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WHY THERE CAN BE NO CONFLICT RESOLUTION AS LONG AS PEOPLE ARE BEING HUMILIATED

EVELIN G. LINDNER

Abstract – This paper discusses how conflict resolution and reconciliation, in their interplay with emotions, are embedded into two current trends: the transition toward increasing global interdependence, and the call for equal dignity for all. In a traditional world of ranked honour, humiliation is often condoned as a legitimate and useful tool; however, in terms of human rights it is seen as a violation of humanity. This article argues that the norms of equal dignity are worth supporting for two reasons: first, the human rights framework promotes quality of life, and second, it is the best way to tackle increasing global interdependence. Yet, there is a caveat. While feelings of humiliation in the face of debasing conditions are an important resource in that they emotionally “fuel” the human rights movement, they also represent what the author calls the “nuclear bomb of the emotions” that, if instrumentalised, can power cycles of humiliation and atrocities. Only if the implementation of human rights is approached hands-on and these feelings converted into Mandela-like social transformation to form a decent global village can the human rights movement fulfil its promise and humiliation be transcended.

Résumé – POURQUOI IL NE PEUT Y AVOIR AUCUNE RÉOLUTION D’UN CONFLIT TANT QUE LES GENS SONT HUMILIÉS – Cette étude discute de savoir comment, dans leur interaction avec les émotions, la résolution d’un conflit et la réconciliation sont incluses dans deux tendances actuelles: la transition vers une interdépendance globale croissante, et l’appel à une dignité égale pour tous. Dans un monde traditionnel de classification par les honneurs, l’humiliation est souvent excusée comme étant un outil légitime et utile; cependant, en termes de droits de l’homme, elle est vue comme une violation de l’humanité. Cet article soutient que cela vaut la peine de soutenir les normes d’une égalité dans la dignité pour deux raisons: d’abord, le cadre des droits de l’homme favorise la qualité de vie, et en second lieu, il est mieux adapté pour s’attaquer à une interdépendance globale croissante. Cependant, il y a une opposition. Tandis que les sentiments d’humiliation face à des conditions rabaissantes sont une ressource importante, du fait qu’ils « nourrissent » émotionnellement le mouvement des droits de l’homme, ils représentent également ce que l’auteur appelle « la bombe nucléaire des émotions » qui, si elle est instrumentalisée, peut alimenter des cycles d’humiliation et d’atrocités. C’est uniquement si une approche main dans la main des droits de l’homme est accomplie et si ces sentiments sont convertis en une transformation sociale façon Mandela pour former un village global décent, que le mouvement de droits de l’homme peut accomplir sa promesse et l’humiliation être dépassée.

Zusammenfassung – WARUM KONFLIKTLÖSUNG NICHT MÖGLICH IST, SOLANGE MENSCHEN GEDEMÜTIGT WERDEN – Dieser Artikel befasst sich damit, dass Konfliktlösung und Versöhnung in ihrer Wechselwirkung mit Gefühlen

derzeit von zwei Entwicklungstrends geprägt sind: der zunehmenden internationalen Verflechtung und der Forderung nach gleicher Würde für alle. In von Traditionen geprägten Kulturen, in denen Ehre einen hohen Stellenwert hat, werden Demütigungen häufig als legitimes, nützliches Instrument gebilligt. In Bezug auf die Menschenrechte betrachtet man sie jedoch als Verstoß gegen die Menschlichkeit. In diesem Artikel wird die Ansicht vertreten, dass der Grundsatz der gleichen Würde für alle aus zwei Gründen unterstützt werden sollte: Zum einen fördern die Menschenrechte die Lebensqualität, zum anderen kann man mit ihrer Hilfe besser mit der zunehmenden internationalen Verflechtung zurechtkommen. Es besteht jedoch auch eine gewisse Gefahr: Gefühle der Erniedrigung angesichts entwürdigender Umstände sind insofern ein bedeutendes Instrument, als sie die Menschenrechtsbewegung „anheizen“. Gleichzeitig stellen sie jedoch mit den Worten der Autorin eine „Atombombe der Gefühle“ dar, die Kreisläufe von Demütigung und Grausamkeiten antreiben kann, wenn man sie instrumentalisiert. Nur wenn die Umsetzung der Menschenrechte aktiv angegangen wird und diese Gefühle nach Art von Mandela in gesellschaftlichen Wandel gelenkt werden und ein lebenswertes globales Dorf entsteht, kann die Menschenrechtsbewegung ihr Versprechen einlösen und die Demütigung überwunden werden.

