, namely, the *pie of resources*, the *security dilemma*, the *future time horizon*, and *social identity*.⁵⁰

The table also shows how these logics manifest throughout the three major eras of human existence that I have defined as, a) the era of *pristine pride*, b) the era of *honour*, and c) the era of *equal dignity*.

- The first logic addresses the question as to whether and to what extent the *pie of resources* is expandable (game theory is relevant here, as developed within the discipline of philosophy)
- The second logic concerns the *security dilemma* and whether it is weaker or stronger (using international relations theory, as developed in the field of political science)
- The third logic asks whether long-term or short-term future *time horizons* dominate (as described in many academic disciplines, among others, cross-cultural psychology, in the indigenous seven-generation sustainability rule)
- The fourth logic concerns the human capacity to tighten or loosen fault lines of *identification* (social identity theory, developed in social psychology)⁵¹

If we inscribe these four logics into the chronology of human history on planet Earth that I presented above, then human communities enjoyed an era of pristine pride when abundant expandable pies of resources were available (a). Then, when our species had completed what I call our first round of globalisation, around the time of the Neolithic Revolution, a dramatic shift occurred in a rather brief historical time span, abundant expandable pies of resources turned into fixed ones — circumscription — and the security dilemma and the commons dilemma became salient. Our forebears responded with a new ethos and emotional coinage, the era of honour began, which legitimised the vertical ranking of human worth into ‘higher’ and ‘lesser’ beings (b). Presently, we are participating in yet another radical shift, as significant as twelve thousand years ago, this time many aspire to an ethos and emotional coinage of equal dignity in freedom and solidarity (c).

The worst scenario combines a short future time horizon in a context where the pie of resources is fixed or even diminished, where a strong security dilemma reigns, where solidarity is not seen as being part of equal dignity in freedom and individuals and groups and are exposed to humiliating treatment and retaliate with counter-humiliation. Unfortunately, the world we live in now, seems to

veer into this direction.⁵²

The most benign scenario, the one I work for, is a global knowledge society that treats knowledge as an expandable pie everyone has access to, at the same time mindful of the finitude of the pie of ecological resources, a global knowledge society that invites everyone into one single global in-group where systems and practices of humiliation no longer have legitimacy. It is our fragile journey towards a hoped-for future where we transcend the security dilemma through global trust building in an atmosphere of respect for the diversity of all in equal dignity, where we draw appropriate lessons from long past time horizons for the sake of long future time horizons for us all to become the norm, for time horizons that reach even beyond seven generations, where we protect and replenish the planet as humanity's commons.

Clearly, this narrative is highly simplified, it follows sociologist Max Weber's *ideal-type* approach. The chronology of human history obviously is not as clear-cut as described here and we see expressions of all three 'eras' concurrently in present day's world — for instance, uncontacted tribes (a) live in the Amazonian Rainforest in a national context where the dominator model of society is presently resuscitated (b). It is entirely possible that humankind will travel backwards again in the future, that we will fail to continue our journey towards more dialogical partnership in the world, that the human rights revolution will join all other unfinished revolutions. Indeed, this seems to be the case at the moment in our world of worn-down commons and full of humiliating experiences, where grand authoritarian narratives offer dangerous relief through denying facticity.

Still, this model of the human condition can help us analyse social change over long time stretches and in different world regions, as well as aid future strategy planning. It offers us an overarching meta-narrative for a dignified course into the future in times of deadly crisis in that it highlights the promise entailed in our historical transition towards ideals of equal dignity in solidarity and informs of the dangers and pitfalls to be avoided. It offers the important warning that the destructive nature of the dynamics of humiliation becomes more salient the more the other parameters veer to the benign side,⁵³ it warns that even the most benign scenario is vulnerable to turning malign when feelings of humiliation are allowed to grow, as their consequences can become so significant that they override and undermine otherwise benign trends.⁵⁴

The model has many advantages. It can relieve from despair and hatred because it opens space for compassion with our challenged species, *Homo sapiens*. Throughout the past millennia, many among us were extremely proud of the human ability to dominate and control, unaware that this strategy was sub-optimal, at best, and may bring us all down in the end. The model opens space for the human capability for love and courage to come to the fore in a situation where humanity is either in hospital or already in hospice. If we give it our all, if we hold hands in loving mutual support, we can co-create a future where the best sides of human nature can flourish in equal dignity. If it is too late and we are in hospice, we can at least go down in dignity together.

Outlook — What must we do



How can we regain our blue and green planet?



Anthropologist Margaret Mead is often quoted as saying, ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has’.

Together with Linda Hartling, you see her in the middle of the picture, and a dedicated core group of scholars, educators, and practitioners, I have the honour of nurturing a global collaborative fellowship of people who wish to walk the talk of dignity. I do this work since the idea for it was born in 2001.⁵⁵

Our dignity fellowship has around 1,000 invited members and around 8,000 people on our address list. You can look at www.humiliationstudies.org to meet the members of our global advisory board, global core team, global research team, and global education team. We have a very long time horizon for our work, we think of our dignity community as a seed for a future dignity family to flourish globally also in the far future.

Can we imagine a world without borders and without military forces, only with rule-of-law institutions that keep individual dominators from undermining the global commons? Can we imagine a world of shared global commons, of global unity in diversity, collectively protected and replenished? Can we imagine globally inclusive cooperation, rather than cooperation only sought for the sake of ever more effective domination over ‘enemies’? Could we make such a world work?

The answer is a resounding yes. Thus is the state of the world today: Few people take in that our species, *Homo sapiens*, lives in a historical moment that is unparalleled not just in terms of crisis but also of opportunity. History is not a predetermined process with humans as helpless victims, particularly not now. For the first time in our history, we, humankind, are in a position to succeed in bringing about the adaptations that are long overdue, basically since millennia.

