What the World's Cultures Can Contribute to Creating a Sustainable Future for Humankind

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Abstract

Contemporary Norway has a unique traditional notion of *likeverd* (equality in dignity) and is a strong global peace mediator. The Nobel Peace Prize is being awarded in Oslo each year, the Oslo Accords come to mind, or Norway's recent engagement in Sri Lanka.

What is peace? Clearly, peace is more than resolved conflict. A sustainable future for humankind is more than 'resilience' within the status quo. In an interdependent world, security, peace, and sustainability are no longer attainable by solving singular conflicts, or through 'keeping enemies out or subjugated', only through 'keeping a fragmented world together' to jointly embark on comprehensive solutions for the problems of its sociosphere and biosphere.

What can the world's cultures contribute to a sustainable future for all? This paper inquires whether it is possible to distil out what large cultural realms such as Africa, Asia, Continental Europe, and the Anglo-Saxon sphere can contribute.

If our aim is the pro-active creation of global cohesion informed by equality in dignity – instead of passively waiting for global division to tear us apart – then, so suggests this paper, traditional Asia can contribute with its notions of nondualism and harmony. This would need to be carefully combined, with, for example, American-Anglo-Saxon emphasis on courageous action, and Continental European strength in planning and design. This in turn would need to be inspired by all nondualistic, dignifying, and philia-promoting philosophies from around the world, be it Egyptian or Greek notions of love, African *Ubuntu*, Martin Buber's 'dialogical unity' in I and Thou, or Gandhi's non-violent action approach.

The paper concludes by calling for global systemic change in the spirit of nondualistic Unity in Diversity, sustained through continuous pro-active maintenance of harmonious global social cohesion imbued with the notion of likeverd. We need to realise an 'era of equality in dignity', a decent future, where everybody can live a dignified life. We need

to create a *decent global village*. Norway, with its unique background, plays an important role that it needs to expand for the common good of humankind.

Introduction

Norway has developed a unique culture of *likeverd* (equality in dignity). This means that Norwegian traditions are in tune with human rights ideals to a larger degree than in the more hierarchical societies of the rest of Europe and most of the rest of the world. Norwegian culture does not have to adapt much to embrace human rights ideals, in contrast to the considerably farther way long-standing hierarchical cultures have to traverse.

Why is that? Henrik Wergeland (1808–1845) makes the point that Norway's disadvantaged geopolitical setting may have played out as an advantage.[1] Perhaps Norway was too marginal, too poor (oil was found only as recently as 1967/9), and its Nordic nature too scarce to be interesting enough to be attacked, or to be subjugated in any thorough way into the deeper hierarchies of larger neighbouring empires.[2] In other words, Norwegian pride has never been broken, their heads not forced to bow, at least not significantly. The fact that the rural population did not have to hide from attackers is still amply visible today – Norwegian farms dot the landscape, all in a certain distance from their neighbours – evidently there was no need to seek protection in fortresses of feudal lords, or build villages surrounded with protective walls, in stark contrast to the situation just some kilometres further south, in Continental Europe.

The 11th Annual Conference of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies (HumanDHS), for which this paper has been prepared, is part of the celebrations of the Wergeland Year that takes place between 17th May 2008 and Wergeland's 200th birthday on 17th June 2008. Wergeland was one of the principal figures in Scandinavian romanticism, and one of Norway's greatest poets and prose writers. He worked tirelessly against discrimination and for equal rights, among others, for civil rights for Jews in Norway.[3] Consequently, the Minister of Culture in Norway has announced 2008 also as the Year of Diversity in Norway.

I wrote my doctoral dissertation at the University in Oslo, and defended it in 2001.[4] My doctoral research included the cases of genocidal killings in Somalia and Rwanda on

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[1] Henrik Wergeland (1843) wrote, 'Haard er den Himmel, som bedækker Norge, Klimatet er strength; vi ere Beboere af en hyperboræisk Afkrog paa Kloden, og Naturen har bestemt os til at savne saamange af de mildere Landes Fordele. Men Naturen, god midt i sin tilsyneladende Ubarmhjertighed, og retfærdig midt i sin Uretfærdighed, har aabenbar villet levne os Erstatning for hine Savn, og derfor beskikket, at Norges, i nogle Henseender saa ufordeelagtige, Beliggenhed skulde i andre Henseender være saare velgjørende' (p. 23). I thank Bernt Hagtvet and Nikolai Brandal for making me aware of this quote.

[2] The Union with Denmark (1537–1814), for example, was not characterised by thorough subjugation. A relatively small number of Danes mainly resided in the capital Christiania (today's Oslo). The subsequent Union with Sweden, was shorter, though experienced as less benign, almost ending in war in 1905. Nazi-Germany's occupation of Norway from 1940 to 1945 represented the most serious and brutal occupation of Norway, luckily not lasting for thousand years, as Hitler had envisaged.

[3] See Henrik Wergeland, Dagne Groven Myhren, & Ragnhild Galtung (2003) for selected poems that pertain to the Jewish cause.

[4] Evelin Gerda Lindner (2000b). Please let me take this opportunity to express my warm thanks, especially to Associate Professor Reidar Ommundsen, Professor Jan Smedslund, and the other dedicated

the background of Nazi-Germany. My field work in Africa intrigued me, also with respect to Norway and Europe: Interestingly, one thousand years ago, the Norway of the Vikings may have resembled today's Somalia, at least partly. Notions of fierce, noble, and honourable independence, particularly for every male head of a family (but also for women), together with a strong but fickle clan loyalty characterised Viking society as much as contemporary Somalia. However, unlike Somalia, Norway has since shed most of the destructive aspects of such a culture. When we see contemporary Somalia, it is torn apart by a culture of unpredictable pride and unwillingness to bow for the sake of greater common good, especially for males. Somalia still has to reap the advantages inherent in its culture, namely a unique approach to democracy.[5]

Young Somalis may one day look back on their traditions as the young Norwegian student does whose Internet site I will now quote. This is a young man who in Somalia would perhaps be a traditional nomadic warrior, or an urban militia boy. The young Norwegian author writes on behalf of the Norwegian students abroad (ANSA). I quote this text, because it illustrates today's young Norwegians' views on the male prowess and pillaging spirit of their forefathers, a view that may surprise today's Somalis, because it betrays humour rather than admiration or condemnation:

By AD 700 they [the Vikings] were fully fledged and raring to go. The homestead and the clan were by now well established, and society was properly divided into masters and serfs, as shown by the medieval Frostating Law, which states that he who pokes out the eyes of another shall pay a fine of a farm and 12 head of cattle, two horses and two slaves. By now neighborhood feuds were the accepted pastime and passion, the Viking ships had been invented, and general fury was at boiling-point. They were now ready and could overcome half Europe, invade Ireland and take on England (though it was actually the Danes who did that), they could found Russia (or was it a Swede who did that?) and they could discover America (that we do know was a Norwegian, even if in his heart he was perhaps Icelandic or a Greenlander). When it comes to claiming great deeds we have elastic notions of nationality. What drove them to this? What makes people abandon hearth and home, concubines and swine, in order to court the dangers of the unknown, drink themselves into a frenzy, rape, loot and pillage, and generally make themselves at home in another land? It seems there were three reasons: 1) They had killed someone and needed to flee. 2) They had no clue as to where they were sailing. 3) They were bored' (ANSA (1996)).

The young Norwegian man writing this text demonstrates a humoristic distance from male role models of masculine pride, a distance that Somali men may not (yet?) possess. It may be assumed that a proud Somali nomad would feel insulted by such an account of his national past.

Somalia contrasts Rwanda, where a culture of obedience – not unlike Nazi-Germany – was available to be instrumentalised for the 1994 genocide.

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    [5] Ioan M. Lewis (1961).

Norway may have its place somewhere in the middle between fickle pride and subservient obedience, displaying the beneficial sides of both. In Norway, we find a keen sense that citizens ought to be equal in dignity and not have their worthiness ranked in any way (likeverd), but that a certain degree of joint subservience is needed, for example, when the common good requires it (see, for example, the concept of *dugnad*).

Trøndelag, in the middle of Norway, is particularly interesting, because it displays a strong propensity to creating the cooperative structures that the world today would benefit from.[6] The city of Trondheim was founded in 997 and frequently used as the seat of the king. Still today, Norwegian kings are crowned in Trondheim's Nidaros Cathedral. Capital of Norway until 1217, it is today a Norwegian center of education, technical and medical research. Part of our conference will take place on the post ship Hurtigruten from Bergen to Trondheim.

Contemporary Norway is a strong global peace mediator. The Nobel Peace Prize is being awarded in Oslo each year.[7] The Oslo Accords come to mind, or Norway's recent engagement in Sri Lanka – just to name two examples. I have discussed the relationship between humiliation, humility, and democracy and their relevance for Norway's peace work around the world, for example, in 'Ydmykelse, ydmykhet, og demokrati'.[8]

What is peace? Clearly, peace is more than resolved conflict. A sustainable future for humankind is more than 'resilience' within the status quo. Profound systemic change at the global level is what is needed today. In an interdependent world, security, peace, and sustainability are no longer attainable by solving singular conflicts, or through 'keeping enemies out or subjugated', only through 'keeping a fragmented world together' to jointly embark on comprehensive solutions for the problems of its sociosphere and biosphere.

Current fault lines are potentially suicidal for humankind, such as the widening gap between the rich and the poor, or borders defined by narrow short-term national self-interest that overlooks international interdependence. A thus fragmented world is not equipped to safeguard a sustainable sociosphere or biosphere.

Many academic disciplines address peace.[9] The emphasis on systemic solutions in this paper may be expected to come from fields such as political science, but not from peace psychology. Yet, also peace psychologists have understood that their scope needs to be much larger than the psyche of the individual.

Peace psychology emerged in the context of the Cold War, and today, peace psychology recognises the need for large-scale systemic change that comprises the entire globe, including all of humankind's sociosphere and the homeostasis of our biosphere. Daniel J. Christie (2006) writes, 'In particular, three themes are emerging in post-Cold War peace psychology: (1) greater sensitivity to geohistorical context, (2) a more differentiated perspective on the meanings and types of violence and peace, and (3) a systems view of the nature of violence and peace' (p. 3).

Joseph De Rivera, Rahael Kurrien, & Nina Olsen (2007) work on peace culture and emotional climate. They contend the following:

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[6] See, for example, Felleskjøpet Trondheim BA. (FKT) is a cooperative company owned by almost 13 000 farmers, http://felleskjopet.no/.

[7] http://nobelpeaceprize.org/.

[8] Evelin Gerda Lindner (2008c).

[9] Evelin Gerda Lindner (2000b).

Societies seem to have emotional climates that affect how people feel and act in public situations. Unlike the emotions experienced in an individual's personal life, these modal feelings reflect a collective response to the socio-economic-political situation of the society and influence how most people behave toward one another and their government. A government may foster a climate of fear to ensure social control, or it may encourage the formation of heterogeneous social groups to facilitate a climate of trust between people from different groups (Abstract).

American scholars such as Stanley Milgram (1974) and Philip G. Zimbardo (1971)[10] have shown through their experiments how important it is to create systems that allow people to be 'good', rather than limit our efforts to attempts to reform individuals who have to function in less than nurturing systems. The experiments by Milgram and Zimbardo were designed to show how 'good' people may not have sufficient resistance to pressure and turn 'evil' – how they can be nudged, perhaps not to the extreme, but far enough so that dictators can get their way and abusive systems can last.