Resumen – POR QUÉ LOS CONFLICTOS NO PUEDEN RESOLVERSE MIENTRAS PERSISTA LA HUMILLACIÓN – Este trabajo analiza cómo la resolución de conflictos y la reconciliación, en su interacción con las emociones, están encauzadas en dos tendencias actuales: la transición hacia una creciente interdependencia global y la demanda de una dignidad igual para todos. En un mundo tradicional de categorías de honor, la humillación frecuentemente es aceptada como herramienta legítima y útil; sin embargo, en términos de derechos humanos es considerada una violación de la humanidad. Este artículo sostiene el valor de luchar por una dignidad igual para todos, por dos razones: en primer lugar, porque el principio de los derechos humanos promueve la calidad de la vida, y en segundo lugar, porque ayuda a convivir con una creciente interdependencia global. Sin embargo, también existe un cierto riesgo: mientras que los sentimientos de humillación frente a condiciones desmejoradas son un importante recurso ya que sirve como “combustible” emocional del movimiento de los derechos humanos, también representan lo que la autora denomina “la bomba nuclear de las emociones” que, si es instrumentalizada, puede generar ciclos de nuevas humillaciones y atrocidades. Sólo si se encara concretamente la implementación de los derechos humanos y si esos sentimientos se logran convertir, como lo hizo Nelson Mandela, en una transformación social para formar una aldea global digna, el movimiento de los derechos humanos podrá cumplir con su promesa y la humillación podrá ser superada.

Резюме – Почему конфликты не могут быть разрешены, если люди продолжают подвергаться унижению – Автор пытается проследить тесную взаимосвязь между урегулированием конфликтов, примирением и их эмоциональной стороной и усилившейся тенденцией к всеобщей взаимозависимости и требованием обеспечить всем одинаково достойную жизнь. В традиционном мире с его “рангами чести” унижение часто считают допустимым и полезным, хотя для правозащитников это – поправление гуманизма. По мнению автора, требование одинаково достойного обращения заслуживает поддержки по двум причинам: правозащитные принципы помогают улучшить жизнь и на их основе легче решать вопросы всеобщей взаимозависимости. Но здесь

требуется оговорка. Ощущение позора является важным ресурсом эмоциональной «подпитки», но, по мнению автора, может стать и «эмоциональной ядерной бомбой» и, будучи взятой на вооружение, вызвать целую цепь оскорбительных действий и зверств. Только проделывая “черную” работу в правозащитной области и направляя эмоции в социальные преобразования, как это сделал Мандела, и в создание человеческой “всемирной деревни”, можно реализовать потенциал прав человека и вырваться из недостойного существования.

Defining reconciliation and conflict resolution

The special issue of *International Review of Education* of which this article is part, is entitled ‘Education for Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution.’ Let me begin by asking: Which education, for which reconciliation and conflict resolution? The reason for this question is that there are two basic kinds of reconciliation and conflict resolution, one built on subjugation of non-equals, and the other built on dialogue between equals. Let me illustrate this basic dichotomy with some stark examples. A tyrant will teach his underlings the lesson that conflict resolution and reconciliation are achieved when underlings are subservient. This ‘education’ is the daily ration meted out to people in Zimbabwe, Myanmar, or North Korea, as well as to many victims of domestic violence. A Nelson Mandela, on the other hand, will edify the lesson that conflict resolution and reconciliation are achieved when equal rights and dignity for everybody are respected (Nelson Mandela is treated here as an ideal type; his name is taken to stand for the essence of his constructive strategies).

This paper is deeply embedded in the second, the Mandela definition. The oppressor of a country, or the man who is proud of beating his disobedient wife and children, will just laugh at the claim entailed in the title of this paper, and dismiss it as detestable cowardice, lack of honourable backbone, or plain stupidity. Subordinates have to be taught their place, if necessary through humiliation, he would say, and this is good for them and everybody else. “Employees need to be humiliated, otherwise they do not work! Humiliation is an important tool of high utility in the workplace! It teaches people the right work ethics! Don’t take this tool away from us!” is an argument frequently voiced in the corporate sector in many parts of the world. I was reprimanded in this way by a celebrated Indian economy professor in 2002 and a renowned Chinese organizational consultant in 2006.