Our ancestors could not see pictures of our Blue Marble from the perspective of an astronaut.⁵⁶ For the first time in our history, we, as humankind, can fully appreciate our place in the cosmos. Unlike our forebears, we have the privilege of experiencing the *overview effect* with respect to our

planet⁵⁷ — we can see it from outside — an effect that helps us understand that we humans are *one* species living on *one* tiny planet. We can embrace *biophilia*,⁵⁸ we can feel ‘the ecology of the living’ taking place within *one* circumscribed *biopoetic* space that is shared between all beings.⁵⁹ We have access to a much more comprehensive knowledge base about the universe and our place in it than our grandparents ever had. Finally, we have the good news from research that human nature is neither ‘good’ nor ‘evil’ but social,⁶⁰ and that much of human action depends on the ways constitutive rules frame relational contexts — in other words, cooperation in solidarity in the world can be nurtured systemically, through building appropriate societal frames.⁶¹

I suggest we sit together and find out whether the existing *regulatory* rules can be sufficiently tweaked⁶² and, if not, create new *constitutive* rules of engagement⁶³ for our modern *world-system*.⁶⁴

In times of crisis, as in ours, the choice between pessimism and optimism is not an option, ‘pessimism is a luxury one can only afford in easy times’.⁶⁵ Dignifying efforts cannot depend on any calculation of whether making an effort is worth it or not — future is not like a business partner to make deals with — we simply have to make the effort no matter what. Furthermore, what do we mean by hope? If we stand in front of deadly crisis, like now, a potentially hopeless situation, and we meekly hope for miracles to happen so we do not have to act — if hope means waiting for miracles from heaven or from other people — there will be no hope. Likewise, if we wait for hope to somehow befall us and motivate us to act, there will be no hope. Hope depends on our action, on our courage to create hope against hope, to imagine new ways of arranging of our affairs on this planet, we are the authors of hope not its recipients, hope is the outcome, not the beginning. Only if we give it our all straightaway, without hesitation, there will be hope. Wringing our hands just slows us down from pushing up our sleeves. People in a lifeboat drown if they lose time on waiting for hope. Again, what do we mean by hope? The strong might hope to survive by throwing the weak overboard, for example. Human Titanic might go down and those on the luxury top floor might hope to survive by monopolising the lifeboats and letting the rest perish. Is that what we mean by hope? Rather than losing time and energy on calculating odds and waiting for hope — let us give our all to make sure that, even if we go down, we go down together in love and dignity. We cannot know the future, we are surrounded by symptoms and predictions and we will know which symptoms are significant and which prophecies are true only after what has been predicted has happened: *post res perditas*.

The outcome is in our hands. If we wait that others should save us, if we engage in apathy or selfish carelessness, there will be undignified survival for a few, at best, together with undignified demise for the rest. If we give it our all, if we embrace appropriate levels of fear and invest this fear into hope against hope, then we will succeed with the dignified survival of all, together, or, if unavoidable, at least, we will at least go down in dignity together.

Dignism

Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the most important authors of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. After the atrocities of the Second World War, the goal was ‘never again’. This is also my life mission. When Rachel Carson published her book *Silent spring* in 1962, many were full of hope for a substantial turnaround.⁶⁶ ‘Earthrise’ was the high spirit in the 1960s. Yet, it transmuted into ‘profit versus planet’ around 1970–1987, then environmentalism turned into ‘sustainability’ around 1987–1997, and finally into ‘market environmentalism’ from 1998 to 2018. In 2019 came Greta Thunberg, and now, in 2020, the Covid-19 virus. What comes next?

As I hail from a displaced family who has been deeply affected by the two world wars of the last century, I am particularly aware of the vulnerabilities of our human arrangements on this planet. All my life, I have been preparing for the next ‘Eleanor Roosevelt moment’ like in 1948, waiting for a new window of opportunity to open for dignity to regain the attention it deserves. Together with Linda Hartling and other close collaborators, I am helping to nurture a moment like this through our dignity work to come, ready to be among its co-authors if needed, ready to contribute with our approach of loving dignity.



- Ca. 300,000 years ago, our forebears enjoyed a win-win situation of seemingly infinite abundance
- 12,000 years ago, this changed into a win-lose situation, our ancestors adapted with developing strategies of competition for domination, with the security dilemma as outcome
- 1757/1948 we see *egalisation* and the emergence of *dignity humiliation*
- 1967/72 we can for the first time see our planet from outside, a foundational shift in perspective
- 1980 we start to overuse our resources
- 1991 marks the end of the Cold War and an opportunity to unite in *one world*
- 2007/8 we see the collapse of the blind belief in 'the wisdom of the market'
- Now: the generation alive now carries more responsibility than any other generation before, the responsibility to co-create new ways of arranging our affairs on planet Earth, without systemic humiliation, to co-create the next form of civilisation, to learn how to co-operate with our own evolution, how to manifest what Gandhi called *satyāgraha*

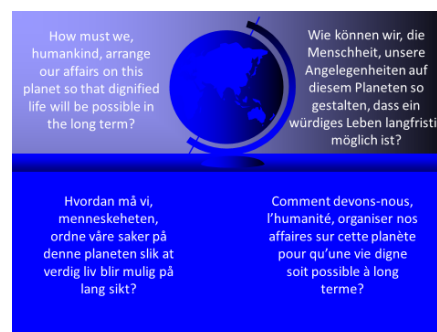


The Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations General Assembly for 2030 are a worthy start, yet, only if Goal 8 is seriously reconfigured. It shows an exponential economic growth curve, a curve that represents an impossibility in a finite context.⁶⁷ Goal 8 has the potential to undermine all other goals as it 'lumps together important need-related goals — participation in work and acceptable conditions in work — with economic growth, a questionable means to achieving these goals', says scholar of human needs Ian Gough.⁶⁸ 'The UN's sustainable development goals... are clearly not going to be met without drastic recalibration', warns also Philip Alston, outgoing UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, as 'the SDG framework places immense and mistaken faith in growth and the private sector'.⁶⁹ This is also my conclusion from my global experience.