Philip Zimbardo, on 23th April 2008 (in BBC World *HARDtalk* with Stephen Sackur) explained vividly, how 'the system' creates 'a situation', which brings 'good' people to behave 'badly'. Since the Inquisition we have been dealing with problems at an individual level, the individual only was addressed, with its propensities and culpability, he claims. The influence of the situation was neglected.

Troubled teens are sometimes helped by being placed into contexts that nudge them to behave 'good' (such 'contexts' typically range from counseling to rehabilitation services, for example, in the form of residential treatment in boarding schools, or even as wilderness therapy or similar settings). Milgram and Zimbardo illustrate how malign systems can also create situations that prod people to behave less 'good'. Zimbardo said on 23rd April 2008, 'The *system* creates a *situation*, which interacts with the person in ways that everybody can be made to cross the line to dehumanization.'[11]

In Nazi-German a whole people was being placed into a horrifying 'boot camp' by Hitler and his helpers. Interestingly, post-WW II German crime television series are very different from those authored, for example, by Agatha Christie. She dramatises the intellectual challenge, for the investigator, of exposing a cold-blooded perpetrator (usually driven by greed). Contemporary German crime television series are also very different from many American series, which highlight the struggle of "good versus evil," with the courage required on the "good" side when facing evil being visualised, preferably, by huge explosions and dangerous stunts. In contrast, in contemporary Germany, a long list of crime series on television (*Tatort, Soko 110, Rosa Rot, Derrick*, etc.) highlights the dilemmas that a malign context creates. At the core of these series is always the nuanced description of an unfolding moral dilemma and how it nudges 'good' people to become perpetrators (this primary focus is sometimes, but not always, combined with a secondary one on the perpetrator's weaknesses of moral judgement or lacking courage to stand by it, handicaps which are supposed to be present either a priori, or acquired through earlier mistreatment).

In 'How to Construct Stable Democracies' Jack Goldstone & Jay Ulfelder (2005) explain that liberal democracy creates a powerful benign context that enhances the

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[10] See also *The Lucifer Effect* by Philip G. Zimbardo (2007).
[11] In a BBC World HARDtalk interview with Stephen Sackur.

political stability of a country. Within nations, economic, ethnic, and regional effects have only modest impact on political stability.[12] Rather, stability is determined by a country's patterns of political competition and political authority.

Jean Baker Miller (2006) encourages us to refuse 'false choices' and instead create 'alternative arrangements':

> To create a society that would provide much fuller lives for women, men, and children would not be so difficult. What is difficult is to convince the culture to do it. We are often locked into forced and false choices without recognizing it, likely because we are so accustomed to thinking this way. These appear to be the only options, but we can easily think of many others. While major change in societal arrangements will take much hard work, many benefits follow from refusing false choices. The search for alternative arrangements stimulates us to think in new ways before we can accomplish the necessary changes (Miller, 2006, p. 17).

We can conclude that we, as humankind, must build the 'alternative arrangement' of a more benign global frame, modelled on the pattern of democratic institutions, within which also local frames can become more benign, and global and local situations can express a climate of trust between people from different groups, thus nudging all world citizens to behave 'good'.

Following the example of troubled teens – perhaps troubled humankind is ready to build a setting of global institutions for itself, a setting that compels everybody to behave in ways that ameliorate the overall situation?

If yes, what can the world's cultures contribute to the necessary systemic change toward a sustainable future?

I suggest it would be beneficial to 'harvest' useful and beneficial cultural practices from all cultures of our planet to help us build a global inclusive culture for a decent sustainable future for our world. Howard Richards, founder of the Peace and Global Studies and Philosophy at Earlham College, writes, 'Think of the diverse human beliefs and practices of the past and the present as cultural resources available to be employed in the construction of a world that works for everybody. Think of the social sciences as innovative language-games, not as mirrors that reflect social reality, but as social movements that reconstitute social reality…'[13]

This paper follows Richards' suggestion and conceptualises social science as a means for innovation. In my article 'Avoiding Humiliation – From Intercultural Communication to Global Interhuman Communication',[14] I suggest that we harvest suitable cultural knowledge from all cultural realms all around the world, from indigenous cultures to highly complex modern societies. In this paper, I go one step further, and ask whether it is possible to distil out what large cultural realms such as Africa, Asia, Continental Europe, and the Anglo-Saxon sphere can contribute. All are extremely diverse within their borders – is it at all possible to filter out certain dominant orientations?

I suggest that we indeed can find dominant orientations and that it would be useful to combine everybody's strengths. Asian notions of *nondualism* and *harmony* are two

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[12] Jack Goldstone & Jay Ulfelder (2005), p. 9.
[13] http://howardrichards.org/peace/component/option,com_frontpage/Itemid,1/.
[14] Evelin Gerda Lindner (2007).

ingredients which can give momentum to the pro-active creation of global cohesion informed by likeverd, if carefully combined with American-Anglo-Saxon emphasis on *action*, Continental European strength in *design of systems*, and African knowledge of *shared humanity*. This would need to be pooled with all other nondualistic, dignifying philosophies, and cultural skills from around the world, from the indigenous expertise in consensus building that evolved over long stretches of history, to more recent philosophical and psychological leaps – such as, for example, Martin Buber's concept of '*dialogical unity*' in I and Thou.

Clearly, we need to be selective when we harvest. When we look back in history, we can identify myriads of cultural practices. Mutilating 'foot-binding' practices are destructive. We need to harvest the liberating and dignifying practices that humankind developed around the world, practices that free the fullness of human capacity and creativity. *Living well* is a suitable heading over constructive harvesting: On June 5, 2008, more than one thousand representatives from indigenous communities across the Americas gathered in Lima, Peru, and agreed on a new social system, known as "Living Well," that focuses on reciprocity between people and the Earth.[15]

Before I delve further into these questions, let me insert two caveats. First, let me make my stance toward human rights clear, and second, my view on culture.

My stance toward human rights

At the current point in human history, everywhere on the globe, if not in reality, so at least in rhetoric, the human rights ideal of equality in dignity increasingly replaces the traditional paradigm of inequality in dignity, or ranking of human worthiness into 'higher' and 'lesser' beings in what I call ranked honour societies. Even though the human rights revolution is advancing in a haphazard way, sometimes one step ahead and two steps back, it does advance. Slavery and Apartheid, just to give two examples, have been abolished, at least as legal systems.

In this context, I stand up for human rights not because I enjoy presenting myself as an arrogant Westerner who humiliates the non-West by denigrating their honour codes of ranked human worthiness.

First, honour is not the reserve of the non-West (see *Southern Honor* in the United States[16]). Second, to my view, people who endorse honour codes may not be looked down upon. My conceptualisation is that honour codes had their place in a world that had not yet experienced the coming-together of humankind into *One single* family. Ranked honour is a moral code that represents an adaptation to the past 10,000 years of human history, while the ideal of equality in dignity is in tune with the new situation of growing global interdependence.

Third, I do not see human rights as a Western idea. Important religions include significant ideals of equality. Buddhism has a claim for equal dignity, Islam, the Sikh religion, and so forth. However, it seems that these ideals were pushed into the background by the overall hierarchical structures of the larger social and societal

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[15] See, for example,
http://www.latinamericapress.org/article.asp?IssCode=&lanCode=1&artCode=5630.
[16] Bertram Wyatt-Brown (1982).

environments everywhere on the globe for the past ten millennia (with some exceptions, such as Norway). Only in recent times do these ideals gain significant weight, ironically, one could say, as an unintended effect of European expansionism. If the surface of planet Earth were larger, Europeans would perhaps still colonise others with an iron fist. Yet, the limits of our planet changed the game from conquering new worlds to having to live together in the world we have.

Contemporary global interdependence provides a profoundly new environment that pushes for new moral frames. In a world that no longer depends on the exploitation of land ownership, but on knowledge and skills thriving within a web of global relationships, space opens for the ideal of equality in rights and dignity.[17]

This effect became visible already earlier, whenever global interdependence became palpable, but often only as short flashes. For example, the Renaissance, with its new conceptualisation of dignity, emerged in a Florence that felt liberated and energised as one of the first successful global players.

However, this effect is not a Western achievement – on the contrary, as mentioned above, it may rather be an unintended side-effect of Western imperialism having met its limits. It is a chance to be grasped for every global citizen.

Fourth, I agree with Kishore Mahbubani (2008) that the 'West' should not lecture the rest. On 24th April 2008, in BBC World's *HARDtalk* with Stephen Sackur, Mahbubani explained how the West currently suffers from huge credibility problems. He reminded the viewer that abolishing slavery and torture were among the most important achievements of the human rights movement. Nobody would have thought, he said, that America, the beacon of freedom and human rights, would re-introduce torture, and that no Western country would officially denounce this backward turn (for example in the relevant UN organs). Instead, Europe allowed the United States to use European facilities for 'extraordinary renditions'.

I am not a 'Westerner', but a global citizen. I have never identified with 'us' against 'them', not least because I was born into a displaced family and never 'acculturated' into anything but the identity of non-belonging, of 'here where I was born, I am not truly at home, but there is no home for me on this planet to go to'. As a result, I live globally and not locally.[18]

In conclusion, I suggest that we all refrain from wasting time and energy on finger pointing and rather define ourselves as global citizens, who, together, take the best from everywhere, to jointly throw in all their resources to save the future of our planet and humankind.

My view on culture

Before I try to describe what I would pick as 'the best from everywhere', let me insert a strong caveat. I do not regard cultural realms as closed containers, but as fluid concepts. I see the world as a rich web of global and local cultural trends that interact and interlace. For example, the 'culture' of a highly educated female, all over the world, is closer to my own than that of the neighbourhood where I grew up. My experience often resonates with

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[17] William Ury (1999).
[18] See an explanation of my life at http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/evelin.php

Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1995) and her suggestion that there are at least three types of citizens world-wide, across all 'cultures': 'locals', 'cosmopolitans', and 'world class', with 'world class' people having understood the oneness and interdependence of everything, whether they ever have travelled or not.

Let me now make a full turn and use a Weberian *ideal-type* approach, which means distilling out patterns that may help see trends, even though they are not expressed as ideal types in reality.[19] Identifying dominant propensities, and pinpointing what is not fluid, runs diametrically counter to my main orientation of highlighting ubiquitous flux between, and internal diversity within cultural realms. However, I think both approaches can build on each other, identifying underlying patterns even if they are not starkly visible on one side, and highlighting how they mix on the other.

Let me begin with listing patterns of commonalities that provide a common ground for all humankind to communicate, understand each other, and cooperate.

Commonalities

Commonalities are due to the fact that humans evolved on planet Earth and are affected by the make-up of Earth's biosphere, and by biosphere's responses to human interference. Certain of these effects are global and universal, and can therefore be distilled out as shared and common.

First to 'human nature'. All humans are social creatures. New research has uncovered the extent to which Homo Sapiens is a social animal that thrives on connection and cooperation rather than isolation and confrontation – see, for example, 'The Human Brain: Hardwired for Connections' by Amy Banks & Judith V. Jordan (2007).