Who is right? What is the “correct” approach to education for reconciliation and conflict resolution? Obedient subservience of underlings, or mutual respect for equal rights and dignity? At their core, the two approaches are diametrically opposed. One cannot rank human worthiness and un-rank it at the same time. It is either-or. There is no compromise. It is like right-hand

driving or left-hand driving. One can only allow for one rule, mixing them leads to head-on collisions. So, we ask: Whose rule is correct? Which rule should be used? The tyrant, the domestic chastiser and the above-quoted organizational consultant are sure of their stance. And a Mandela is sure of the opposite stance.

Some human rights advocates, driven by the wish to respect cultural diversity, feeling guilty in the face of the accusation that human rights ideals represent Western imperialism, have problems deciding. A friend in the United States told me that she tries to avoid appearing as an arrogant Westerner by explaining human rights as something she has learned to appreciate through growing up in "her" American family. Moral values based on human rights therefore, according to her, are neither inferior nor superior to "other" cultural normative universes, just different.

Is this a tenable position? Should we withdraw the title of this paper? Is it too provocative, too offensive, and too uncompromising? Should we, to stay in the traffic metaphor, allow some cars to drive on the right side and others on the left side, because some people feel offended? What would Shirin Ebadi respond, the Iranian Nobel Peace Prize winner of 2003, with whom I discussed this in Oslo in 2004? She receives death threats, but still goes on with her work. Does not cultural relativism, applied to human rights, make a mockery of the dedication of human rights advocates, who, like her, put their personal survival on line in regions of the world where human rights advocacy means real sacrifice and not just some lame lip service?

In other words, the title of this paper is deeply controversial and embedded in a currently wildly contested transition of norms. The editor of this special issue, Birgit Brock-Utne, has made her voice loudly heard in the current "traffic jam". She argues (Brock-Utne 2000) that "education for all" may at times be as treacherous a term as conflict resolution or reconciliation. She makes the case that in Africa it too often means "Western primary schooling for some, and none for others", or "a quadrangle building has been erected in a village of round huts". In other words, she makes the criticism that "education for all" all too often does not mean "education for all to nurture equal dignity," but "education for all to maintain inequality." My stance coincides with Brock-Utne's position, and I will go on to explain it in more detail.

This paper has three sections and ends in brief concluding remarks. The first section attends to the transition from norms of ranked honour to norms of equal dignity and explains how this is not just any transition, but a transition to a more suitable paradigm, a paradigm that promotes human quality of life in a better way than the traditional one, and is moreover better suited for today's interdependent world. I will explain why it is more suitable in that section. In the subsequent section, the two conflicting paradigms of conflict resolution and reconciliation are probed. Thereafter the role played by humiliation is discussed. In the concluding remarks a vision for a *decent* global village is presented.

The transition from ranked honour to equal dignity and how this is beneficial

Incidentally, the stance that Brock-Utne and I subscribe to currently gains weight all around the world. At present, many “customs” or “normal conditions” are transmuting into human rights violations. Until recently, female genital mutilation, for example, was apologetically labelled a “custom”. Only lately has it acquired the label of human rights violation. Not long ago honour killings were “respected” as cultural idiosyncrasy rather than pinpointed as human rights violations. The practice of *vani* in Pakistan, a tribal custom in which blood feuds are settled with forced marriages, was made illegal only in January 2005.

The Indian caste system has been taken up and publicly branded as “Indian Apartheid” as recently as 2001 (for example, at the World Conference on Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, 31 August – 7 September 2001). Many Indians disagree, and even feel that their culture is insulted. Yet, the fact that the term “Indian Apartheid” could emerge as the topic of a large international conference announces change. Also within India, there is an “awakening”. On 27 May 2007, at a ceremony in Mumbai, several thousand tribal and Dalit Hindus converted *en masse* to Buddhism. The converts hoped to escape the caste system in which their status is the lowest. Arun Khote, of the National Campaign on Dalit Human Rights, told the BBC: “Once they convert themselves to another religion, the minimum they will get is treatment as human beings” (quoted from http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/south_asia/6695695.stm).

The very definition of human rights is similarly affected. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Initially *rights* were emphasised, today, *dignity* is increasingly entering the stage. Initially human rights used to be defined as political rights only. An increasing number of aspects of human rights have since been recognized (beyond civil and political rights, toward economic, social, and cultural rights) and applied to ever wider categories of people, as well as to increasingly widening realms of biotic and abiotic nature. Economic rights are the most recent “newcomers” to the field of human rights. Poverty as violation of human rights has entered mainstream attention. The term *enabling environment* entails more than freedom from political oppression, it entails a call for dignity, for dignifying living circumstances. Also animals are currently in the process of being included. And the Earth with its biosphere is “dignified” as well; global warming, until recently a phenomenon ridiculed by many, is now a readily discussed topic.