For me, dignity is a mandate, the duty to transform the world. I have coined the term *dignism* (dignity + ism).⁷⁰ The aim is to point at the positive goals of *co-globegalisation*. This is how I describe dignism:

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. It is a world, where the carrying capacity of the planet guides the ways in which everyone's basic needs are met. It is a world, where we unite in respecting human dignity and celebrating diversity, where we prevent unity from devolving into oppressive uniformity and keep diversity from sliding into hostile division.



As the world watches the heart-breaking coronavirus pandemic unfold, our hope is for an exponential change of heart so that global unity rooted in respect for local diversity becomes possible. The central question we face, as humanity, which we must ask and answer together, remains:

How must we, humankind, arrange our affairs on this planet so that dignified life will be possible in the long term?

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Notes

¹ This paragraph is paraphrased from my book *Making enemies: Humiliation and international conflict*, Lindner, 2006, pp. 163–164.

² See Riane Eisler, 1987. Her most recent books are Eisler, 2007, and Eisler and Fry, 2019. It is a privilege to have Riane Eisler as an esteemed member in the global advisory board of our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship.

³ Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus and Reeve, 2004. Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, commonly referred to simply as Vegetius, was a writer of the Later Roman Empire in late 4th century CE.

⁴ When people are in danger, adrenaline rushes into their blood stream and the maintenance tasks of the body are put on wait. For a short while, this is tolerable. However, under conditions of continuous strain, of never-ending states of emergency, when essential maintenance is neglected for too long, the body breaks down. Heart attack — the typical emergency troubleshooter disease — is the outcome.

⁵ See, among others, *The youth have seen enough*, by Rex Weyler, Greenpeace, 4th January 2019, www.greenpeace.org/international/story/20260/the-youth-have-seen-enough/.

⁶ See Higgins, 2016.

⁷ 'Sociocide is the intended wounding-killing of a society by eliminating the prerequisites for a live, vibrant, dynamic society', writes peace researcher Johan Galtung, in 'Sociocide, Palestine and Israel', *TRANSCEND Media Service*, 8th October 2012, www.transcend.org/tms/2012/10/sociocide-palestine-and-israel/, italics in original:

Sociocide, the killing of a society's capacity to survive and to reproduce itself, should become equally and prominently a crime against humanity. A society is a self-reproducing social system. So are human

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beings, with our basic needs for survival, wellness, identity, freedom. Society is also an organism, with a lifespan far beyond that of individuals. For humans to survive as humans, their basic needs have to be met. For that to happen the society has to survive. For the society to survive the basic social *prerequisites* must be met:

- for *security*, against violence, killing, wounding the members
- for *economic sustainability*, against their starvation, illness
- for *identity* culturally, a meaning with life, against alienation
- for *autonomy* politically, to be a master of their own house.

As society unfolds, so do humans, and vice versa. Life breeds life.

This also holds for nomadic societies based on hunter-gatherers. Monasteries are incapable of self-reproduction biologically when based on one gender, but are highly viable societies based on recruitment. Under modernity, identity is carried by the *nation*, with four characteristics: an *idiom*, a *religion-worldview*, a *history* — of the past, present and future — and *geographical attachment*. *Time*, *space*, with the means to communicate and something to believe is crucial.

Under modernity the state is the key executor of all the above.

Sociocide is the intended wounding-killing of a society by eliminating the prerequisites for a live, vibrant, dynamic society.

Sociocide molests the human members. In the longer run, lethally. *Sociocide* is what Western, and not only Western, colonialism has done for centuries, denying others their autonomy, imposing their own identity — language and worldview — moving others out of their own historical dialectic and into history as Western periphery, denying them the land they are attached to with their hearts and minds. And their bodies for security and sustenance, for food, water, health.

See also Cormann, 2015.

⁸ ‘Britain appoints minister for loneliness amid growing isolation’, by Lee Mannion, *Reuters*, 17th January 2018, www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-politics-health/britain-appoints-minister-for-loneliness-amid-growing-isolation-idUSKBN1F61I6. See also *PM commits to government-wide drive to tackle loneliness. Theresa May will host a reception and set out the government’s plans to tackle loneliness*, press release, Prime Minister’s Office, 10 Downing Street, Office for Civil Society, and The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, 17th January 2018, www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-commits-to-government-wide-drive-to-tackle-loneliness.

⁹ See ‘The vengeance of history: Thirty years of foreseeable retrogression’, by Hall Gardner, *Wall Street International Magazine*, 18th December 2018, <https://wsimag.com/economy-and-politics/46316-the-vengeance-of-history>. Hall Gardner is professor and chair of the ICP Department at the American University of Paris, and author of *World war Trump: The risks of America’s new nationalism*, Gardner, 2018.

¹⁰ I very much thank the President of the Club of Rome from 1999 to 2007, Prince El Hassan bin Talal, for his personal message on 19th May 2020, where he suggested to me the term *cogitocide*. He shares his Opening Address to the 2004 Annual Conference of the Club of Rome ‘On limits to ignorance: The challenge of informed humanity’, 11th–12th October 2004, Helsinki, where he suggests the term *cogitosphere*. His address was titled *The challenge of informed humanity: From ‘infosphere’ to ‘cogitosphere’*. He calls on the Club of Rome to elevate the ‘Cogitosphere’, or the realm of thinking and reflection, ‘above that of the Infosphere in order to avoid sightless vision and to focus our deliberative process on the real challenges facing informed humanity’.

