Solidarity with Animals
Reflections by Evelin Lindner
in contribution to the Great Transition Network (GTN) discussion of December 2022
In response to
"Solidarity with Animals," opening essay by Eileen Crist
https://greattransition.org/images/Solidarity-Animals-Crist.pdf

Contents

Eileen Crist wrote a marvelous essay. The comments that have been submitted so far, are as substantive as her essay, and I highly appreciate each of them.

Crist draws on John Rodman's notion of a *differential imperative*, which is "the Western cultural proclivity for searching and acclaiming those characteristics that ostensibly distinguish the human from all other life forms," such as "reason, language, morality, civilization, technology and free will, among others."[1] In her 2017 article titled "The Affliction of Human Supremacy," Crist wrote that "these attributes have been offered again and again as traits of human distinction. They have also enjoyed foundational status in hierarchical narratives about life that have dominated in the history of Western civilization."[2] In the 2018 GTN forum titled "Feminism and Revolution," economist Julie Matthaei referred to the notion of the *great chain of being*, where divinity is placed at the top and dirt at the bottom, with humans and other animals ranked in between.[3] Gwendolyn Hallsmith observes in her comment to Crist's essay that "rationalizations like the differential imperative enforce the hierarchical control over everything imposed by the wealthy and powerful men who have dominated economics, governance, and social systems for thousands of years." Angus Taylor points at "our ingenuity at rationalizing our self-serving behavior."

Where does the sense of human supremacy come from?

In my work, I ask: Where does this "affliction of human supremacy" come from? Is it part of human nature to "rationalize our self-serving behavior"? If so, it might be unchangeable and there may be no hope. However, if there is hope, what can be done?[4]

My first conclusion is that human nature is not the culprit. Instead, I see historical changes in the human condition over the past millennia, combined with human adaptations that have so far been dysfunctional. By looking at *big history*,[5] it becomes clear that the *dominator model of society* was prevalent almost on the entire globe for the past millennia, beginning at the time of what is called the Neolithic Revolution. This was due to very specific geopolitical forces — anthropologists identify *circumscription*[6] and political scientists point at the *security dilemma*.[7]

Riane Eisler, a systems scientist and activist, developed a cultural transformation theory in which she contrasts the *dominator model* with the collaboration-based *partnership model of society*,[8] or, as psychologist Linda Hartling prefers to call it, the *mutuality model of society*, meaning "movement towards mutuality in all relationships".[9] Eisler describes how during the past millennia otherwise widely divergent societies all over the globe followed coercion- and

authority-based models of society with alpha males dominating and leading the pack. From the samurai of Japan to the Aztecs of Meso-America, people lived in hierarchies of domination under a rigidly male-dominant strongman rule, in both family and state. Hierarchies of domination were maintained by a high degree of institutionalized and socially accepted violence, ranging from wife- and child-beating within the family to aggressive warfare at the larger tribal or national level.

The security dilemma,[10] also called *insecurity-security dialectic*,[11] means, in a nutshell, "We have to amass weapons, because we are scared. When we amass weapons, you get scared. You amass weapons, we get more scared." This dilemma entails that relations with outgroups are defined by the motto of Roman thinker Vegetius that says, *If you want peace, prepare for war*.[12] The dilemma is called dilemma because it is a tragedy — preparations for war, even if intended for peace, tend to produce more war. Peace was never sustainable; it was only a truce until the next war began.

Wherever the security dilemma was strong in the past, the dominator model of society became more pronounced, and mainstream notions of rationality adapted accordingly. They came to resemble conspiracy narratives (to use a contemporary term), rather than "true" rationality. Philosopher Ágnes Heller explains that "masculinist models of consciousness objectify world order, obfuscating how fluid and continuously malleable it in reality is."[13]

It was in this context that the Bible could say, in Genesis 1:28, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'."[14]

Extending the dignity lens beyond our species is without alternative

As long as the world was not yet as interconnected as now, as long as it was still compartmentalized and divided, as long as more or less homogenous dominator polities were pitted against each other in mutual fear, rulers could regard it as "rational" to instigate ever-new cycles of competition for domination. Ruthless practices of domination and exploitation of people and other animals could turn strongmen into victors over their enemies and cement their power over their own people, at least for a short while. During the past millennia, such strategies were an integral part of the "art of warfare." Nowadays, we find books titled *Strategic Warfare for Managers*[15] written to help managers apply power-over strategies in a "mercenary corporate culture."[16] Global finance is embedded in this mindset as welll. In his comment to Crist's essay, Guy Standing rightly remarks, "global finance does not do equality; it does domination."