In sum, even though the transition from ranked honour to equal dignity as reigning normative and cultural paradigm is progressing in a haphazard two-steps-forward-one-step-back fashion, it does indeed move forward. Not least, the existence of this special issue attests to this. However, there is

more. To return to the traffic metaphor, this transition represents more than merely switching the side on which people drive. The two sides are not equivalent. In an ever more interdependent world, the new side promotes human health more than the former, both for society and for the individual. The human rights ideal of equal dignity for all entails a promise that is higher than the promise of the traditional honour order.

Let me explain. The traditional framework of ranked honour has a mutilating effect on human beings. Chinese foot-binding can serve as an example. It began as a luxury among the rich and made women more dependent on others and less useful around the house. It was soon adopted by the lower classes and became a prerequisite for marriage. It lasted for a thousand years, during which about one billion women had their feet bound. Howard S. Levy (1992), to name but one author, describes the torturous details of bones in the feet being broken repeatedly, and their growth stunted, so as to fit into the desired “lotus” shape.

If Chinese foot-binding had been a singular and exceptional phenomenon, it would not be worth mentioning. However, its gist reigned wherever hierarchical societies prevailed during past millennia and still prevail today. Both masters and subordinates in coercive hierarchies are usually forced into artificial foot binding-like incapacitations. To use the body as metaphor, typically only master elites, usually males, can use the sword to defend humiliated honour, not underlings, who have to swallow subjugation quietly. Masters use their sword arm, their right arm, while their left arm, the one responsible for caring and nurturing, metaphorically spoken, is bound behind their backs. For lowly men and women, the inverse is true. Both elites and underlings function with only one arm.

Morton Deutsch (2002) points out the advantages of leaving these distorted selves behind – dominators must withdraw from processes of domination and re-own and resolve their feelings of vulnerability, guilt, self-hatred, rage and terror, and undo the projection of these feelings onto the oppressed, while, so Morton Deutsch expounds, “psychologists, in their roles as psychotherapists, marriage counsellors, organizational consultants, and educators have a role to play in demystifying the psychological processes involved in the dominators. So too... do the oppressed, by not accepting their distorted roles in the distorted relationship of the oppressor and the oppressed” (pp. 35–36).

In sum, not only do we find ourselves in times of transition, we are part of a transition to a normative framework that frees men and women from oppression. The new normative framework of human rights invites everybody to use both arms, invest their full self, and unfold their true potential. And it is a superior framework also for an ever more interdependent world, a world that faces challenges that can only be addressed jointly, by unlocking creativity in a spirit of shared responsibility and mutual support. In short, this transition is worth supporting. And this can be done without vilifying the adherents to the traditional paradigm, a paradigm which represents an adaptation to a different world (more on this point further down).

One aspect of globalisation, what anthropologists call the *ingathering* of the human family, is a central force in this historic transition. Ury (1999) explains:

Over the last ten thousand years, there has been one fairly steady trend in our history: the ingathering of the tribes of the earth, their incorporation into larger and larger groups, the gradual unification of humanity into a single interacting and interdependent community. For the first time since the origin of our species, [now] humanity is in touch with itself (XVII).

The two paradigms of conflict resolution and reconciliation

When I worked as a counsellor in Egypt (1984–1991), it was I who created conflict when I claimed that wife-beating is a violation. Eighty-six percent of Egyptian women surveyed in 1995 thought that husbands were justified in hitting their wives sometimes – see Fatma El-Zanaty et al. (1996). From the couple's perspective, there was no destructive conflict, no suffering victim, and no violent perpetrator. It was me, the counsellor, the human rights defender, an uninvited third party, who introduced conflict. The problem was the definition of love and benevolence. I define love as the meeting of equal hearts and minds in mutual caring, a definition embedded in the human rights ideal of equal dignity for all. Many of my Egyptian friends and their husbands, on the other hand, connected love with female subservience. Both men and women were angry at me for disturbing their harmony. For some of my female friends, being beaten for disobedience was an “honourable lesson”, whose pain they regarded to be for the good of everybody, far from humiliating.

We can easily link this example to events at the international level. South African elites were defensive about Apartheid – they felt entitled to superiority and regarded themselves as benevolent patrons of happy underlings. And, incidentally, not all underlings objected, at least not openly.