¹¹ *Cogito, ergo sum* is a well-known philosophical proposition by philosopher René Descartes, meaning ‘I think, therefore I am’. *Cogito, ergo sum* originally appeared in French as *je pense, donc je suis* in 1637, in Descartes’ oeuvre *Discours de la méthode*. Descartes intended to say *dubito, ergo cogito, ergo sum*, or ‘I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am’.

¹² *The challenge of informed humanity: From ‘infosphere’ to ‘cogitosphere’*, Prince El Hassan bin Talal’s Opening Address to the 2004 Annual Conference of the Club of Rome ‘On limits to ignorance: The challenge of informed humanity’, 11th–12th October 2004, Helsinki.

¹³ Bin Talal refers to cultural theorist Paul Virilio, 1977/2006, originator of the concept of *dromology*, ‘the science of speed’, where he points at the media-driven acceleration that results in an infosphere that diminishes and engulfs the political subject — the accountable leader as much as the participatory citizen and the deliberative process itself. The outcome is what bin Talal calls *infoterror* and *infowar*, and what Virilio describes as the ‘aesthetics of disappearance’.

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¹⁴ The exact phrase *fog of war* can be found in a 1896 text by Prussian military analyst Carl von Clausewitz, describing the state of ignorance of military commanders regarding the strength and position of both enemy and friend. See also ‘kill them all; let God sort them out’, in Latin *Caedite eos. Novit enim Dominus qui sunt eius*, a phrase reportedly spoken in 1209 by the commander prior to a massacre. See Wallace, 2018, for an application of this phrase on present-day problems, p. 1:

emergence of the AI revolution from games of Chess and Go into the real world will fatally encounter the central matters of the Clausewitz analysis of Zweikampf warfare. Promises of graceful degradation under stress for large numbers of driverless vehicles on intelligent roads, of precision targeting that avoids civilian collateral damage for autonomous or so-called man/machine centaur weapons, of precision medicine under even normal living condition, let alone during the current slow disaster; of climate change and social decay, of the ability to manage financial crises in real time with agent-based models, and so on, are delusive groupthink or marketing hype that will be beta-tested on human populations, a gross contravention of fundamental moral and legal norms.

Note also *scobel: Ethik der Algorithmen*, by Gert Scobel, 3sat, 23rd May 2018, www.3sat.de/page/?source=scobel/197051/index.html. 3sat is a public and advertising-free television network in Central Europe.

¹⁵ See Gert Scobel in *scobel: scobel — Ethik fürs Digitale*, by Gert Scobel, 3sat, 3rd September 2020, www.3sat.de/wissen/scobel/scobel---ethik-fuers-digitale-102.html. 3sat is a public and advertising-free television network in Central Europe. See also ‘Mensch über Maschine: Warum künstliche Intelligenz nie mächtiger werden darf als wir’, by Imre Grimm, *Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland*, 26th September 2020, www.rnd.de/digital/mensch-uber-maschine-warum-kunstliche-intelligenz-nie-machtiger-werden-darf-als-wir-AZOSR3BV6ZDPNIS5S5OI3YAJME.html, where the author recommends the book *Prinzip Mensch* by Nemitz and Pfeffer, 2020, as ‘a profound component in the growing debate about data ethics. It is a fact-rich, anger-free and well-founded pamphlet that will not be welcome reading in Silicon Valley, where the billionaires’ delusions of God have merged with the hippiesque promises of salvation of the Californian can-do spirit. Where politics, laws and social discourse are only seen as regional brake blocks on the way to a digital utopia’. Translated by Lindner from the German original:

Prinzip Mensch ist ein profunder Baustein in der anschwellenden Debatte über Datenethik. Es ist eine faktenreiche, zornfreie und fundierte Streitschrift, die man nicht gern lesen wird im Silicon Valley, wo der Gotteswahn der Milliardäre mit den hippiesken Heilsversprechen des kalifornischen Can-do-Spirit verschmolzen ist. Wo Politik, Gesetze und gesellschaftlicher Diskurs nur als regionale Bremsklötze auf dem Weg in ein digitales Utopia gelten.

See, furthermore, the notion of *cogitocide*. I very much thank the President of the Club of Rome from 1999 to 2007, Prince El Hassan bin Talal, for his personal message on 19th May 2020, where he suggested to me this term.

¹⁶ See Torres, 2018. See also ‘Who wants to destroy the world? More people than you might expect — and new technologies might give them the power to do it’, by Phil Torres, *Medium*, 25th October 2019, <https://onezero.medium.com/who-wants-to-destroy-the-world-e7571c66397>:

bioengineering is ‘the specific technology for doing the job right of annihilating humanity — and it’s something that could be done by just one person with the necessary expertise and access to the necessary equipment’.

¹⁷ The 2018 United Nations Climate Change Conference was the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24), also known as the Katowice Climate Change Conference. It was held between 2nd and 15th December 2018 in Katowice, Poland. See the transcript of the speech by Sir David Attenborough on 3rd December 2018, at https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/The%20People%27s%20Address%202021.11.18_FINAL.pdf. See also Attenborough, 2020, and his 2020 documentary film *A life on our planet* at <https://attenboroughfilm.com>. See his interview on PBS News Hour, 6th October 2020, www.pbs.org/video/october-6-2020-pbs-newshour-full-episode-1601956801/.

¹⁸ See the biography of Thomas Berry at <http://thomasberry.org/life-and-thought/thomas-berry-a-biography-columbia-2019>.