All humans also need to be seen, recognised, and validated. In 'The Politics of Recognition', Charles Taylor (1994) argues that identity politics are motivated by a deep human need for recognition, with injurious effects of various forms of misrecognition. My global life has brought it home to me, too, how similar humans are in their need for recognition, and how this similarity can override many a 'cultural difference'. What cannot be overridden, however, at least not as easily, to my experience, are fault lines due to humiliation, precisely because humiliation violates and cuts into what connects. There is a 'special sort of pain which the brutes do not share with the humans – humiliation..'. says American philosopher Richard Rorty (1989).[20]

What else can we say about the commonalities of human nature? Human nature is not inherently aggressive. There is no archaeological evidence for systematic war prior to 10,000 years ago, when the human species populated planet Earth as hunter-gatherers. Jonathan Haas (1998) informs us that 'the Hobbesian view of humans in a constant state of "Warre" is simply not supported by the archaeological record' (p. 8). Humans were pushed into aggressive behaviour during the past 10,000 years of agriculturalism, which was defined by a win-lose frame that was much more malign than the win-win frame that was enjoyed by humans prior to reaching the limits of planet's Earth size around 10,000 years ago.[21]

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[19] See, for explanations, for example, Lewis A. Coser (1977).
[20] Page 92. I thank Howard Richards for making me aware of this quote.
[21] See the work by William Ury (1999). See also Piero Giorgi (2001).

Humans are also cultural creatures, by nature, among others due to the fact that much of their maturation takes place outside of the womb, where children meet the variety of cultural settings that humankind has on offer, which define and guide the child's development into different paths (learning different languages is only one example). Humans have the largest brain, in comparison to body size, of any animal, so large that it has become too big for the pelvic outlet of an adult female, and newborns are therefore pushed into the world 'prematurely', leaving much of human offspring's development to occur postnatally, after birth.[22]

One may expect cultural frames to guide child development into cultural uniformity within the confines of each cultural realm, yet, even though cultural contexts are extremely important for individual development, humans are not 'blank slates' at birth. There exists a great variation of personal styles and predispositions within each so-called 'culture', which, as mentioned earlier, often feels much greater than the differences between cultures.[23] The way individual children react to similar cultural pressures, can be widely divergent, and also this fact is shared throughout all cultural realms.

These commonalities began to evolve during the first ninety percent of human history, when Homo sapiens, starting out in Africa, populated planet Earth as hunter-gatherers. Prior to 10,000 years ago, the abundance of wild food provided a win-win frame that had an enabling effect on all humankind. It opened space to benign integrated nondualistic cultural adaptations that helped maintain complex Unity in Diversity (or 'Unity in Diversity',[24] or 'Diversity within Unity',[25] read more on Unity in Diversity further down in the section on Asia).

Early hunter-gatherers enjoyed rather egalitarian social structures and a high quality of life. Pristine pride and equality in dignity, contemporary human rights ideals, had room to flourish. These cultures cannot be observed today anymore, they can only be approximated from surviving indigenous populations, who, however, are usually affected by changes in the overall environment in ways their ancestors were not.[26]

Around 10,000 years ago, rather rapidly in historic terms, what anthropologists call *circumscription* occurred, and this affected most of humankind.[27] Circumscription means that there was simply not enough for everybody anymore, not enough space that could easily be populated and not enough resources that could easily be consumed. Our planet is small, and it gives the illusion of being unlimited only as long as one has not yet reached its limits. The practice of agriculture over a large fraction of suitable Earth surface began. 'The spread of agriculture throughout the world resulted from a single, strong, manipulation'.[28]

The single, strong manipulation toward agriculture affected almost all humankind, and, likewise, the '*ingathering* of the tribes of the earth'[29] with the presently emerging

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[22] See, among others, Roger Lewin & Robert A. Foley (2004).

[23] See, for example, Lee D. Ross & Andrew Ward (1996), Kenneth J. Arrow, Robert H. Mnookin, Lee D. Ross, Amos Tversky, & Robert Wilson (Eds.) (1995).

[24] Michael Harris Bond (1998).

[25] James A. Banks et al. (2001).

[26] See, among others, La Donna Harris & Jacqueline Howell Wasilewski (2004).

[27] Latin circum = around, scribere = to write, circumscription means limitation, enclosure, or confinement. The terms territorial or social circumscription address limitations in these respective areas.

[28] Peter J. Richerson, Robert Boyd, & Robert L. Bettinger (1999), p. 2.

[29] William Ury (1999), XVII. Italics added.

reality of an interdependent single global village, and the opportunity to use knowledge as source of livelihood, again affects almost all of humankind. It re-opens room for the benign win-win frame of the first ninety per cent of human history, a frame that entails the potential to stimulate the creativity that is necessary to address the global challenges that come with 'hitting the wall' of the limits of the globe.

Being part of these large-scale transitions forms the common ground that all humankind shares, on all continents, in all cultures, even if to various degrees and handled with different cultural colourings. Learning the fact that the size of planet Earth is limited, for example, was and is a global and universal learning process. It began roughly 10,000 years ago, even if only indirectly through circumscription, or today, through climate change. Climate change and international terrorism are but two buzzwords that highlight the global and universal nature of contemporary challenges.

Incidentally, the present discussion around bio-fuel is a very good recent illustration of how this learning process, even today, only very slowly moves into a conscious realisation that the size of planet Earth is limited – bio-fuel was first hailed as a solution, but now often branded as a problem, because chopping down rain forest and pushing out food production to produce biofuel offsets any gain.[30]

In the interdependent world of today, humankind must build global and local institutions, in global cooperation, that re-enable benign integrated nondualistic cultural adaptations that maintain the complexity of Unity in Diversity. Traffic offers a useful metaphor: At a crossroad without traffic lights, the strongest and most ruthless drivers get through first. Installing traffic lights introduces a level playing field – it stops the bullies and gives the weak a chance. Traffic lights work independent of differences of any kind, personal, cultural, religious, or whether people love each other or hate each other.

Troubled teens are sometimes helped by being placed into settings that are characterised by 'tough love.' Humankind's task is to build a context of global institutions that firmly but respectfully nudge everybody to behave in ways that ameliorate the overall situation, independent of personal or cultural propensities.

Differences

The differences that we can observe between individuals throughout all cultural realms in their personal styles were already mentioned above. The 'Big Five', also known as the *Five Factor Model (FFM)*, is among the most known models to organise the many different conceptions of personality that theorists have championed and that different tests measure.[31]

As to cultural differences, prior to 10,000 years ago, various collective cultural styles developed, depending on the natural environment of each group (the climate zone, closeness to the sea or the mountains, the kinds of plants and animals around, and so forth). Some of these early a-priori differences are still palpable today.

When circumscription introduced agriculture around 10,000 years ago – and agriculture requires land as a basic resource – bloody competition of 'this is either my

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[30] The development of second generation biofuels attempts to address this problem, as Sean Sutcliffe eloquently explained on 28th May 2008 in BBC World *HARDtalk* with Sarah Montague.
[31] See, for example, Lisa M. Saulsman & Andrew C. Page (2004).

land or your land' emerged. Constant preparations for war drained societal resources. Everybody had to be on continuously alert, dependent upon their leaderships and governmental organs. The new large-scale win-lose frame created the so-called *security dilemma*, as described in *international relations theory*. Stereotyped fear of out-groups (for example, of other nations) permeated in-groups.

Whoever maximised a culture that supported the dualism of 'we' against 'them' rapidly and thoroughly enough, became a successful dominator. China, for example, could have foreclosed Europe's later colonising spree and could have dominated the rest, if it had continued with its immense naval expeditions that the Ming Dynasty sponsored between 1405 and 1433, long before Europe was even near Chinese levels of development. China could have colonised the world.[32] It may have been a mere historical accident that not Chinese became the lingua franca of the world already many centuries ago. Instead, China, at some point, became the victim of humiliation Western domination.

The might-is-right context that emerged as a consequence of the security dilemma had a disabling effect on the majority of humankind. Dominators enabled small elites at the cost of disabling the rest. Notions of dignity and humiliation evolved to be defined diametrically different for masters and underlings. Equality in pristine pride no longer reigned, but ranked honour. Masters defended humiliated honour in duel-like confrontations, while underlings had to swallow being treated sub-humanly with subservience.

As a result, cultural differences no longer remained only due to adaptations to the variations of natural habitats, but were formed in response to elites who arrogated supremacy. Isaiah Berlin (1991), for example, points out that nationalism (and the 'engineering' of a 'national culture') is often motivated by some form of collective humiliation.[33]

Three profoundly different ideal-type cultures arose, in different mixes within each cultural realm: first, the 'supremacist culture of the dominating elite', second, the 'subaltern culture of those underlings who had been co-opted into accepting subservience',[34] and, third, the 'culture of covertly resisting underlings'.[35] (Any 'culture of overtly resisting underlings' had to emulate a dominator's culture in order to last.)

To describe how elites enforced cultures of domination/submission, concepts such as *méconnaissance* (misrecognition) and *naturalisation*, were used by Roland Barthes, Pierre Bourdieu, and Michel Foucault (among others). In his work on mythology (1954-1956), Roland Barthes, for example, discusses socially constructed reality and how it is perceived as 'natural'.[36] Barthes describes how opinions and values can be introduced by a certain power group and then held up as 'universal truths'. Those who try to question

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[32] See, for example, Edward L. Dreyer (2007).

[33] See also Benedict Anderson (1991), or Evelin Gerda Lindner (2000a).

[34] Johan Galtung forged the related notion of *penetration*, or "implanting the topdog inside the underdog,"[34] illustrating the fact that acceptance of subjugation may become a culture of its own. See also chapter 8 in Evelin Gerda Lindner (2009a).

[35] For example, Stanley L. Engerman & Eugene D. Genovese (Eds.) (1975), Eugene D. Genovese (1975), and Mark M. Smith (1998) in analysing slavery, found that sometimes a very special accommodation-resistance dialectic of obeying but not necessarily complying occurred, which allowed slaves to carve out a degree of autonomous and very distinctive African American culture, which eschewed the values embraced by the master class.

[36] Roland Barthes (1972). See also work on ideology by Terry Eagleton (1991).

this socially constructed reality (what Barthes calls *le cela-va-de-soi*) are ridiculed, rejected, and accused of lacking 'bon sens'.

In the interdependent world of today, with knowledge again offering a win-win frame, humankind's future is in peril, if the culture of dualism that brought 'success' during the past 10,000 years is not rapidly unlearned and its institutions dismantled. Completely new institutions must be created. The earlier used metaphor of traffic lights illustrates this task.

Yet, no intervention will ever secure perfect Unity in Diversity. The one difference mentioned at the outset of this section will always be left to attend to. Although every possible effort has to be invested into educating everybody to respect traffic lights (to use the traffic metaphor), there will always be those who cannot be persuaded. Alongside those who are already *fully enabled* and those who need to be *enabled more*, there will always be those who *cannot be enabled*.

Commonalities and Differences

Gandhi's *satyāgraha* – a combination of *satya* (truth-love) and *agraha* (firmness/force), or a global system that does not shy away from firmness when needed and implements 'tough love' – is a suitable response to this mix of commonalities and differences.[37]

As to love, recent research documents that it is possible to learn and train loving-kindness and compassion like one can train a sport.[38]

However, humankind cannot simply bet on the hope that one day everybody will learn to love everybody else. Time would be too short in any case – humankind may face a time window of less than 100 years to step back from the brink of demise.[39] Besides, succeeding in joint stewardship of the planet does not require maximal solutions to avoid failure – it requires a minimum of cooperation.