In this conundrum, in which conflict and emotions are entangled in complex and often painful ways, questions arise such as: When and in what ways are emotions (feelings of suffering, pain and rage, humiliation, or love and caring) part of a “conflict” that calls for reconciliation and resolution? And when are they not? Who decides? What we can be sure about is that conflict and reconciliation in their interplay with emotions are not static. They are embedded into larger historical and cultural surroundings. Conflict, reconciliation, emotion and their consequences – how we live them, how we define them – are part of the current transition toward increasing global interdependence and equal dignity for all.

Terms such as conflict resolution, non-violent conflict transformation, reconciliation, forgiveness, peace – the list is long – are buzzwords. However, since all these terms are embedded into the complex transition of normative and cultural scripts that humankind is currently part of, they need to be

defined with great care and clarity, otherwise they are misleading. As the Egyptian example shows, in the domestic context, one recipe for conflict resolution is “domestic chastisement”. And as long as a wife accepts being beaten as a socially beneficial honourable lesson, there is no need for any other kind of conflict resolution or reconciliation. There is plain *concord* between her and her master. To use the traffic metaphor, all drive on the same side of the road; there is no collision. Morton Deutsch (2002) explains:

Discontent and the sense of injustice may be latent rather than manifest in a subordinated group. Neither the consciousness of oneself as victimized or disadvantaged nor the consciousness of being a member of a class of disadvantaged may exist psychologically (p. 31).

A husband who habitually beats his wife and children, believing that domestic chastisement of disobedient family members is his duty, will define “successful reconciliation” as the “quiet submission” of his family members under his routine domination. If we extrapolate this example to larger political contexts at macro levels, the path to reconciliation may entail everything from violence and war to a shrewd mix of arm-twisting and deceptive Machiavellian “negotiation” of “conflicts of interest” (be it disputes over access to water, land, or other resources). Reconciliation is seen as accomplished when defeated opponents “understand” that it is in their “interest” to acquiesce to the victor’s domination, and submissively enter the ranks of underlings.

In contrast, another person, someone who defines “domestic chastisement” as “domestic violence” will not differentiate between equals and non-equals, but will conceive of everybody as equal in dignity. This person will define successful reconciliation as respectful dialogue and negotiation embedded into relationships of mutuality. In the same spirit, *Realpolitik* of the future defines reconciliation in new ways. This can be illustrated by visualising Nelson Mandela meeting with de Klerk in South Africa. Mandela invited de Klerk to forsake his belief in white supremacy. He welcomed de Klerk into a new world of equal dignity for black and white people. While in old times masters were toppled and new masters took their place, Mandela did not only ask the supremacists to step down, in addition, he dismantled the system itself. Mandela did not install black supremacy, and he did not perpetrate genocide on the former elite (as was done in Rwanda). Mandela treated de Klerk with respect. Mandela had even befriended many of his former prison guards. He aimed at long-term peace of equal dignity for all, not merely at short-term victory over his opponents.

To conclude this section, conflict resolution and reconciliation can be defined as successful domination over un-equals, or as successful calibration of mutuality between equals. In the first case, from the point of view of human rights, “routine humiliation” is its core tool, a label that it does not carry within the ranked honour paradigm, since there it is regarded as “honourable lesson” whose pain is beneficial. In the second case, humiliation transforms

into an offensive violation of humanity itself. Both approaches are part of the two irreconcilable normative frameworks of ranked honour versus equal dignity. As discussed above, the problem is that one cannot use the normative core stipulations of both frameworks alongside each other. One cannot rank people into higher and lesser beings and at the same time consider them as equal in dignity – the ranking and non-ranking of human value and worthiness cannot co-exist. In extension, terms such as conflict resolution, reconciliation, harmony, peace, or love, all entail interpretations at their core which stand in diametrical opposition with each other. We therefore need to qualify these terms further when we use them. We need to make clear which kind of conflict resolution and reconciliation we refer to, the one that carries humiliation as legitimate tool at its core, or the one that outlaws it.

The role of humiliation

In my work since 1996, I have been focussing on the phenomenon of humiliation. I am building a theory of humiliation that is transdisciplinary and entails elements from anthropology, history, social philosophy, social psychology, sociology, and political science – see, for example, Lindner (2006a, b; 2007a, b).