¹⁹ Richards, 2014:

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So we have a problem: Nothing authorises us to believe that humanity today is so different from humanity in the past that today we can get our act together and work in concert to solve our problems without sharing a metanarrative that tells us who we are and what our role is in the great scheme of things. But liberal economics is a toxic brew. It shreds community more than it builds it. It smothers diversity and imposes the crudest and most violent forms of cognitive injustice. Its growth imperative and its systematic demand to create conditions for capital accumulation and ever more capital accumulation are killing the biosphere very rapidly, so rapidly that if we think in a perspective of geological time the end of life on this planet is the equivalent of only a few seconds away.

Sometimes we seem to face a cruel choice: either no metanarrative or a toxic metanarrative. Either civil wars between mutually incompatible ethnic fundamentalisms which in principle can share no common ground, or else a secular state imposing certain death by liberal economics on one and all.

...

My second simple question is: 'Where are we going?' The beginning of a simple answer is: 'We are going to a green future'. The simple reason why we are going to a green future is that we cannot possibly go to any other future. Failing to maintain the delicate equilibriums of the biosphere is not an option. Human cultures whose constitutive rules and basic norms are incompatible with the laws of physics, the laws of chemistry, and the facts of biology are not sustainable.

See also work done in Germany on the balance between facticity and 'narrativity', and how the coronavirus pandemic showcases how dangerous it is when narrativity not only crowds out facticity but treats it as an enemy. See, for instance, Friedman and Welzer, 2020.

²⁰ See also www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin.php. See more in Lindner, 2019a, or Lindner, 2020a.

²¹ As to the topic of human nature, see the book proposal titled *If we continue to believe in the evilness of human nature, we may be doomed*, Lindner, 2019b:

I suspect that the survival of humankind on planet Earth may depend on how the story of human nature is narrated... I consider the topic of human nature, with all its intriguing aspects, to be perhaps the most important topic for humankind.

See also Lindner, 2017, chapter 3: Also human nature and cultural diversity fell prey to the security dilemma, in the book *Honor, humiliation, and terror*.

A vast body of literature is available. See, for instance, the work of primatologist and ethologist Frans de Waal, 2009, who disagrees with the proverb *Homo homini lupus est* (man is wolf to man) by saying that it both fails to do justice to canids and denies the inherently social nature of our own species. See also the work of anthropologists William Ury and Robert Carneiro, as well as of world-systems scholar Christopher Chase-Dunn, discussed in chapter 9 of Lindner, 2021.

²² Lindner, 2020a.

²³ In my work, I apply the *ideal-type* approach as described by sociologist Max Weber, 1904/1949. See Coser, 1977, p. 224:

Weber's three kinds of ideal types are distinguished by their levels of abstraction. First are the ideal types rooted in historical particularities, such as the 'western city', 'the Protestant Ethic', or 'modern capitalism', which refer to phenomena that appear only in specific historical periods and in particular cultural areas. A second kind involves abstract elements of social reality — such concepts as 'bureaucracy' or 'feudalism' — that may be found in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. Finally, there is a third kind of ideal type, which Raymond Aron calls 'rationalising reconstructions of a particular kind of behaviour'. According to Weber, all propositions in economic theory, for example, fall into this category. They all refer to the ways in which men would behave were they actuated by purely economic motives, were they purely economic men.

Michael Karlberg explains how analytical constructs never correspond perfectly with some presumably objective reality. See Karlberg, 2013, p. 9:

Care must be taken, therefore, not to reify these frames or over-extend the metaphors that inform them. These frames can, however, serve as useful heuristic devices for organising certain forms of inquiry and guiding certain forms of practice — such as inquiry into the meaning of human dignity and the application of this concept in fields such as human rights and conflict resolution.

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I very much appreciate Louise Sundararajan's comments on the book *The nature and challenges of indigenous psychologies* by Carl Martin Allwood, 2018, that she shared with her indigenous psychology task force on 3rd September 2018, based on her book chapter 'Indigenous psychologies', Sundararajan, et al., 2017. Sundararajan explains how to avoid that abstractions slide towards essentialism. In her view 'essentialism is abstraction mistaken as reality', as it is in the case of 'nation' or 'identity', 'whereas scientific theorising is abstraction treated as abstraction'. As an example she offers the model airplane, which nobody would mistake for reality, since it one can't fly in it. Also the pure form of the model does not lead to essentialism, 'because of the basic understanding that no reality exists in pure forms'. I appreciate her next example, namely that of 'dirt' and she illustrates it by two approaches to reality (X):

A: X=dirt, elements, crystals, subatomic particles

B: X=dirt (elements, crystals, subatomic particles)

Sundararajan explains that in scientific investigations, as represented by A, 'abstraction is context dependent, each level of analysis generates its own abstraction such that there are multiple abstractions (dirt, elements, crystals, subatomic particles)', none of which has a higher status of 'essence' than the other. Essentialism is represented by B, where 'the term closest to the phenomenal world (dirt) is elevated to the status of reality, the essence of which is supposed to be captured by the more abstract terms'. Sundararajan then applies the example of dirt to notions such as culture, nation, and population. If one takes the approach of B, nation or population names reality, 'the essence of which is captured by abstractions'. By contrast, in A, 'abstractions are not inextricably yoked to serve the master script of nation or population which are treated as labels of convenience like any other'.

²⁴ Maureen O'Hara in a personal communication to the Indigenous Psychology Task Force led by I Louise Sundararajan, 27th November 2019.

²⁵ Hartling, 1996, and Hartling and Luchetta, 1999.