The notion of dignity followed a similar trajectory as the notion of rationality. The word *dignitary* betrays the roots of the concept of dignity in traditional hierarchy — a dignitary is a "higher being" standing above "lesser beings." Only after the Second World War did the *Zeitgeist* embrace the ideal of *equal dignity for all*, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights in 1948 and formulated in the sentence "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Now, in 2022, the *Zeitgeist* is divided: There are people who strive for equal dignity for all as responsible individuals, free to engage in loving mutual solidarity also with other animals, while others aim to recreate a world of ranked order, where "dignitaries" are granted the "freedom" to preside over supposedly lesser beings, be they human or otherwise.

In today's highly interconnected world, a world in which the ecological carrying capacity of the planet is overstretched, and human rights ideals have become salient, the latter strategies have lost even the limited short-term utility they once had at least for certain

dominators. Now, such strategies risk *omnicide*, the annihilation of all life on Earth. Either all species flourish, or none.

This means that extending the dignity lens beyond the species *Homo sapiens* is far from optional. It is without alternative if humanity wishes to have a future of dignity.

What is the way to a future of dignity for all sentient beings?

Our forebears could not come together as a global citizens movement and undo the security dilemma through global trust-building. Now, for the first time in human history, we have all the resources to do so. No longer do we have to accept Disunited Nations, we can work for Globally United Sentient Beings. No longer do we have to accept *cogitocide*[17] — the degradation of our *cogitosphere*, of our sphere of thinking, through misguided concepts of rationality that drive *omnicide*.

When we look closer, we see that much of what is currently regarded as "scientific mindset and practice" is unscientific. We learn from actor-network theory, for instance, that causality as not linear. This theory sees humans and nonhumans in relation with one another, where any element in a system has "the capacity to enroll the actions of any other element in its functioning."[18] Theorist Karen Barad, in drawing on the insights of physicist Niels Bohr, goes further than actor-network theory. For her, phenomena are not ideational concepts, nor are they assemblages of humans and nonhumans (as in actor-network theory), they are the condition of possibility of humans and nonhumans in their very materiality. *Onto-epistemology* is the study of practices of knowing-in-being, of *intra-actions*.[19] Barad speaks of agential realism and that we are "emergent from a dynamic field of possibilities."[20]

The field of psychology offers many insights with respect to the challenges that wait to be overcome if we want to embrace knowing-in-being. The task is to overcome the security dilemma's influence on our thinking. In the context of a strong security dilemma, ingroups formed which defined themselves in contrast to outgroups. In social psychology, there is a long tradition of discussing the formation of ingroups. Psychologist Gordon Allport explored the formation of ingroups in his 1954 book *The Nature of Prejudice*. He asked, "Can there be an ingroup without and outgroup?" and, "Can humanity constitute an ingroup?"[21]

Crist writes in her essay, "Certain groups — women, children, slaves, Blacks, 'savages' — were conveniently positioned below the supreme (typically white, male, educated) human and above the animals." We could extend this argument and say that "human" became regarded as an ingroup vis-à-vis "animal" as outgroup.

We know from social psychology that a host of biases follows the ingroup versus outgroup division. There is something called *naïve realism*, which entails many misperceptions and misunderstandings, which, in turn, can lead to misguided conclusions.[22] One of its pitfalls is *false polarization*, a bias that leads to an exaggerated perception of intergroup differences.[23] Applied to the "human" ingroup vis-à-vis "animal" outgroup distinction, the false polarization bias made the human animal assume that they were able to perceive the world "objectively," while the outgroup, the nonhuman animals, supposedly processed information in "primitive" ways.