Arne Næss, among the most renowned Norwegian philosophers, recommends that we start with giving everybody a chance to join the camp of cooperators: 'There are no murderers; there are only people who have murdered'. He explained his point at length at the Second Annual Meeting of Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies.[40] Næss described in rich detail how he would invite convicted murderers from prison into his philosophy class at Oslo University to demonstrate to his students that even murderers deserve and need to be dignified. He was adamant that only individuals, who feel secure in their connection to humanity, can admit to a crime, feel guilty, show remorse, and rejoin the human family in constructive ways. As long as people feel less than fully human, there is no reason for them to care that they have hurt others or society.[41]

Former child soldier Ishmael Beah, attests to Næss's approach. He received help from a nurse, called Esther. Esther untiringly repeated to Ishmael 'it is not your fault!' thus

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[37] See also the section 'Coercion and respect can be combined' in Evelin Gerda Lindner (2006).
[38] See, for example, Antoine Lutz et al. (2008).
[39] See, for example, Michio Kaku (2005).
[40] 12th - 13th September 2003, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme de l'Homme, Paris, http://www.humiliationstudies.org/whoweare/annualmeeting02.php.
[41] See related work by Howard Zehr (1990), Howard Zehr (2002).

allowing him to feel shame and express it prosocially. Her selfless compassion rekindled the humanity that Ishmael could no longer find in himself. He recounts in an interview:

> Well, after I'd been at the rehabilitation centre for quite some time, you know. I think it was you know the people who came into my life. There was a particular nurse at the centre called Esther who was just… patient and selfless and compassionate and was willing to look at me just as a child regardless of what I had been through. I would tell her the most vicious stories I could think of during the war just to kind of deter her from talking to me and that didn't go the way I wanted and she became closer and closer to me and because of her willingness to just look at me over and over as a child, it began to sort of make me feel that there was something more to me that even I had failed to see you know, that she was seeing.[42]

In sum, teaching everybody how to love, and giving everybody the chance to regain the camp of cooperation – these are good starting points. However, they will not always lead to success. As mentioned earlier, there will always be those who cannot be enabled. To create a global frame of firm respect and love, institutions that supervise and regulate ethical conduct must be strengthened, not weakened – from practices of social control to legal institutions and police forces. Leaders who start out as saviours but end as dictators, for example, need to be taken off the job by their peers. And strong law enforcement will always be necessary to take out those of the playing field who engage in re-introducing the power-over culture of the past 10,000 years, and, if given free way, would destroy any culture that enables egality.

Still, paying for police forces, globally or locally, should be the smallest investment of global society. Currently, more than ninety percent of humankind would do much better if more enabled – rather than being denied this support and having to watch how the gap between the rich at the top and the poor at the bottom is growing, both locally and globally, and how old power-over approaches channel most funds to military expenditure. We need to apply a *Lévinasian* interpretation of human rights, which emphasises that human rights also mean care and respect for the other, in contrast to the *Kantian* interpretation of human rights as merely an abstract principle.[43]

Much 'world policing' could be avoided if the currently hugely disabling living conditions around the world were improved.[44] Greatly gifted potential Mandela-like leaders are being born everywhere – however, too many of them risk never living beyond the age of five. Millions of children all over the world die of easily preventable diseases and poverty. The Holocaust victim numbers amounted to about six million – the number

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[42] Interview with Andrew Denton, retrieved from on July 4, 2007, from http://www.abc.net.au/tv/enoughrope/transcripts/s1968333.htm.

[43] Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) was a Prussian philosopher, regarded as one of history's most influential thinkers and one of the last major philosophers of the Enlightenment, having a major impact on the Romantic and Idealist philosophies of the 19th century. Emmanuel Lévinas (1906 - 1995) was a Jewish philosopher from Lithuania, who moved to France and wrote most of his works in French. His work focuses on the ethics of the Other: The Other is not knowable and cannot be made into an object, as is posited by traditional metaphysics.

[44] The discourse on global terrorism can serve as an example. See, among others, Evelin Gerda Lindner (2008b).

of victims today is about double that figure, each year. The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs[45]) spell out the details for how this enabling process must be implemented.

To conclude the Introduction to this paper, my attempt, in this text, is to distil dominant orientations from Africa, Asia, Europe, or America as ingredients to help create a global system that puts into effect Unity in Diversity. Again, I do this with utmost hesitation. I beg the reader to always insert words such as 'tendency' or 'trend', when I write about differences, and to keep in mind that I describe my personal experiences as a global citizen, who is immersed in several different cultures. I do not wish to peddle rigid dualisms.

I design my life in ways that allow me to continuously float 'between cultures'. I often find myself in a social context where a certain world-view, or intellectual and emotional atmosphere, is regarded as 'natural', or 'bon sens', which would be seen as utterly 'unnatural' in a different context. For example, the world looks very different from certain segments of Japanese society as compared to China, or, there are two 'histories' in the Great Lakes region in Africa, one that could be called Tutsi-coloured, and an very different Hutu view. Or, as we read earlier, there is a widespread sense that there is an 'Eastern' perspective that differs from a 'Western' one.

To describe these differences 'correctly' is impossible, since they represent amalgams of a wide spectrum of fact, fiction, misplaced projections, blind spots, and manipulations for ulterior ends.[46] Yet, I cannot deny that I find myself experiencing gaps between different world-views. And I cannot overlook that some people deeply identify with these differences.

However, by describing these differences, I do not mean to prescribe them. I do not wish to reify these gaps in any way. On the contrary, my aim is to facilitate mutual understanding, dialogue, and interweaving. To me, most gaps are misunderstandings flowing from the mere lack of truly listening to each other. And this lack has many reasons, reaching from lack of opportunity to particular emotional or power interests that block such listening.

I use myself as a moving 'culture-sensor'. Evidently, this is a very subjective approach. I do not claim anything more. Yet, even though I have met many people who travel much, I have never come across a person who lives as globally as I do. My perspective is unique. I hope therefore that my reflections can have at least a stimulating effect.

My aim is to 'harvest' all elements that are useful when we try to 'engineer' a new global culture of social and ecological sustainability.

In the following, I will briefly address four cultural realms in three sections, starting with Africa, the cradle of humanity, then proceeding to Asia, and at the end to Continental Europe in relation to the Anglo-Saxon sphere.

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[45] http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/.
[46] See, for example, Benedict Anderson (1991).

Africa

Loving Humanity

I have coined the word *egalisation* to match the word globalisation and at the same time differentiate it from words such as equality or sameness, because the main point is not equality or sameness. The point is equal dignity or likeverd, even though there is a connection between equality and equal dignity (the connection is 'hidden' in the human rights stipulation that equal chances and enabling environments for all are necessary to protect human dignity).

The term egalisation is meant to avoid claiming that there should be no differences between people. On the contrary, egalisation is the only way to truly reap the fruits of diversity. Egalisation is the path toward realising Unity in Diversity, or, more precisely, more unity and at the same time more diversity, thus avoiding the bygone fallacies of either uniformity or division.

Egality can coexist with a functional hierarchy that regards all participants as possessing equal dignity; egality can not co-exist, though, with a hierarchy that defines some people as lesser beings and others as more valuable.[47]

Egalisation is a process that elicits intense humiliation when its promises fail. The lack of egalisation is thus the very element that intensifies feelings among so-called 'globalisation-critics'. Their disquiet stems from lack of egalisation and not from an overdose of globalisation. What they call for is that *globalisation* ought to marry *egalisation*. What they call for is globalisation without humiliation.

However, we need more than egalisation, more than global institutional frames that humanise globalisation and structurally enable global cooperation. We also need social and psychological 'glue' that safeguards global cohesion. As mentioned above, we need to apply the *Lévinasian* interpretation of human rights.

Even though we all hope for a world where everybody learns to love everybody else, as mentioned above, humankind does not have to reach its highest dreams to survive. We must simply avoid pushing the planet over the edge, both socially and ecologically. This is the mandatory minimum requirement. In many countries parents increasingly receive joint custody for their children after divorce. Humankind has *joint custody for the planet* – irrespective of any interpersonal or international falling out.

How do we develop cultural, social, psychological, and emotional scripts that enable us to cooperate even if we do not love each other, similar to the cooperation that is needed for shared custody for children to work after 'divorce'?

A good starting point is the human experience prior to 10,000 years ago, as it was lived, for example, in Africa, and as far as it lasted long enough to become to a certain extent hard-wired. It is certainly wrong to idealise hunter-gatherers or to romanticise them as harmonious golden age dwellers. Yet, in the face of dissonance, conflict, disharmony, disease, or danger, the core ethos, the core moral sentiment and moral economy among them seems to have been egalitarian. Or in other words, human worth and value was not ranked hierarchically in any deep institutionalised form. Every

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[47] See the work on *rankism* by Robert W. Fuller (2003).

individual faced the world with considerable pristine pride until roughly 10,000 years ago, when living conditions changed, and agriculture began to define human life in much more malign ways. As mentioned above, there is, for example, no archaeological evidence for systematic war prior to ten thousand years ago – 'human nature' is not as inevitably 'aggressive' as many believe.

Social scientists have begun to heed those new insights. The Jean Baker Miller Training Institute of Wellesley College, for example, proposes a relational analysis of psychological development and has developed a *relational-cultural theory*,[48] showing that relationships – specifically growth-fostering relationships – are a central human necessity. Or, Jacqueline Wasilewski, teaching in Japan, with an Indigenous American background, has not only written on indigenous wisdom,[49] and how consensus-based decision-making may be applied in contemporary global society,[50] but has also embarked on a large dialogue project that applies ancient indigenous wisdom to people from Northeast Asia, many of whom are caught in deep mutual mistrust and feelings of humiliation.[51]

If we look for concepts that are related to relational cohesion building, we find, for example, *mettā* in Pāli (or *maitrī* in Sanskrit), meaning 'loving-kindness', 'friendliness', 'benevolence', 'amity', 'friendship', 'good will', 'sympathy', or 'active interest in others'. Or we have *philia*, which means 'love between friends' in Greek, or *agape*, also Greek, an adjective and adverb that means 'gaping, as with wonder, with expectation, or with eager attention'. Or, more recently, Jewish theologian Martin Buber (1944) calls for 'I-It' relationships to be replaced by '*dialogical unity*' in an 'I-Thou' fashion based on mutual respect. For Buber, meeting a fellow human being in a real dialogue is a reflection of the human meeting with God, or for, atheists, a quasi-divine encounter.

Ubuntu

Africa, the cradle of humanity, can contribute here also today. Africa is more than the provider of humankind's formative environment and its genetic and cultural evolution for the first ninety percent of human history. Africa can also today be approached for inspiration. There is, for example, *Ubuntu*. Ubuntu represents a traditional African philosophy for living together and solving conflict in an atmosphere of shared humility.[52] Desmond Tutu (1999), in his work with the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* drew on Ubuntu. Also Nelson Mandela's approach could be placed within the same frame (in my work I treat Mandela in the spirit of a Weberian ideal-type approach and focus on his constructive strategies, which are not minimized by criticisms that people may direct at his movement or him as a person).

Linda Hartling of the Jean Baker Miller Training Institute in Boston confirms that Ubuntu is a way to togetherness and community in the atmosphere of shared humility:

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[48] See, for example, Judith V. Jordan (1997), Judith V. Jordan & Linda M. Hartling (2002); Judith V. Jordan et al. (1991), Judith V. Jordan, Maureen Walker, & Linda M. Hartling (2004), Jean Baker Miller & Irene P. Stiver (1997), and Maureen Walker & Wendy Rosen (2004).