²⁶ *The psychology of humiliation: Somalia, Rwanda / Burundi, and Hitler's Germany* was my doctoral dissertation in social psychology at the Department of Psychology of the University of Oslo, Norway, in 2000. *Quality of life: A German-Egyptian comparative study* (in German) was my doctoral dissertation in psychological medicine at the University of Hamburg, Germany, in 1993. *Honor, humiliation, and terror: An explosive mix — and how we can defuse it with dignity*, was my fifth book, and it came out in 2017 in Dignity Press, in its imprint World Dignity University Press, with a foreword by Linda Hartling, director of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies. Please see more chapters and papers in full text on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php.

²⁷ *Making enemies: Humiliation and international conflict* was my first book on dignity and humiliation and how we may envision a more dignified world, characterised as a path-breaking book and honoured as 'Outstanding Academic Title' for 2007 in the USA by the journal *Choice*. Please see more details on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/01.php. *Emotion and conflict: How human rights can dignify emotion and help us wage good conflict* was my second book. See www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/02.php.

²⁸ *Gender, humiliation, and global security* was my third book, published by Praeger in 2010. Archbishop Desmond Tutu kindly contributed with a foreword (asked for a prepublication endorsement, he kindly offered to contribute with a foreword). The book was 'highly recommended' by *Choice* in July 2010. For more details, see www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/03.php.

²⁹ *A dignity economy: Creating an economy that serves human dignity and preserves our planet* was my fourth book, and it is the first publication of Dignity Press, published in 2012 in its imprint World Dignity University Press. See www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/book/04.php.

³⁰ See, among others, psychologist Jean Twenge, 2017, and her book *iGen: Why today's super-connected kids are growing up less rebellious, more tolerant, less happy — And completely unprepared for adulthood — And what this means for the rest of us*. She presents the results of four large national datasets on the mental health of teenagers and college students; baby boomers, Gen-X, and the millennials are all markedly different from iGen, the generation born after roughly 1994, where the rates of anxiety, depression, loneliness, and suicide spike upward. Twenge suggests that social media had a detrimental effect on the nature of social interactions in iGen. See also Curran and Hill, 2017, and Collishaw, et al., 2012.

³¹ See Fuller, 2003, and Fuller and Gerloff, 2008. In a human rights context that stipulates that all human beings ought to be treated as equal in dignity and rights, hurtful psychological dynamics of humiliation are

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set in motion when *rankism* is practiced, when, for instance, ‘women’ are regarded as a lowly category, or ‘children’, ‘the elderly’, ‘foreigners’, and so forth. It is a privilege to have Robert Fuller as an esteemed member in the global advisory board of our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship.

³² I thank Øystein Gullvåg Holter for discussing with me the problem with *equal dignity* (*likeverd*) and *gender equality* (*likestilling*), and how the notion of equal dignity can be abused to undermine gender equality with the argument that inequality is nothing but freely chosen diversity. See the 2nd International Conference on Democracy as Idea and Practice at the University of Oslo, 13–14th January 2011, with Workshop 5. Democracy, Gender and Dignity in a Global Perspective together with Holter. See www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin/pics11.php#demokrati, and www.stk.uio.no/om/historie/bulletine/2011-1/Bulletine-01-2011.pdf.

³³ Hardin, 2007.

³⁴ See also Bollier and Helfrich, 2018, *Free, fair, and alive: The insurgent power of the commons*.

³⁵ See also Lindner, 2020b.

³⁶ See Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010. I resonate with affect theology and its focus on studying the heart of faith, tracking how human emotions become religious feelings. See <http://revthandeka.org/affect-theology-thandeka.html>:

The spiritual foundation of liberal faith, after all, is not a set of doctrinal claims or creeds or religious beliefs or ideas. Liberal faith begins with transformed and uplifted feelings that exalt the human soul and let us love beyond belief, come what may. I use affect theology’s core principle of love beyond belief when I work with congregations. The goal: to transform ‘corps cold’ churches (as Ralph Waldo Emerson put it) into sanctuaries that warm and elevate the human heart and inspire folks to stand strong on the side of love.

See also Schneider, 2017. See, furthermore, philosopher Alan Wilson Watts (1915–1973) and his 1971 reflections in *Alan Watts: A conversation with myself*, in four parts, beginning with <https://youtu.be/8aufuwMiKmE>.

Read also author Andreas Weber, 2016, who develops a creative ecology of the living — a *biopoetics*. And remember American writer Henry David Thoreau, 1854, who built himself a small cabin in a quiet, idyllic location among the pine trees on the shores of Walden Pond, Massachusetts, in 1845, when he was in his late twenties. He wanted to live in communion with nature, without the support of machines and modern civilisation. I thank Kamran Mofid for reminding me. See ‘Why a simple life matters: The path to peace and happiness lies in the simple things in life’, by Kamran Mofid, *Globalisation for the Common Good Initiative (GCGI)*, 7th August 2015, www.gcgi.info/index.php/blog/713-why-a-simple-life-matters-the-path-to-peace-and-happiness-lies-in-the-simple-things-in-life.

³⁷ See also Lindner, 2020b.

³⁸ See Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010. I resonate with affect theology and its focus on studying the heart of faith, tracking how human emotions become religious feelings. See <http://revthandeka.org/affect-theology-thandeka.html>:

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(GCGI), 7th August 2015, www.gcgi.info/index.php/blog/713-why-a-simple-life-matters-the-path-to-peace-and-happiness-lies-in-the-simple-things-in-life.

³⁹ Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, pp. 149–153.