Then there is the case of empathy. More empathy is not the solution, because the problem lies in ingroup versus outgroup demarcations. People have deep moral feelings for their ingroup members, but empathy ends at the boundaries of one's ingroup. Ingroup empathy leads to antisocial inter-group tendencies, and a person's general empathic abilities are irrelevant for this split between outgroup and ingroup empathy.[24] "Violence, hatred, and terror are deeply intertwined with honor, heroism, glory, and love," this was the message of my 2017 book on terror.[25] *Im-munity* can stand in the way of *com-munity*.[26] This is why

endangered species are hated even in countries that subscribe to protecting them — sheep farmers in Norway, for example, regard wolves as their enemies.[27]

The only solution is un-dividing the world, bringing the world together into one single ingroup — one humanity on one planet, one humanity that reinvigorates its Indigenous legacy of humbly accepting that it is only one among many species. There is no alternative if humankind wishes to survive in dignity, we must embrace the fact that we are one single ingroup of sentient beings on one tiny planet and that there are no outgroups. Only then can outgroup biases be overcome, only then can cooperation and empathy unfold their true unifying potential, only then can their divisive potential be left behind. Human solidarity and animal solidarity, Crist rightly argues, are synergistic aspects of a GT vision and action agenda.

In this situation, it is not enough to change personal inclinations. Human behavior depends on superordinate frames more than on personal inclinations. "The important levers for policy purposes lie outside the psychology of individuals, in the social structures that sustain and guide people's decisions."[28] In other words, we cannot depend on individual prosocial tendencies, we must create overarching structural frames that nurture and enable them. The human condition was victim to the security dilemma throughout the past millennia almost everywhere on the globe, and it is this frame that needs to be changed, because as long as the world is divided, love for one's ingroup will inspire hatred for outgroups. Only if we succeed in framing our world society in ways that prosocial tendencies receive systemic support will there be hope. The task at hand is to co-create a commons-centric global village of dignity for all sentient beings, rather than a global market-centric Wall Street war theatre.

As for now, however, "our generation is doing worse than any in human history," says Thomas Pogge, philosopher of global justice, with reference to poverty.[29] He warns that it is morally unconscientious to compare existing poverty "with historical benchmarks", instead, one should compare it with "present possibilities" — "How much of this poverty is really unavoidable today?"[30]

We can extend his argument to humanity's situation in general, and ask, "How much *ecocide* and *sociocide* is really unavoidable today?" We live in times where "present possibilities" are enormous. This throws into stark relief their enormous underuse, it highlights the obscenity of completely unnecessary *omnicide* caused by dominators who are beholden to outdated short-term mindsets of competition for domination. It is obscene when such strategies are recommended for supposedly beneficial "development," and when labels such as "developed country" are arrogated.

We can do better. The most important novelty of our time is that we can appreciate our place in the cosmos. Unlike our ancestors, we can see pictures of our Blue Marble from the perspective of an astronaut. Unlike our forebears, we have the privilege of experiencing the *overview effect* with respect to our planet[31] — we can see it from outside. This makes our horizon large enough to understand that we humans are only one species among many species who all share the same small planet and that only global cooperation can save us. We *Earthlings*[32] can feel "the ecology of the living" taking place within *one* circumscribed space that is shared between all beings. We can embrace *biophilia*,[33] and a creative ecology of the living — a *biopoetics* — where mind and life are coextensive.[34]

For the first time, we are equipped to build the trust needed for solidarity at a global scale, we have all the resources required to reap the benefits that the global ingathering of humanity provides. We can draw on all experiences, past and present, from the oldest Indigenous wisdom to the newest scientific knowledge.[35] Short, the co-creation of a decent global village is within the reach of our "present possibilities."