[49] Jacqueline Howell Wasilewski & Laura Harris (2004).

[50] Jacqueline Howell Wasilewski (2002).

[51] Jacqueline Howell Wasilewski (2005).

[52] Michael Jesse Battle (1997).

'While collectivism can promote social interest at the expense of personal well-being, individualism promotes self-interest at the expense of social interest. Both of these tendencies are not sustainable… A third way may be the concept-philosophy-practice of ubuntu'.[53]

Egyptian love

Let me pick another example from the African continent, an example that has impressed me deeply. 'Nowhere but in Egypt are there so many marvellous things, nor in the world besides are to be seen so many things of unspeakable greatness', wrote Herodotus, the fifth century BC historian. Egypt as one of civilisations oldest cultures, offers extremely rich love poetry, from ancient Egypt to modern Egypt with its Arabic and Moslem influences (which makes Egypt be part of both Africa and the Middle East).

I worked as a clinical psychologist in Cairo, Egypt (1984-1991). I will never forget the first time I was touched by Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum (1904-1975), her intense and highly personal relationship with her audience and how she is loved back by her audience still today, decades after her death. The official recorded length of a song such as *Enta Omri* (You Are My Life) is sixty minutes; however, a live performance could last for many hours, where she would repeat single sequences with slightly different emotive emphasis and intensity and bring her audiences into a euphoric and ecstatic state. Indeed, I have never met a culture of emotional richness and love that could rival that of the Nile Delta. Among the warmest and most loving people in the world, to me, are the people of this delta.

This is not to say that it is an ideal society – hierarchical and abusive social and societal structures are as pervasive as in many other parts of the world. However, in the Nile Delta they appear to be somewhat mitigated by a profound sense of loving and merciful humanity, that I have not met anywhere else.

I have often reflected on the reasons for this particularity. For thousands of years, the Nile Delta inhabitants were surrounded by desert and its threat of belligerent nomads (most of my Egyptian friends share a deep fear of the desert); for two thousand years they suffered oppression at the hands of foreign occupators. A culture of long-term mutual dependence developed – incidentally the very culture that all of humankind has to develop in our contemporary interdependent world – with an unparalleled ability to compromise and love, across the status lines of its traditional top-down hierarchical society.

Many people of the Nile Delta are particularly pragmatic people who have no 'natural' tendency to become zealots. Egypt is often called 'the Czechia of the Arab World'. The Czech 'good soldier Schweik' (a figure created by Jaroslav Hasek, 1983-1923) is an example of a person who resists oppression in very subtle ways, for example, with humour, while appearing stupid, or with especially clever argumentation, or even with well-hidden sabotage. As noted above, oppressed populations seem to develop special abilities in the field of communication, abilities that cover a whole range of subtle methods (not surprisingly, the amalgam of these cultural elements, if driven too far, can lead to an inefficient waste of time and resources).

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[53] Linda Hartling, in a personal message, 27th April 2008.

Interestingly, Upper Egypt, south of Cairo, is different. This is the area of Egypt that has the strongest Arab-nomadic influence (Egyptians have a tradition of farming along the Nile and are not nomadic Bedouins like their desert brothers from the Arab Peninsula). Upper Egyptians are said to be fiercer than those in the North. Northerners think of themselves as more civilised, better able to talk and reconcile conflicts by using sophisticated communication strategies. They look down upon southerners, and ridicule them in innumerable jokes expressing the cliché that the Upper Egyptian does not talk much but is ready to shoot fast. Upper Egyptians, on their part, retaliate with jokes depicting their northern brothers as weaklings who talk instead of acting.

What is important for Western readers to note is that Egyptian love is tough. In my 2006 book on humiliation and international conflict, I present the Egyptian concept of social control (pp. 154-157). Egyptian love is not a rosy feeling or a naïve wish, but a cultural institution that entails coercive elements. What is interesting is that *overpowering coercion* is *wedded to respect* in the spirit of Gandhi's satyāgraha.

I would recommend the ability to love that has emerged in the Nile Delta to the world. Admittedly, too much 'loving' consensus seeking can foster inefficiency; however, I believe that this can be filtered out. The sheer ability for love that so many Egyptians learn already as children and carry in their hearts and minds, to me, is an invaluable treasure that Egypt has to offer to the world.

To end this section, let us turn to Avishai Margalit (1996), who calls it a *decent* society when systemic change has succeeded to provide all citizens with institutions that do not humiliate them. What we need today, is to embark on global systemic change towards a *decent global village*, with institutions that create a dignified world, filled with loving mutuality even 'after divorce', loving mutuality that bridges the most serious rifts, so as to transform humanity into one that is truly humane. This loving mutuality can be informed, among others, by African Ubuntu and Egyptian love.

Asia

Elena Mustakova-Possardt (2008) calls for an 'integrative psychological approach to cultivating optimal individual and collective global consciousness and achieving a meeting and interpenetration between East and West' (Abstract).

How can we achieve a meeting and interpenetration between East and West?

Nondualism and Harmony

In two articles,[54] I argue that the ontological orientation of *nondualism* and the call for *harmony* are crucial contributions traditional Asia can make to the creation of a sustainable future for humankind.

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[54] Evelin Gerda Lindner (2009b), Evelin Gerda Lindner (2008a).

Nondualism

Metaphysics is the branch of philosophy that reflects on 'the study of being', in Greek 'ontology'.[55] Philosophy of mind is the ontology of the mind, of mental events, mental functions, mental properties, consciousness, and their relationship to the physical body, particularly the brain.[56]

The dominant Western metaphysical orientation that underpinned its spree of conquering the rest of the world over the past centuries was *dualism*.[57] Dualism holds that ultimately there are two kinds of substance. René Descartes' dualistic view of a mind-body dichotomy is perhaps the most widely known expression of dualism. Dualism is to be distinguished from *pluralism*, which holds that ultimately there are many kinds of substance, from *nondualism*, and from *monism*, which is the metaphysical and theological view that all is one, either the mental (*idealism*) or the physical (*materialism and physicalism*). Physicalism is thus a monist concept, holding that that there are no kinds of things other than physical things.

Even though contemporary scientists usually are physicalists, dualistic views still linger on in many spheres of life[58] – not least expressions such as 'the axis of evil' can serve as evidence. Indeed, dualism represents the strongest metaphysical background that lends itself to be instrumentalised to push for war. Dualism-Manichaeism-Armageddon (the DMA syndrome), is decried by peace researcher Johan Galtung as the eerie path from conflict to war.[59] In his book *The Psychology of War*, also Lawrence LeShan (1992) dissects how creating and firing up Manichaean self/other and good/evil dualisms in people prepares them for violence and convinces them that wars are worth fighting. The critique of dualistic *binary oppositions* (a term coined by Ferdinand de Saussure) is an important part of post-feminism, post-colonialism, post-anarchism, and critical race theory.[60] Dualism is a kind of 'master blind spot' in current Western approaches.

At present, we observe growing fascination in so-called *nondualistic* approaches.[61] To the nondualist, reality is ultimately neither physical nor mental, but an overwhelming state or realisation beyond words. There are many variations of this view, with nondualism proper holding that while different phenomena are not the same, they are inseparable, or that there is no hard line between them. We see this approach in mystical traditions of many religions, particularly traditions originating in Asia.[62]

Gandhi's non-violent action approach of satyāgraha could be counted as a recent outflow of a nondualistic Asian tradition. In the West, non-violence is often misunderstood as feeble and passive readiness to allow bullies to walk over the weak, with violence as the only way to stop abuse. It is precisely Gandhi's nondualistic combination of force and love that makes it useful, transcending the misleading dualism

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[55] See, for example, Michael J. Loux (2006).

[56] See, for example, Brian Beakley & Peter Ludlow (Eds.) (2006).

[57] See also the term *binary opposition*, which has its origins in Saussurean structuralist theory.

[58] See, for example, Charles B. Nemeroff, Clinton D. Kils, & Gregory S. Berns (1999).

[59] Johan Galtung et al. (2000).

[60] Jacques Derrida argues that the binary oppositions that create abusive hierachies must be deconstructed – see Jacques Derrida (1976).

[61] See, among others, Jerry Katz (Ed.) (2007).

[62] Evelin Gerda Lindner (2009b), Evelin Gerda Lindner (2008a)

of appeasing pacifism versus non-appeasing non-pacifism that confuses the discussion of non-violence in the West.

Muneo Yoshikawa, in Japan, has developed a *double-swing* model[63] that conceptualises how individuals, cultures and intercultural concepts can blend in constructive ways that safeguard 'waging good conflict'.[64] The model is graphically presented as the infinity symbol, or Möbius Strip (∞). Muneo Yoshikawa draws upon on European Martin Buber and his concept of dialogue, secondly, on the Buddhist 'Not-One, Not-Two' logic of 'soku',[65] and thirdly on a dialectical approach that emphasises the processual, relational and contradictory nature of intercultural communication.[66] Buber's idea of 'dialogical unity' in *I and Thou* emphasises 'the act of meeting between two different beings without eliminating the otherness or uniqueness of each'. A two-fold movement between the self and other allows for both a unity and uniqueness. Yoshikawa calls the unity that is created out of the realisation of differences 'identity in unity'. The dialogical unity does not eliminate the tension between the contradictions between basic potential unity and apparent duality.

Harmony

Asian harmony, to my experience, is in some ways similar to the concept of love in Egypt, however, in Asia it seems to be defined rather by passive and quiet compliance with duty, while the love I see in the Nile Delta appears to be more of an actively outreaching love.

To mention but two texts among innumerable publications on this topic, Kamar Oniah Kamaruzaman (2008), for example, in 'Intra-Personal and Inter-Personal Peace: An Islamic Understanding of the Human Constituents', contributes to the discussion of harmony in Asia by examining ways to psycho-spiritual harmony of individuals. Or, M. Anne Brown (2002), in her discussion of the 'Asian way debate', advocates dialogue that takes its path toward harmony from the suffering of the victim, not from top-down monologic preaching of universal values..

Let me delve a little deeper into this point. As already alluded to earlier, we live in times of transition. As William Ury (1999) so eloquently explains, it is a transition that brings back elements of a more benign past. The human rights ideal of equality in dignity for all that seems to have reigned prior to 10,000 years ago was subverted during the past 10,000 of human history – most societies on the globe were ranked, with 'higher' beings ruling over 'lower' beings. Today the ideal of equality in dignity for all re-emerges. The problem is that it squarely contradicts the practice of the past ten millennia.

As a consequence, terms such as *conflict resolution, reconciliation, harmony, peace, love*, or *humility, shame, and humiliation* are treacherous. They all entail interpretations at their heart which stem from incompatible worlds. Conflict resolution, reconciliation, harmony, peace, love, or humility, shame, and humiliation can be understood in the frame

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[63] Muneo Jay Yoshikawa (1980), Muneo Jay Yoshikawa (1987).
[64] This term was coined by Jean Baker Miller (1986).
[65] Martin Buber (1944), Nobuji Nakayama (1973), pp. 24-29, as explained by Elizabeth I. Dow (2005).
[66] Judith N. Martin, Thomas K. Nakayama, & Lisa A. Flores (2002).

of the *docile subservience of underlings*, or of *successful calibration of mutuality between equals*.