⁴⁰ Primatologist and ethologist Frans de Waal has studied the phenomenon of *inequity aversion*, proposing that it arose in humans and other species to make cooperation possible through reinforcing social contracts founded on fairness. If the social contract is broken, the unfairness elicits a strong sense of disgust, leading to the punishment of the violator. See Brosnan and de Waal, 2014. Frans de Waal, 2009, disagrees with the proverb *Homo homini lupus est* ('man is wolf to man') by saying that it both fails to do justice to canids and denies the inherently social nature of our own species. I highly appreciated meeting Frans de Waal on 11th April 2011, and listening to his talk Empathy and emotional communication: Primate origins, at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. See more in chapter 3 of my 2017 book *Honor, humiliation, and terror*.

⁴¹ See, among others, 'Life with A.I.: Elon Musk: "Mark my words — A.I. is far more dangerous than nukes"', by Catherine Clifford, *Consumer News and Business Channel (CNBC)*, 13th March 2018, www.cnbc.com/2018/03/13/elon-musk-at-sxsw-a-i-is-more-dangerous-than-nuclear-weapons.html. CNBC is an American basic cable, internet and satellite business news television channel. Elon Musk is most known for being co-founder, CEO, and product architect of Tesla, Inc. CNBC is an American basic cable, internet and satellite business news television channel.

⁴² See, for instance, 'Corruption and tax-dodging "rampant", urgent reforms needed: UN panel', *United Nations News*, 24th September 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/09/1073442>.

⁴³ Lindner, 2006, pp. 28–29. This table is adapted from Dennis Smith, 2001, p. 543. I thank Dennis Smith for coining the words conquest/relegation/reinforcement/inclusion humiliation. It is a privilege to have Dennis Smith as an esteemed member in the global advisory board of our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship.

⁴⁴ See, among others, Lindner, 2015–2018. Many may remember the work of ethologist Konrad Lorenz, 1963/1966, who, in his book *On aggression*, describes inter-group aggression as being different from intra-group aggression. Among individual animals, fights for rank are seldom fatal, while, by contrast, groups of animals might fight to the death among each other, willing to kill or be killed in defence of their community. Consider also Larry Brendtro, et al., 2009, who point out that saying 'you no longer belong to our group' amounts to the ultimate form of punishment, namely, social death. I thank Mechthild Nagel, for making me aware of Brendtro's work.

⁴⁵ See Freire, 1968/1970, 1968/1973, and Morais, 1979, 1983. See Andersson and Richards, 2013, chapter IV, p. 15, of the unpublished manuscript:

De Morais, in contradistinction to Freire, sets forward not two but three levels of awareness. He adds to Freire's two, which are: the naïve level and the critical level. The third is the organisational level of awareness. At the naïve level a person is aware of problems but is unable to understand their cause (and so may blame God or the Fates). The critically conscious person is able to identify the factors responsible for problems, and their inter-relationship. Organisational awareness is reached when the person has the ability to act together with others to address a problem or attain particular results. Organisational awareness manifests what de Morais calls a 'methodological rationality'.

It was a great inspiration for me to learn about the work of Iván Labra based on Clodomir Santos de Morais' concepts in Howard Richards' Dialogue Home and Centro para el Desarrollo Alternativo en Limache, Chile, on 26th April 2012. See *Iván Labra and the organisation workshop* at <http://youtu.be/SaxNvVBDfks>, and *Iván Labra: Consciousness is in the act* at <http://youtu.be/Vn05XK8McEM>. See also note 103 in chapter 2 in Lindner, 2021.

⁴⁶ When firearms are a symbol of freedom for 'heroes', it is easy to overlook that firearms at home endanger one's loved ones more than they are protective. See Kivisto, et al., 2019.

⁴⁷ Steve Kulich, professor of intercultural communications at Shanghai International Studies University, said at the Second International Conference on Multicultural Discourses in Hangzhou, 13–15th April 2007: 'First I have empowered my students. Then they became nasty people. Today, I no longer use the word empowerment. I use *entrustment*'. See also Lindner, 2007. Note also the very negative associations with the word empowerment or *Ermächtigung* in German language. The German word *Ermächtigungsgesetz* usually refers to the Enabling Act of 1933, a cornerstone of Adolf Hitler's seizure of power.

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⁴⁸ Ury, 1999, p. 108. It is a privilege to have William Ury as an esteemed member in the global advisory board of our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies fellowship.

⁴⁹ I shared my adaptation of Ury's categorisation, for instance, in my book *Making enemies: Humiliation and international conflict*, Lindner, 2006, p. 26.

⁵⁰ Adapted from Lindner, 2000, p. 439. See also Lindner, 2006, p. 48.

⁵¹ Lindner, 2006, p. 45. Tajfel and Turner, 1979.

⁵² Lindner, 2006, p. 47. See also ““Global trust” declining, “our world needs stepped-up global leadership””, *United Nations News*, 28th November 2018, www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2018/11/global-trust-declining-our-world-needs-stepped-up-global-leadership/: ‘On the eve of the G20 international forum in Argentina, and ahead of next week’s COP24 climate conference in Katowice, Poland, UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for global leadership to be stepped up, “at a time of declining global trust”’.

⁵³ Lindner, 2006, p. 45, and Lindner, 2000, p. 439.

⁵⁴ See also ‘Who can win America’s politics of humiliation? Trump or Biden?’ by Thomas L. Friedman, *New York Times*, 8th September 2020, www.nytimes.com/2020/09/08/opinion/biden-trump-humiliation.html, where Thomas Friedman quotes his friend political philosopher Michael Sandel, 2020, as saying, ‘Resentment borne of humiliation is the most potent political sentiment of all’.

⁵⁵ We call our global network Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies. See www.humiliationstudies.org. See the doctoral dissertation on humiliation by Linda Hartling, 1996, and, among many other joint publications, see Hartling and Lindner, 2018.