We have to be fast, though. We have only a few years to outgrow the past millennia's straitjackets that limited and distorted our thinking and behavior. We have entered what Paul

Raskin calls the *planetary phase of civilization*, where strands of interdependence weave humanity and Earth into a single community of fate on its way to sharing one single *Earthland*.[36]

In the past, I have called on the field of *inter-cultural communication* to expand towards *global inter-human communication*,[37] and I would now want to extend this call to *inter-species communication* in the sense that not just each human animal has a unique personality and needs acknowledgement for that, also each nonhuman animal has a unique personality.

I have coined the term dignism ("dignity" + "ism") to describe a world where every newborn — human and nonhuman — finds space and is nurtured to unfold their highest and best potential, 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 all basic needs are met. It is a world of unity in diversity, where we prevent unity from devolving into oppressive uniformity and keep diversity from sliding into hostile division. It is a world where we unite in respecting every individual's dignity while celebrating their diversity.

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[1] Crist, 2017.

[2] Crist, 2017.

[3] Julie Matthaei, 2018, in her essay for the 2018 GTN forum titled "Feminism and Revolution":

The "Great Chain of Being," in which human dominates over life / nature / animals and plants, man dominates over woman, adult dominates over child, the able-bodies / healthy / powerful dominates over the disabled / ill / weak, the White dominates over the Black (and this is not only in Western societies, but in all societies), the wealthy / elite dominates over the poor / mass, the citizen / national dominates over the immigrant / stranger / foreigner, (recently) the Northerner dominates over the Southerner, & finally God "AlMighty & Powerful" dominates over everyone else!

[4] See my new book, Lindner, 2023. See also Lindner, 2006, 2009, Lindner and Desmond Tutu (Foreword), 2010, Lindner, 2012, and Lindner, 2017. See chapters and papers in full text on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin02.php, and see a list of talks on www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin021.php.

⁵ See classic publications on *big history* by McNeill and McNeill, 2003, or Chaisson, 2001. See also Spier, 2010, Harari, 2014, 2015/2016. Listen also to the Earth Charter podcast with Gus Speth titled "A New Consciousness and the Eight-Fold Way Towards Sustainability." See https://earthcharter.org/podcasts/gus-speth/.

⁶ Carneiro, 2012, and Carneiro, 2018.

⁷ See more in Lindner, 2023.

⁸ See Eisler, 1987. Her most recent books are Eisler, 2007, and Eisler and Fry, 2019.

⁹ Linda Hartling in a personal communication, October 5, 2020.

¹⁰ See Herz, 1950. Under the conditions of a strong security dilemma, the Hobbesian fear of surprise attacks from outside one's borders is inescapable for a nation and defines the limits of its space for action also in times of peace. Barry Posen, 1993, Russell Hardin, 1995, and Rose, 2000, discuss the emotional aspects of the security dilemma and how they play out not just between states, but also between ethnic groups.

¹¹ "Countdown to World War Trump: Iran and the New "Butter Battle" Arms Rivalry," by Hall Gardner, *Wall Street International Magazine*, September 18, 2019, https://wsimag.com/economy-and-politics/57509-countdown-to-world-war-trump. 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.

¹² 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.

¹³ Philosopher Ágnes Heller, 1984.

¹⁴ Bible, New International Version, https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%201%3A28&version=NIV.

¹⁵ Gilad and Junginger, 2010. The German title of this book is *Strategische Kriegsführung für Manager*, English *Strategic Warfare for Managers*. See also www.clausewitz.org.

¹⁶ See *The Corporation*, a documentary film by law professor Joel Bakan, directed by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, 2003, see www.bibliotecapleyades.net/sociopolitica/sociopol_globalelite08.htm. See also *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* by Bakan, 2004.

¹⁷ The President of the Club of Rome from 1999 to 2007, Prince El Hassan bin Talal, suggested the term *cogitocide* in a personal message to me on May 19, 2020. He proposed the term *cogitosphere*, the realm of thinking and reflection, in his Opening Address to the 2004 Annual Conference of the Club of Rome "On Limits to Ignorance: The Challenge of Informed Humanity," October 11–12, 2004 in Helsinki, Finland. His address was titled *The Challenge of Informed Humanity: From "Infosphere" to "Cogitosphere"*. In this address, he called on the Club of Rome to elevate the cogitosphere, "above that of the Infosphere in order to avoid sightless vision and to focus our deliberative process on the real challenges facing informed humanity."