Therefore we need to qualify these terms further when we use them. The traditional concepts, from the point of view of human rights, have a humiliating effect, while the new definitions liberate. Forcing slaves into subservient humility, asking them to feel ashamed of their lowliness, requesting them to interpret their painful situation as 'prosocial' (the approach of the past 10,000 years), from today's perspective, is humiliating. A slave deserves to be liberated, empowered, and respected as equal in dignity. Calibration of mutuality between equals 'can be distinguished from providing interventions that overtly or covertly encourage people to merely adapt and accept their devalued status'.[67]

When people face ideas and visions that are new for them, for example the human rights ideal of equality in dignity, what are the options they have at their disposal? One possible reaction is to embrace the new vision, and implement it. Another possible reaction is to close one's eyes, or deny that new ideas exist altogether. Or, one can acknowledge their existence and reject them in different ways. Three main reasons for rejection come to mind: First, one can reject a new vision because one understands it only too well and is not ready to accept its reverberations (for example, traditional power elites may not wish to give up their privileges and may therefore wish to maintain a ranked system). Second, one can reject a new idea, while instrumentalising its very arguments in the service of this rejection (for example, one may wish to maintain a ranked system within one's own cultural realm by requesting respect from outside critics, using the argument of equality only between cultures, not within. Third, one can understand the new vision better than some of its promoters and reject its implementation when it is done in ways that undermine its own spirit (for example, Western arrogance directly undercuts its own human rights advocacy; the 2003 Iraq war illustrated the resulting fault lines).

Since the term 'harmonious societies' is currently writ large in Asia, I included those three cases in Table 1 and related them to the concept of harmony.

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[67] Linda Hartling, in a personal message, 27th April 2008.

Three Ways to Reject Human Rights Advocacy, and their Relationship with Harmony

Rejection of human rights advocacy	Harmony
1. Human rights advocacy is being rejected outright.	Harmony is regarded as being achieved, in a context of ranked submission/domination, when underlings behave in a quiet and subservient manner.
2. Human rights advocacy is being rejected for one's own underlings, while human rights arguments are used in a double-bind, self-refuting way to keep human rights advocates at bay.	Harmony is regarded as being achieved, in a context of ranked submission/domination, when underlings behave in a quiet and subservient manner, and human rights activists are held at bay by their own arguments.
3. Human rights are accepted, however, self-refuting ways to advocate human rights are being rejected.	Harmony is regarded as being achieved, in a context of equality in rights and dignity, when also the fashion in which human rights are being promoted is consistent with the human rights message.

Table 1: Three ways to reject human rights advocacy, and their relationship with harmony

If we take that human rights are a normative frame that is best suited for an interdependent world, then only one conceptualisation of harmony will be sustainable, the one that defines harmony as the successful calibration of mutuality between equals. As of today, this kind of harmony does not exist anywhere on the globe, and the obstacles on the path to a thus-defined future are huge. See, for example, a chapter by Fan Zhou (2008), 'To Hate or to Like: Attitudes towards the Rich of the Public in Chinese Society', which discusses the difficulties that present themselves on the path to 'harmony'.

Harmony has to do with relationships and happiness. New research shows that having friends (rather than money) is at the core of happiness. Positive psychology has been catapulted into the limelight just very recently. Nobel Laureate Daniel Kahneman, together with Martin Seligman, and Ed Diener, all spell out the make-up of happiness.[68]

To round up this section, let us look to Bhutan. Bhutan offers a unique example from Asia in this context. Bhutan decided to focus on Gross National Happiness (GNH) rather than Gross National Product (GNP).[69] Ex-king Jigme Singye Wangchuck seeks to steer Bhutan into the modern world while preserving its unique identity. He carefully and cautiously brought Bhutan into a globalising world by royal decree.[70] No bloody overthrow of his monarchy was necessary. In Bhutan's landmark elections on 24th March

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[68] See, for example, Daniel Kahneman (2002), Martin Martin E. P. Seligman (2002), or Norbert Schwarz, Daniel Kahneman, & Ed Diener (Eds.) (1999).

[69] Jigmi Y. Thinley (2005), the then Minister of Home and Cultural Affairs, Bhutan, explained this strategy in a keynote speech, 'What does Gross National Happiness (GNH) mean?'

[70] See the official website of the Election Commission of Bhutan at http://www.election-bhutan.org.bt/module.php?Menu=Top&View=KASHO.

2008, that ended a century of absolute monarchy, the party widely perceived as most loyal to the monarchy won by a landslide.

Here we observe how a power elite descends from arrogating supremacy and humbles itself, while lifting its population up. All meet at a middle level of equality in dignity, thus paving the way for a society where the kind of harmony can unfold that offers dignified lives to all its members.

My conclusion is that we are well advised, as humankind, to study Bhutan's example and create a *harmonious global society* by applying traditional Asian templates of nondualistic conceptualisations of harmony.

Continental Europe and the Anglo-Saxon Sphere

Courageous Action and Designing Systems

Many markers highlight the propensity toward *courageous action* in the Anglo-Saxon sphere, in comparison with a disposition for *designing systems* in Continental Europe. For example, the so-called *common law* system is used in every country which has been colonised at some time by England, except those that had been formerly colonised by other nations. Common law is law developed through decisions of courts and similar tribunals, rather than through legislative statutes or executive action. Continental Europe, and most of the rest of the world, in contrast, uses the *civil law* system or *code* jurisdictions, designed rather by scholars than judges. For example, the *Napoleonic code* forbade French judges to pronounce law.

There are many other markers, let me pick one from the field of physics: Viennese physicist Anton Zeilinger explains that there was and still is a tradition in Europe of philosophical thinking among physicists, a tradition which may benefit from being combined with American Anglo-Saxon action orientation. He explains:

> I saw that in 1977 when I went to America for the first time. Already after a couple of weeks I started to miss philosophical discussion. Here we're more ready to ask really fundamental questions. In Europe it's important to question things. In America it's important to be able to build something. I don't mean that at all negatively… it also has to do with the American pioneer spirit and the 'success' of natural sciences in World War II. But I think the European approach is more successful in the long run. Precisely in terms of the major problems facing physics. We've now been working on the unification of gravitation and quantum physics for almost eighty years – there must be something wrong with our concepts. I'm convinced we can only succeed with an entirely new philosophical approach' (Anton Zeilinger, Mathias Plüss, & Regina Hügli (2006)).

Or, here is another example. Kishore Mahbubani, in the *HARDtalk* interview with Stephen Sackur mentioned above, applauded the European Union for having reached the 'gold standard' of peace by designing a suitable system for concord among diverse cultural realms and trends within the EU borders. The notion of *subsidiarity* – meaning

that local decision making and local identities are retained to the greatest extent possible – is central to these institutions. (Subsidiarity allows for safeguarding and celebrating diversity in ways that do not separate and divide, but embed it in a context of respect for equal dignity.)

However, Mahbubani also made the point that Europe has so far failed as soon as action was required outside of its borders.

When I studied medicine in the 1980s, debates were waging between proponents of two approaches, a preventive *strengthening* approach to health, as opposed to surgical or pharmaceutical *strikes* to rescue damaged health. We learned, however, that patients benefit most when both strategies are used, supporting one another. In the global arena, building a sustainable world based on human rights would be equivalent to the preventive *strengthening* approach. Dissuading, isolating, and marginalising extremists – such as terrorists – would correspond to *strikes*:

> European hesitation confirms American suspicions that Europeans are not capable of being decisive and courageous and that Americans are the world's most visionary and strong-minded leaders. Americans are good surgeons so to speak, and Europeans are weaklings who cannot stand the sight of blood. From the European point of view, American strategies risk being counterproductive – the wrong strikes at the wrong time – exacerbating the disease instead of healing it (Evelin Gerda Lindner (2006), p. 95).

Clearly, it seems advisable to combine the Anglo-Saxon orientation of *courageous action* with the Continental European talent of *planning and designing systems*. Let us analyse both propensities somewhat deeper.

The dilemma: What provides legitimacy and credibility in mainstream American culture, tends to remove it outside of American culture

Let me concentrate on Continental Europe and American culture in particular, because mainstream American culture displays the propensity for action slightly more than Great Britain. Please allow me to expand on this issue slightly lengthier, since it is a particularly sore point, which plays a role in decisions as important as waging war (the 2003 Iraq war exposed related fault lines and their nuances).

Buy this wonderful product!

What makes it difficult to build bridges between both approaches is, to my view, the dilemma that what provides legitimacy and credibility in mainstream American culture, tends to remove it outside of American culture: For example, foregrounding that one has a well-defined product (an idea, a project, a book, a course, etc.) that one wishes to implement and sell in a short time frame, not hiding that success will also boost one's own standing and gain, causes one to be regarded as a sensible person in mainstream America, and people are willing to listen.

Outside of American culture, the effect is easily the opposite (this does not necessarily mean outside of America, since American culture has been adopted and is even being idolised in many parts of the world – current China, for example, sometimes feels more American than America, much in violation of Chinese philosophical historical traditions). Outside of American culture, people tend to be wary of people who want to 'hastily' sell and implement something, particularly when this scheme will also gain them personal wealth. For example, religious preachers who amass riches for themselves, in violation of their own preachings, would risk losing legitimacy quicker outside than inside American culture.

Philosophical musings, i.e. investing time and energy into endeavours that do not bring short-term visible and personal gain, are easily seen as 'crazy' in mainstream American culture, furthermore as smacking of morally and socially unacceptable free-riding. In contrast, outside of mainstream American culture, investing time and energy into a higher cause, even when this does not provide short-term and direct personal gain, may be seen as a noble endeavour, worthy of support. More even, outside of American mainstream culture, any claim to work for a higher cause would easily be undermined, smacking of double standards, if this work provided personal gain, at least any gain that extended beyond basic sustenance, because then the cause would no longer be seen as a higher one.

The fact that the same approach that decisively strengthens any mission within American culture, may damage it outside of American culture, can also be described as an emphasis on action-oriented *problem-solving* versus creative *self-expression* (Paul Richards' terminology).[71] In the U.S., many people may not only be more into problem solving but there may be a tendency to regard certain kinds of problem-solving as self-expression – for example, gaining personal wealth may be regarded as respectable self-expression. Outside of American culture, earning one's living, even accumulating personal wealth, is regarded as problem-solving rather than self-expression, and people who self-express in less self-oriented ways gain more stature – even more, outside of American culture, the credibility of self-expression tends to be destroyed, not aided, when it is put to the service of self-referential problem-solving.

To simplify starkly, higher causes are not regarded as having much utility in mainstream American culture, except perhaps as a hobby, a hobby for weaker souls who need hobbies to be happy due to their failure to draw happiness from what really makes happy, namely gaining wealth, status, and significance for oneself, and perhaps one's immediate family, in the eyes of one's peers and of God. In contrast, higher causes that transcend immediate individual advancement are regarded as optimal source of meaning and happiness outside of American culture.

American history may play a key role. The American ideal is the person who immigrates to America to escape shackles, to liberate and fulfil her own potential. Higher causes are quickly equated with those shackles, and engaging in them with failing to make the transition towards fulfilling one's own potential for personal advancement. Or, to say it differently, the one higher cause regarded as worthiest may be the American ideal of fulfilling one's own potential for personal advancement. There is a heroic element in freeing one's own fate from oppressive collectives, and this element may be responsible for moving this cause to the level of a 'higher' one in American culture. This

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[71] Please see his body of work at http://www.sente-energetics.com/.

tendency was intensified after the demise of state ownership in the communist countries, contends Richard G. Wilkinson (2005): 'The Unites States lost its liking for equality: people came to assume equality involved a sacrifice of freedom' (p. 310).