In everyday language, the word “humiliation” is used with at least three meanings. First, the word *humiliation* points at an *act*, second at a *feeling*, and third at a *process*: “I humiliate you, you feel humiliated, and the entire process is one of humiliation.” (In this paper, the reader is expected to differentiate according to the context, because otherwise language would become too convoluted.)

At the core of humiliation we find a downward push. Somebody is being pushed down and held down. The act of holding down people in subjugation was regarded as perfectly legitimate for the past millennia, and has acquired the taint of violation only very recently. A shift in the meaning of the word humiliation marks this turn. In the English language, the verbs to humiliate and to humble parted around 250 years ago. Their meanings and connotations went in diametrically opposite directions. Up to 1757 the verb to humiliate did not signify the violation of dignity. To humiliate meant merely to lower or to humble. William Ian Miller (1993) informs us that “the earliest recorded use of *to humiliate* meaning to mortify or to lower or to depress the dignity or self-respect of someone does not occur until 1757” (175, emphasis in original).

The transition from obediently accepting subjugation to opposing it as humiliating violation is embedded into a long-term historical transition that humankind is part of. William Ury (1999) offers a very accessible presentation of the historical and anthropological background of the transition from hunter-gathering to agriculture and from there to today’s vision of a global knowledge society based on human rights.

If we take Ury's account and combine it with political science, we can paint the following picture. Prior to the emergence of the idea and reality of one global village, humankind lived in a fragmented world of many villages, and these villages were usually hierarchically organized. Otherwise widely divergent societies (but all based on agriculture) were "dominator societies" (Eisler 1987), from the Samurai of Japan to the Aztecs of Meso-America – all were characterized by very similar hierarchies of domination and a rigidly male-dominant "strong-man" rule, both in the family and state. Elites, mostly male elites, were meant to tackle the fear of attack by guarding the borders towards outgroups (international relations theory calls this state of affairs the security dilemma), while underlings, among them almost all women, inhabited secondary and lowly positions inside their ingroup. This situation began about ten thousand years ago with what anthropologists call circumscription – no longer was abundant wild food as easily accessible as before. Intensification, or agriculture, was humankind's response. As archaeology attests, hierarchical "civilisations", built on the intensive use of land as main source of livelihood, slowly encompassed almost the entire globe, wherever land was arable, pushing aside hunter-gathering societies which were smaller and rather egalitarian in their institutional set-up (Ury 1999). During past millennia, usually, neither elites nor underlings in hierarchical cultural contexts questioned this order. It was regarded as divinely ordained or nature's order. If underlings rose up, they typically replaced the master and kept the hierarchy as it was. Honour was the concept that was used to describe and encapsulate everybody's position in the hierarchical ranking order.

In line with Ury's analysis, I suggest that the human rights revolution could be described as an attempt to collapse the master-slave gradient of the past 10,000 years to the line of equal dignity and shared humility. The practice of masters claiming superiority and subjugating underlings is now regarded as illicit and obscene, and human rights advocates invite both, masters and underlings, to join in shared humility and equal dignity.

The ideal of equal rights and dignity for everybody means that the notion of humiliation changes its attachment point. In the new human rights framework, for the first time, the downtrodden underling is given the right to feel humiliated and is no longer expected to meekly acquiesce to domination. The master, on the other side, is called upon to humble himself, and he is no longer given permission to resist this call by labelling it as humiliating. Elites who claim superiority lose their right to cry "humiliation!" when they are asked to descend and humble themselves, and they lose the right to routinely hold down underlings in lowly positions.

In other words, the topic of humiliation gains immense significance in the new world, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and this fact must inform the teaching of conflict resolution and reconciliation. New concepts of conflict resolution and reconciliation have to include this new trend into their calculus: Millions get angry when exposed to eye-opening human rights

advocacy, and they get angrier when subjected to globalisation's ills, while Mandelas are still lacking.

Let me clarify this point. One reason for the unprecedented significance of humiliation is that the intensity of feelings of humiliation is heightened. Being humiliated in a context of equal dignity excludes the victims from humankind altogether, humiliation strips them of their humanity, whereas being lowered was seen as acceptable treatment of underlings in former times, a frame subscribed to not only by superiors but also by inferiors (see, for example, the section "Why humiliation is more hurtful in the context of human rights" in Lindner 2006b, pp. 43–44). The effects flowing from the rise in intensity of feelings of humiliation are compounded by a second dynamic, namely the fact that an increasing number of people feel those feelings. Human rights advocacy moves the right to invoke humiliation as a violation from the top to the bottom of pyramids of power, from the privileged to the disadvantaged. As a result, millions of people, when they learn about human rights, learn that they no longer need to quietly accept lowliness, but that they have a right to feel humiliated, to be angry, and to rise to a level of equal dignity for everybody. The downtrodden masses of South Africa, for example, by asserting their rights in their struggle against Apartheid, gained new levels of dignity. Similarly, millions of formerly quiet underlings around the world turn into millions of angry people who, in addition, get ever angrier with globalisation's harmful outfalls. And this is brought about, incidentally, at least partly, by people from the former elites who identify with the underlings' plight and lend them their powerful voice – human rights advocates from the West, for example.