¹⁸ Gergen, 2009, p. 379.

¹⁹ Barad, 2003, p. 829. Physicist Niels Bohr speaks of intra-actions, and that one must reject the presumed inherent separability of observer and observed, knower and known. Read more about Barad's work in note 2342 in chapter 7 of Lindner, 2023.

²⁰ Barad, 2003, p. 819:

> Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements. Statements are not the mere utterances of the originating consciousness of a unified subject; rather, statements and subjects emerge from a field of possibilities. This field of possibilities is not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity.

²¹ Gordon Allport, 1954, asked in chapter 3, on page 41, "Can there be an in-group without and out-group?" and on page 43, "Can humanity constitute an in-group?"

²² See, for instance, the work of social psychologist Lee Ross and Ward, 1996, of Stanford University. His last book, Ross and Gilovich, 2016, was titled *The Wisest One in the Room: How You Can Benefit from Social Psychology's Most Powerful Insights*.

²³ See, for instance, Robinson, et al., 1995.

²⁴ See Bruneau, et al., 2017, Batson, 2009, Decety and Ickes, 2009, Breithaupt, 2017, or Bloom, 2016, 2017.

²⁵ Lindner, 2017, p. xi, in the book *Honor, humiliation, and terror*.

²⁶ Two contrasting English words, *immunity* and *community*, build on the Latin word *munus*, or duty to service, obligation, mutual exchange. *Immunitas* signifies an exemption from this duty, whereas *communitas* calls for it.

See Takaaki David Ito's chapter "Modes of Spiritual Care" in Kashio and Becker, 2021. Ito was inspired by Italian political philosopher Robert Esposito's trilogy *Immunitas*, *Communitas*, and *Bios*, Esposito, 2008, 2009, 2011.

[27] "Vil skyte all ulv i Norge [Will Shoot All Wolves in Norway]," by Jørgen Gilbrant, *Dagbladet*, August 16, 2021, https://www.dagbladet.no/nyheter/vil-skyte-all-ulv-i-norge/74112626.

[28] Reciprocity theorist Alejandro Guala, 2012b, p. 51.

[29] "The end of poverty?" by Thomas Pogge, *The Mark News*, February 7, 2016, www.themarknews.com/2016/02/07/the-end-of-poverty/. See also Pogge, 2008. See also the work of Norwegian economist Kalle Moene, 2018.

[30] "The end of poverty?" by Thomas Pogge, *The Mark News*, February 7, 2016.

[31] See White, 2014.

[32] Astronomer Jill Tarter invites her students to call themselves *earthlings*, "because it locates us, as a species, on a particular planet." See Jill Tarter "It Takes a Cosmos to Make a Human", in *On Being*, with Krista Tippett, WNYC (non-profit, non-commercial, public radio stations located in New York City), May 20, 2021, https://onbeing.org/programs/jill-tarter-it-takes-a-cosmos-to-make-a-human/..

[33] Anderson, 2016. Historian and psychologist Carolyn Baker, 2009, foresees that our journey through the collapse of industrial civilization will be as much a spiritual one as a physical one, that it will be a journey back from profound disconnection to the sacred.

[34] A creative ecology of the living — a *biopoetics* — is being developed by philosopher and biologist Andreas Weber, 2016, explaining why mind and life are coextensive.

[35] For "harvesting" from all cultural traditions and achievements, see, among others, Lindner, 2007. Cognitive scientist Bruce Schuman as well advises "to look for and revive all ancient wisdom ever accrued," in his contribution to the Great Transition Initiative (GTI) Forum on the topic of "Journey to Earthland: Making the Great Transition to Planetary Civilization", September 24, 2016, in response to Raskin, 2016.

[36] Raskin, 2016. See also Lindner, 2016.

[37] Lindner, 2007.