In contrast, focusing on one's own potential for personal advancement is not regarded as a higher cause outside of American culture. There, it is merely a necessity of life that has no heroic element. What is seen as worthy heroism, in contrast, is transcending one's immediate personal realm, and investing into common interest.

It seems evident, that these mutually exclusive appraisals of worthiness would gain from being changed from a win-lose frame to a win-win frame. The American ideal entails an element of liberating oneself from a larger oppressive collective (for immigrants from Europe, it was 'Old Europe'), and moving away from it. In an interdependent world, however, moving away is no longer an option. Changing the entire system is the only option.

In an interdependent world, nobody can flee from the larger context and merely concentrate on his or her own personal realm. There is no empty world waiting for immigrants, since there is no other planet to which heroic individuals could move to fulfil their potential for personal success. There is no personal realm that can be made independent from the larger context. Therefore common interest and immediate self-interest coincide. It does not help, for example, to equate the call to serve common interest with oppressive collectivist culture, when it is, for example, global climate change that calls. Heroically rejecting this call is futile and ridiculous.

People, who immigrated to America, responded to the pressure for change in their lives by leaving and building a new life elsewhere. People, who stayed behind, did so either because they did not feel pressure for change, or, in case they did, they accepted that the maximal option available to them was to try to ameliorate the situation from within.

Today, since leaving is no longer a possible choice on planet Earth, American culture faces a problem. Since it is no longer feasible to merely react to the need for change by attributing problems to oppressive collectives, which need to be rejected, left behind, and replaced by a better life elsewhere by courageous individuals, since, today, 'elsewhere' no longer exists, change from within is the only possible strategy left. Linda Hartling comments that American culture, by advancing the outlook that 'selling and self-promotion' are ideal ways to achieve success and respect, and that selling and self-promotion are admirable behaviours everyone should develop, risks being steered by 'myopic' self-interest.[72]

What does Hartling mean with 'myopic self-interest'? Let us use the image of a tree for the biosphere. Any rule that permits maximisation is potentially harmful, for example, maximisation of profit. Applied thoroughly, this would mean harvesting as many apples as possible, however, refusing to invest in maintaining the trees. At the current point in history, the world's rules allow those who have many apples, to exchange them for acquiring more trees, from which they then harvest all apples, before letting them die, and moving on to trees which are still intact. Clearly, this party must have an end when the limits of the biosphere are reached and all trees are dead. Such rules are not sustainable. If one wishes to harvest apples in a sustainable fashion, the rules must be adapted.

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[72] Linda Hartling, in a personal message, 27th April 2008.

Several bonanzas already ended, for example, the bonanza of a few empires colonising and exploiting the rest of world. Those empires conceptualised their strategies in terms of national landownership. At present, the subsequent raid is about to end, namely that of exploiting the resources of the world by profit-maximising businesses (sometimes cloaked in national interest) – the corporate sector conceptualises its strategies in terms of corporate ownership of resources.

The new rules for the future must focus on optimising the human fit into the larger homeostatic system of our biosphere, rather than on maximising opportunities for exploitation for a few at the expense of the short-term well-being of the rest, and the long-term survival of everybody. The idea of maximisation is an enemy to any homeostatic system – it does not fit into Unity in Diversity approaches, because it leads to the division and fragmentation of the unity of a homeostatic system. The only strategy that can be maximised is the one of the best fit for Unity in Diversity.

To use the Unity in Diversity principle to gauge the role of capital reveals that capital can only play a benign role if it is embedded in the unified care for the quality of the common good. When profit is allowed to be blindly 'maximised', it is made independent of the common good and has a profoundly divisive effect.[73] 'Living well' for all, as mentioned above, is the antidote to 'living wastefully' for a few.

I wrote the last sentence just before talking to Reynald Parmelin, a pioneer of bio-viticulture (he started out in 1994) north of Lake Geneva (24th May 2008 at his Domaine La Capitaine). He explained that many of his colleagues are afraid to follow his example, because unless one possesses a wealth of knowledge about the complexity of homeostatic balance, the experiment can quickly veer out of control. The secret is optimisation, not maximisation. It is easier to maximise the killing of pests, than optimise a balance of integrated pest management.

Where American culture remains very useful however, is with respect to its action-oriented rejection of oppressive settings. It is important to free the world from oppressive regimes. It is important to reject settings where the space for individuals to unfold is curtailed unnecessarily, as it happens under oppressive regimes. What indeed is needed in today's world, are individuals who defend personal integrity and dignity to the maximum, and this is what American culture can help with.

Yet, again, any 'solution' falls short when all impingements on personal space are defined as equally illegitimate. The impingement on one's space that stems from global climate change, for example, is not something one can fend off like an illegitimate oppressive regime. And what is not addressed either when this approach is applied blindly and indiscriminately, is the danger that by merely giving everybody maximum space, bullies will soon take up more legroom and squeeze the weaker ones out, thus undermining the very aim of the core idea of the system.

Again, the American culture of turning one's back and moving elsewhere is practical when 'elsewhere' exists, but impractical, when not. In an interdependent world, solutions are only successfully achieved through large-scale systemic reform of the overall context, from within, and this is a task aided by non-American cultural emphases. What is

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[73] Hear, among many, the voice of Gore VidalJay Parini (Ed.) (2008). In a BBC World HARDtalk interview with Stephen Sackur on 22nd May 2008, he exclaimed that he is not in the business of "loving his country" – loving one's country is the source of all evil, he said – no, what he does is caring about the United States.

necessary is to deeply engage with the larger context that exerts this pressure and help design this larger context in ways that give all individuals optimum individual conditions. Once more, the larger context needs attention and meticulous design; it cannot be fled from or rejected.

The definitions of common good and self-interest are crucial here, as are the focus on the individual as compared to the system. From a mainstream American point of view, the world works best, and the common good is promoted best, when all individuals have the space to develop to the maximum whatever they perceive to be in their self-interest, for accumulating personal advancement. If this space is lacking, one has to resist, and, if necessary, turn around, and go elsewhere.

The alternative view would be that it is in the common interest that everybody helps design the overall context in ways that distribute the opening up and the curtailing of personal freedom in ways that optimise the common good for everybody. At some junctures space must be opened, at others space must be curtailed. Whenever pressures are exerted that do not serve common interest, but the particular interests of a group who had succeeded in becoming influential and powerful, their space must be limited to safeguard the legroom of the rest. Enron-like abuses or sub-prime catastrophes illustrate how some players can expand their space and obliterate it for others. The dilemma must be heeded that a focus on individual freedom can be abused for the opposite end, namely for oppression. For power elites who wish to strengthen their grip on their underlings a focus on the individual is an attractive tool to weaken underling resistance. The inquisition, for example, managed to make supposedly evil underlings responsible for ills authored elsewhere, and it succeeded in clouding and occupying the minds of their underlings by guiding their attention to individual evil instead of evil meted out by the elites.

The principle of Unity in Diversity that was introduced earlier, can guide the combination of action- and system-orientation that the world requires at the current juncture: Our world needs action from all its citizens, action that is informed by cultural diversity, however, that unites people and strategies for protecting the common good.

The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth!

Several more elements of American culture which evolved when people still could turn their backs and build a better life elsewhere need to be amended in today's interdependent world. Let me refer to a discussion that I had with a dear American friend (in an email exchange throughout 2007), a friend who rejects the notion of appreciative communication, because she is proud of the American ethos of saying 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'. She feels that she has only two choices, either saying the whole truth and paying the price that she may alienate her interlocutors, or suppressing the truth. For her, there is no middle way. And since she prefers the truth, to her, there is no alternative to confronting others to the point of hostility and separation if necessary. Everything else, for her, would amount to a betrayal of what she values most in American culture, namely courage for clarity.

I explained to her that to me there exist three core approaches, not just two. First, one can suppress potentially confrontational topics so as to save the social bonds to one's

interlocutors. Second, one can follow my American friend's example and 'honestly' address a situation, including controversial topics, in ways that lead to confrontation and the break-down of the relationship with the other. In the latter case, indeed, the speaker can congratulate herself that she was honest, however, to me, she has gained nothing in the real world, except breaking the connection to the other person. The second approach merely switches from 'letting the other person walk over me' to 'me walking over the other person', thus proceeding from one kind of 'too much' to another kind of 'too much', from being too much together to being too much apart, from too much dependence to too much isolation.

I would prefer a third strategy, namely to honestly address the situation, including confrontational topics, in ways that lead to real dialogue and preserve a mutual, interdependent connection with the other person. This is what Jean Baker Miller (1986), pioneer in women's psychology, calls 'waging good conflict' (see also the work by Yoshikawa introduced earlier).

Let me flesh out these three points somewhat deeper. As to the first alternative, a Japanese child, for example, would never be taught to tell 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth'. Nor would a European child (I grew up in Europe and can attest to that!). I assume an African American child perhaps neither, nor a child with an indigenous American background. In other words, the script of 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' has its historic roots in a specific segment of American society.

Let me paint this picture a bit more thoroughly. In Japan, the feudal lord and his warriors (Samurai) could cut off the head of lower persons, such as farmers, traders, or outcasts, whenever they deemed it necessary. In other words, fear reigned, and saying the truth was potentially lethal, at least for the majority of people. The majority had to fear for their lives, only the small minority of the ruling elite was somewhat exempted. Interestingly, these differences are still visible nowadays, even though feudalism ended in 1868. Still today, I see an imaginary sword hovering over the heads of the Japanese population. To me, their politeness is imbued with fear of death (I lived in Japan for three years).

Let me insert a little vignette from Japan. I have two dear Japanese friends, doctoral students in political science, one the son of a former Samurai family, the other the son of a former farming family. The former Samurai family's son, thirty five years old, today, more than one hundred years after the end of feudalism, carries his head high up and thinks rather independently. The former farming family's son, of the same age, bows and acquiesces. The difference is astounding. They themselves did not notice this difference until I discussed it with them. Once (in 2005) I asked them: 'Will you get married?' The Samurai said: 'Yes!' The farmer said: 'My parents expect me to'. This was all he said, nothing more. Or, I asked: 'What is your view on the vision of a world with equal dignity for all?' The Samurai said: 'Yes, this is what we need!' The farmer said: 'I like hierarchy, and I like to be an underling. Underlings have a quiet life and do not have to carry too much responsibility'.

In other words, in feudal societies such as Japan, the first strategy, namely *not* to say the blunt truth, was forced as cultural script upon the majority of their populations.

Now to the second strategy. America fought and gained independence from its occupier and humiliator, namely Britain. And its early immigrants left behind humiliating living conditions in 'Old Europe' and came to America to build a better life. It is with

pride that they can say that they rejected applying the first strategy, namely quietly bowing to humiliation. On the contrary, they said the truth, nothing but the truth, and then took the consequences, namely separation. And, undoubtedly, pride for the courage entailed in this liberation is warranted.

Now to the third alternative. The world has changed. No longer is it a suitable strategy to just bow to oppression. Neither is it appropriate to merely say the truth and separate. Not only are there no 'empty' countries anymore toward which one could leave and build better lives, even countries who do gain independence today, are small and in need of cooperation with their neighbours to survive. The contemporary world is one big interdependent entity, and we have to learn to transform oppression and humiliation from within, and proceed together to a new global culture and global society of equal dignity for all.