The ideal of equal dignity which is at the core of the human rights message is not a Western idea. It can be found in many religions and philosophies – African *Ubuntu* is but one example. However, during past millennia, the ideal of equal dignity, wherever it raised its head, typically fell prey to the security dilemma and was systematically forced into hierarchical societal structures. It is the ingathering of the human family that frees the ideal of equal dignity and gives it a chance to flourish. Yet, this promise is fulfilled only if the accompanying feelings of humiliation are handled in a Mandela-fashion and not allowed to feed cycles of humiliation kept in motion by angry humiliation-entrepreneurs.

Table 1 depicts how elites and underlings react differently within the old paradigm as compared to the new paradigm. In times gone by (cell 1 of Table 1), most underlings accepted lowliness as non-humiliating, and reconciliation was regarded as successful when elites dominated underlings into submission. Among themselves, ruling elites typically defended humiliated honour in duel-like confrontations (cell 2). Reconciliation was seen as achieved through victory.

The new paradigm, however, introduces conflict. Underlings, and those who identify with them, no longer accept lowliness as divinely ordained and non-humiliating (cell 3). The problem, potentially leading to violence, is that

Table 1. Two cleavages: How elites and underlings react within the old paradigm of honour as compared to the new paradigm of equal dignity for all (✓ indicates the occurrence of violence)

Two cleavages		
	Old paradigm: Ranked honour	New paradigm: Equal dignity
Underlings	Script 1. Underlings are expected to accept lowliness as non-humiliating: "reconciliation" means that elites routinely dominate underlings into quiet submission.	Script 3. Underlings are no longer expected to accept lowliness as non-humiliating: "reconciliation" is achieved by "Mandelas", who respectfully invite old elites into constructive social change built on the new paradigm. ✓ Some underlings, however, in discord with human rights, try to use script 2. They do not achieve reconciliation, because subjugation, formerly regarded as legitimate tool, has transmuted into unacceptable humiliation.
Elites	Script 2. ✓ Elites defend humiliated honour in duel-like confrontations: "reconciliation" is achieved through victory, after which the defeated are expected to accept lowliness.	Script 4. Elites are expected to peacefully abandon supremacy and join into promoting equal dignity for all. ✓ Some elites, however, in discord with human rights, try to use script 2. They do not achieve reconciliation, because subjugation, formerly regarded as legitimate tool, has transmuted into unacceptable humiliation.

some underlings, and those who take on their cause, may aim at reconciliation in the old way, unleashing cycles of humiliation in the process – unfortunately, the number of Mandelas is still small and his approach is too new and requires a high degree of personal maturity. Still too few treat opponents with respect and refrain from finger pointing and vilification. The problem is not only the occurrence of violence, though, as the title of this chapter indicates, applying the old approach in a new context no longer achieves reconciliation. Subjugation, formerly regarded as a legitimate tool,

has transmuted into unacceptable humiliation and thus forfeited its usefulness for conflict resolution and reconciliation.

As to ruling elites, they also face the conflict that is introduced by the new paradigm (cell 4). Still too few of them, so far, are aware that it is inherently counterproductive for them to apply the old method of subjugating underlings, or fighting “enemies” in a duel-like fashion. In the new world, conflict resolution is achieved only by elites respectfully joining the kind of reconciliation that Mandela advocates, namely constructive social change toward the new inclusive paradigm of equal dignity.

In the context of the old paradigm, violence occurred when ruling elites oppressed underlings or affronted enemies. Underlings were usually too disempowered to inflict violence on their oppressors, at least most of the time. During the period of transition to the new paradigm of equal dignity, until everybody has learned the Mandela lesson, unfortunately, more violence is likely to occur. This is indicated in Table 1 by the symbol \nearrow .

The following is part of the definition of humiliation that I am developing.