⁵⁶ *Space exploration — A powerful symbol of global cooperation*, Jim Zimmerman, NASA, interviewed by Susan T. Coleman, The Peacebuilding Podcast, 13th December 2016, <http://us11.campaign-archive1.com/?u=e5c2110f5cc4fe346c79bf3d1&id=06298a46ca&e=e7c4dd8362>. I thank Judit Révész for making me aware of this interview.

⁵⁷ White, 2014.

⁵⁸ Anderson, 2016.

⁵⁹ Author Andreas Weber, 2016, develops a creative ecology of the living — a *biopoetics*. This is the book description:

Meaning, feeling and expression — the experience of inwardness — matter most in human existence. The perspective of biopoetics shows that this experience is shared by all organisms. Being alive means to exist through relations that have existential concern, and to express these dimensions through the body and its gestures. All life takes place within one poetic space which is shared between all beings and which is accessible through subjective sensual experience. We take part in this through our empirical subjectivity, which arises from the experiences and needs of living beings, and which makes them open to access and sharing in a poetic objectivity. Biopoetics breaks free from the causal-mechanic paradigm which made biology unable to account for mind and meaning. Biology becomes a science of expression, connection and subjectivity which can understand all organisms including humans as feeling agents in a shared ecology of meaningful relations, embedded in a symbolical and material metabolism of the biosphere.

⁶⁰ As to the topic of human nature, see the book proposal titled *If we continue to believe in the evilness of human nature, we may be doomed*, Lindner, 2019b. See also Lindner, 2017, chapter 3: Also human nature and cultural diversity fell prey to the security dilemma, in the book *Honor, humiliation, and terror*.

⁶¹ Researchers let students play the prisoner’s dilemma game and framed the situation by telling them that this is a community game: the students cooperated. Other students were told that this is a Wall Street game, and, consequently, they cheated on each other. See, among others, Axelrod, 2006, Liberman, et al., 2004, Imhof, et al., 2007, Nowak and Highfield, 2011. See also Bernstein, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1990, 2000. I thank Vidar Vambheim for reminding me of Bernstein’s work and that Bernstein introduced the concept of framing to describe how control of mental frames is used to regulate thinking and behaviour in educational contexts. Bernstein describes framing as a mental process and a technique to exclude certain aspects of reality from entering the communication. See also Chong and Druckman, 2007.

⁶² I resonate with Howard Richards and Catherine Odora Hoppers, who insist that ever more *regulatory* rules are not enough, what is needed are new *constitutive* rules. See, among others, Richards and Swanger, 2006, Evelin Lindner, 2020

Notes

Richards and Swanger, 2013, Odora Hoppers and Richards, 2012, and Richards, et al., 2018, inspired by the lecture series ‘Against Foucault’, given by Howard Richards and followed by dialogues with Catherine Odora Hoppers and Evelin Lindner in Pretoria, South Africa, in 2013.

⁶³ See Taylor, 1971, 1993, Searle, 1995. Searle speaks of *institutional facts*, for instance, with respect to property rights and contract rights. See Manicas, 2006. See, furthermore, Porpora, 1993, Donati and Archer, 2015, Richards, 2004, and Lawson, 2019. I thank Howard Richards for including me into his lifelong journey of reflecting on social change.

⁶⁴ See Wallerstein, 1974–1989. See also Harvey, 2005, or Hudson, 2003. Howard Richards in a personal communication, 23rd October 2016: ‘According to Immanuel Wallerstein the global economy is the one and only object of study of the social sciences today; everything else is caught up in a web of causes and effects where the structure of the global economy is the principal cause’. See also Lindner, 2012.

⁶⁵ ‘Pessimism is a luxury we can afford only in good times, in difficult times it easily represents a self-inflicted, self-fulfilling death sentence’, coined by Evelin Lindner and Jo Linser, Auschwitz survivor, in 2004.

⁶⁶ Carson, 1962.

⁶⁷ For the Sustainable Development Goals, see <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs>. If Goal 8 were to be taken seriously, it would undermine the success of more or less all other goals.

⁶⁸ I appreciate the work of scholar of human needs Ian Gough, 2017, and his book *Heat, greed and human need*, where he refers to eudaimonic psychology’s definition of three universal needs, *autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness*, see page 44. Katherine Trebeck, a research and policy adviser with Oxfam, summarises Gough’s definition of basic needs on 17th July 2019, on www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/book-review-heat-greed-and-human-need/:

...basic needs encompass physical health, autonomy of agency (mental health, cognitive understanding, opportunities to participate), and critical autonomy. They are satisfied by access to things such as adequate food and water, protective housing, safe work environment, healthcare, and significant primary relationships, and in turn optimised by freedoms from (civic and political rights), freedoms to (rights of access to need satisfiers), and political participation.

I resonate with Trebeck’s appreciation of Gough’s work, as it helps those who are ‘sceptical about the merit of wellbeing as individual self-reported happiness in the hedonic sense’. While preferences and wants depend on context, which means that it is not advisable to make simplistic assumptions about how people feel, ‘human needs are objective, plural, non-substitutable and satiable’, Gough, 2017, p. 3.

⁶⁹ ‘Covid-19 has revealed a pre-existing pandemic of poverty that benefits the rich’, by Philip Alston, outgoing UN special rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, *The Guardian*, 11th July 2020, www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/jul/11/covid-19-has-revealed-a-pre-existing-pandemic-of-poverty-that-benefits-the-rich. See also Hickel, 2018, and *The parlous state of poverty eradication: Report of the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Advance Unedited Version*, Center for Human Rights and Global Justice, NYU School of Law, 2nd July 2020, <https://chrgj.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Alston-Poverty-Report-FINAL.pdf>.

⁷⁰ Lindner, 2012.