Rwanda travelled from the first to the second strategy in its history and attempts to home in on the third at the current point in its history. The country lived through the first strategy for centuries, Hutus bowing to their Tutsi masters in subservient obedience, never saying out loud what they thought. Then Rwanda applied the second strategy. When it gained independence, and Hutu power prevailed, many Tutsis became refugees in neighbouring African countries. When the second generation of refugees wanted to repatriate to Rwanda, extremist Hutus set out to kill all of them (killing as the ultimate separator).

This shows that in an interdependent world separation is not only no longer feasible, it even risks leading to unspeakable mayhem. In short, the cultural script of 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' with separation as outcome, is not only outdated today, no longer appropriate, it is even potentially dangerous. In Zimbabwe, today, a similar form of separation strategy is being carried out, to everybody's peril (except perhaps for a small elite in the short term). In the U.S., this danger becomes apparent, for example, when we think of the ubiquitous presence of arms (the ultimate separating tool).

What is needed nowadays is to find a way to say the truth and transform the situation together, not just confront, leave and separate. Mandela modelled this approach. He did not apply the Rwandan or Zimbabwean strategy in South Africa. He developed a new inclusive strategy of saying the truth and including everybody into social and societal transformation.

Many of my American friends construe calls for appreciative strategies merely as requests to revert to the first strategy. However, this is clearly a misconstruction – it means misunderstanding the appeal to move forward as a step backward. We need to make a step forward, toward building a new culture of clarity that is inclusive. And this is done by de-constructing what we learn as 'right' and 'wrong' from our parents and our culture, and looking for its historic roots. It means understanding why a particular script was deemed 'right' or 'wrong'. And it means harvesting all those elements from old scripts that are appropriate for our contemporary situation, and leave behind what is not helpful. Merely bowing is no longer an adequate strategy, and simply separating neither.

As alluded to earlier, during the past 10,000 years, roughly, humankind, almost everywhere on the globe, lived in hierarchical societies that were based on agriculture, where the majority learned the first strategy, namely to bow to oppression, while a tiny elite learned how to oppress (this is the feudal Japan mentioned above). Then came a significant turning point, beginning around 300-250 years ago, marked by the change of

meaning for 'to humiliate' in 1757 in the English language – 'to humiliate' lost its connotation of 'to humble' and acquired the new one of 'violating dignity'.[74] This was the beginning of a new kind of uprising, an uprising with the aim not just to dispose of some oppressors and replace them with new ones (as was done during the past 10,000 years), but to dismantle oppression itself. It was the birth of the human rights movement, which calls for the two-tiered dismantling of the oppressor and the oppressive system. Human rights, at their core, embody the script of inclusive change, away from merely bowing to, or simply confronting and removing oppressors.

We could describe human history as a cultural discourse, starting out from a thesis, namely a culture of equality in pristine pride during the first ninety percent of human history. Then, roughly 10,000 years ago the first antithesis meant accepting oppression (the first approach), occasionally proceeding to the alternative anti-thesis of rejecting oppression (the second approach, usually followed by the erection of a new system of oppression), with the need to home in, today, on the synthesis of building a new inclusive world (the third approach).

The third strategy is new cultural terrain (much helpful age-old wisdom has been lost during the past ten millennia), and nobody is an expert in this as of yet. The entire world still has to learn the cultural script of 'waging good conflict' by using an appreciative approach. And even if it gains visibility, it is often only for a short while, faltering again quickly. For example, when we look at France and their 1789 revolution, the old aristocracy lost their heads under the guillotine under the banner of Liberté, Égalité, et Fraternité, only to give rise to a new aristocracy soon after, in the person of emperor Napoleon and his entourage. France fell back into the first and second strategies for quite a while before emerging from it for a new attempt to master the third strategy.

In America, the Declaration of Independence marks the same uprising, only that in the U.S., aided by the success in having gained national independence from Britain, and the outcome of the Civil War, the idea of separation, the second strategy, had sufficient time and support to be turned into a cultural script. American history led to almost an idolisation of the focus on the individual (ironically, enforced with collectivist fervour). American culture highlights the individual as a marker of its pride in the historical liberation of their individuals from oppressive systems. Yet, since the script of 'the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth' with its consequence to lead to separation, is inappropriate today, and even potentially dangerous, this script needs to be de-constructed, taken apart, and elements of it put into a new script of something like 'clarity that is inclusive'.

Unsurprisingly, in the process of transformation, the building of new scripts is an unsteady undertaking, looking feeble in contrast to old and well-cemented cultural scripts. However, old scripts are not 'right' just because they are old and strong. And new scripts are not 'wrong' just because they are not yet fully born. We need to work on those new scripts together, by mutually supporting each other, with love. Learning something new always begins in a Bambi-on-the-Ice fashion, and can only be brought forward through mutual support. 'In times of change, the learners inherit the world, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists' (a saying attributed to Eric Hoffer).

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[74] See William Ian Miller (1993), p. 175.

How we solve the dilemma in our Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network

The differences sketched out above present particularly serious dilemmas for deep philosophical reflections, because they are not self-evident. The problem is mitigated for undertakings such as making chairs, or building houses, or any other project that has self-explanatory utility. In contrast, deep philosophical reflections depend on being explained to gain visibility.

The Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies network (HumanDHS), which I founded together with a small group of like-minded scholars and change agents, and which we develop since 2001, has currently roughly one thousand members globally. Since our work has a global scope, our HumanDHS initiative tries to circumvent the above-described dilemmas by combining many approaches, among them the Anglo-Saxon and the Continental European ones, at least to a certain extent (of course, combined with other elements from the rest of the world): By emphasising, in our work, that we, as humankind, have problems that need urgent pro-active solving by courageous individuals, we speak to American culture. However, we also say that we, as HumanDHS members, do not wish to sell anything for our own advancement, that we do not engage in our initiative to gain anything for ourselves, except in the sense that in an interdependent world self-interest coincides with common interest and saving the world from demise becomes everybody's personal self-interest, we speak to the cultural leanings outside of mainstream American culture, to those who have not adopted the American outlook. Also our emphasis on a relational culture of mutuality runs counter to the ruthless individualism that is idolised in certain segments of American society. The same does our strategy to open space for people to engage in long-term reflection on innovative and creative solutions for the future of our world. We value, for example, French pride in intellectual inquiry, and wish to strengthen this pride world-wide. This we do in the face of dictators around the world who suppress intellectuality, as much as in the face of Anglo-Saxon product-oriented short-termism.

In short, we attempt to find a balance between, on one side, the space and fertile ground that is necessary for unleashing the creativity that we, as humankind, need if we want to find innovative solution for our future, and, on the other side, the decisiveness of the action that we must muster. To stay in the above-mentioned metaphor of medicine, we wish to avoid the wrong surgical strikes at the wrong time, but aim at taking time to design the appropriate strikes at the right time, strikes that include the implementation of large-scale systemic change.

Concluding Remarks

Adolf Hitler and his followers turned millions into victims in the name of the Aryan race of Übermenschen. Some supported him willingly, others were taken hostage by his system, and many were doubly humiliated, first by being rendered helpless, and second by being coerced into becoming evil perpetrators (with no option to abandon the 'experiment', as in the case of Zimbardo's experiment).

Nelson Mandela, if he could design a global system, would create a system that does not serve the supremacist interest of any individual or group of individuals. He would

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create global institutions that safeguard the common good of all humankind, including their socio- and biospheres, and this would give people space to be 'good'. And Mandela's system would be informed by nondualistic and harmonious cohesion, and maintained by philosophies that promote the loving humility and humanity that is necessary to share custody for the common good, even in the face of mutual dislike.

If our aim is the pro-active creation of global cohesion informed by likeverd (equality in dignity) – instead of passively waiting for global division to tear us apart – we need to combine the strengths of all humankind to create an enabling global context for our troubled humanity.

Traditional Asia can contribute with its notions of nondualism and harmony. This can be carefully combined with American-Anglo-Saxon emphasis on action by courageous individuals, and Continental European strength in planning and designing systems of subsidiarity. This in turn can be inspired by all nondualistic, dignifying, and love-promoting philosophies from around the world, be it Egyptian or Greek love, African Ubuntu, Martin Buber's 'dialogical unity' in I and Thou, or Gandhi's concept of non-violent action.

All these cultural elements can support the global systemic change which is needed at the current historic juncture. The contemporary Hobbsian might-is-right ranking that defines the highest level of global institutions is potentially suicidal for humankind. Today, in an interdependent world, the common good is best served by all of us courageously engaging in building global systems that cannot be highjacked for any particular self-interest, global systems that serve common interest and give all global citizens the space and opportunity to be 'good' people.

The United Nations take up the highest global institutional level in present world affairs, however, in their current form they are only forerunners to viable global superordinate institutional structures – the United Nations were designed as a 'club' of nations, who serve national interest and not humankind's interest.

The necessary systemic change[75] must be implemented by a few very courageous individuals now. The new system must be designed to encourage and give space to all global citizens to stand *up* in the future, not *by*, whenever necessary (Ervin Staub, in his work on the Holocaust, identifies the failure of *bystanders* to stand up as most significant malfunction[76]).

I suggest founding a new field, 'global interhuman communication' (supplementing the field of 'intercultural communication') in order to help us bridge cultural gaps. This new field would explain why traditional ranked honour norms are as unhelpful as 'Western' ruthless individualism when we wish to foster a harmonious global society that offers equality in dignity to all world citizens in a pro-active and nondualist fashion. This new field would disseminate the insights we draw from contemporary research, namely that equality is the major factor in the French revolution's slogan of 'Liberty, equality and

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[75] See, for example, John Bunzl (2008), Lorna Gold (2004), Ha-Joon Chang & Ilene Grabel (2004), Don Eberly (2008), Anthony Giddens (2000), Hazel Henderson (1996), Hazel Henderson & Simran Sethi (2008), Erik S. Reinert (2007), Howard Richards & Joanna Swanger (2006), Philip Pettit (2001), Joseph E. Stiglitz (2003), Joseph E. Stiglitz & Andrew Charlton (2006), Genevieve Vaughan (Ed.) (2007), Richard G. Wilkinson (2005), Howard Zehr (1990).
[76] Ervin Staub (1989), Ervin Staub (1993), Ervin Staub (1999).

fraternity' (today we would replace fraternity with term such as 'harmony' or 'social cohesion').[77]

As explained above, I call for egalisation to humanise globalisation. I agree with globalisation-critics that we need a worldwide commitment to overcoming the lack of egalisation that currently humiliates humanity. I therefore propose a 'Moratorium on Humiliation', similar to the *Moratorium on Trade on Small Arms* (see the Human Dignity and Humiliation Studies website for many more ideas).

What humankind needs, at a grand level, in a self-enforcing spiral, is global systemic change, in the spirit of nondualistic Unity in Diversity that is sustained through continuous pro-active maintenance of harmonious global social cohesion imbued with the notion of likeverd and loving humility and humanity. We need to realise the 'era of equality in dignity', the vision of a decent future, where everybody can live a dignified life. We need to create a *decent global village*.

Norway, with its unique background, plays an important role that it needs to expand this role for the common good of humankind.

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[77] See, for example, Richard G. Wilkinson (2005).

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