Humiliation means the enforced lowering of a person or group, a process of subjugation that damages or strips away their pride, honour or dignity. To be humiliated is to be placed, against your will (or in some cases with your consent, for example in cases of religious self-humiliation or in sado-masochism) and often in a deeply hurtful way, in a situation that is greatly inferior to what you feel entitled to. Humiliation entails demeaning treatment that transgresses established expectations. It may involve acts of force, including violent force. At its heart is the idea of pinning down, putting down or holding to the ground. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of humiliation as a process is that the victim is forced into passivity, acted upon, made helpless.

People react in different ways when they feel that they are unduly humiliated: some just become depressed – anger turned against oneself – others get openly enraged, and yet others hide their anger and carefully plan for revenge. The person who plans for revenge may become the leader of a movement and instigate mass violence, by forging narratives of humiliation and inviting the masses to pour their grievances into those narratives. Feelings of humiliation and fear of humiliation represent the “nuclear bomb of the emotions”, which, if instrumentalised in malign ways by humiliation-entrepreneurs, can power mass atrocities in unprecedented “efficient” ways. Cycles of humiliation, if kept in motion by sufficient number of people, can foreclose the need to procure costly weapons. The most powerful weapon of mass destruction is the humiliated mind (authentically feeling humiliated or manipulated into it) and such a mind can reduce big armies to insignificance. In Rwanda, household tools such as machetes were sufficient; many victims paid for bullets, which they gave to their killers so that they could be shot, rather than hacked to death; or, the downing of the Twin Towers on 9 September 2001, similarly, was achieved by missiles (civil airplanes turned into weapons) that were not paid for by the perpetrators themselves.

However, feelings of humiliation can also feed Mandela-like social transformation. The human rights movement is fuelled by feelings of humiliation, which serve as emotional wake-up-calls for human rights violations. However, only if translated into constructive social change will these feelings promote success for the human rights movement.

Let me clarify the last point in this definition a bit more. Humiliation is the emotional driving force that propels the human rights movement. The human rights framework makes quiet acceptance of subjugation of underlings impossible. In the human brain, negative emotions serve as eye-openers when something is wrong and needs to be addressed (Lindner 2006a). Feelings of humiliation, in a way, are the human rights educators. The human rights movement would not move forward, if not for more and more people felt humiliated by the fact that millions are denied their dignity in today's world, that humans are still trafficked like chattel around the world, or that domestic chastisement has not yet been labelled clearly enough as domestic violence and prevented and healed. The list is long. I feel that my core humanity is being humiliated in today's ramshackle global village. In short, within a human rights frame, humiliation as an act is a violation, whereas the ability to feel humiliated, rather than gleeful or apathetic, in the face of acts of humiliation, is a crucial asset.

Yet, having negative emotions is not enough. They may lead to apathy, depression, or violence. Due to its strength, humiliation can acquire addictive qualities – see the chapter entitled “The Humiliation Addiction” in Lindner (2006b). Victims of humiliation may pull everybody else into malign cycles of humiliation. They might choose to preserve their sense of worthiness in exchange for their lives, and they might pull whole societies into collective suicide and homicide – Hitler's attempt to remedy national humiliation, for example, ended in the demise not only of millions of “enemies,” but also in the destruction of Germany itself.

In order for constructive change to occur, Mandela-like action must emerge from negative emotions. The sickening feeling of humiliation can and ought to be healed by promoting equal dignity for all. Mandela opposed the old concord, unleashed conflict, and reconciled everybody into a new level of concurrence. If Mandela and his movement had returned to the past and agreed to accept Apartheid, this “reconciliation” would not have worked. Neither would it have worked if Mandela had advocated merely replacing white supremacy with black supremacy and thus perpetuated a system of institutionalised routine humiliation.

Concluding remarks

In the introduction, I told the story of an American friend who tones down her allegiance to human rights because she wishes to avoid appearing as an arrogant Westerner. Am I an arrogant Westerner? I indeed strongly associate

myself with the idea of equal worthiness and dignity for every human being (and extensions beyond the human world). I do not wish meekly to relativise human rights and cruelly abandon my friends all around the world who put their lives on line for human rights. However, Westerner arrogance is not my game. In my opinion, people who oppose human rights and endorse the traditional normative framework of ranked honour, wherever in the world, should not be looked down upon, but treated with respect. My conceptualisation is that honour codes had their place in a world that did not yet experience the coming-together of humankind into one single family, a world that was caught in the tragic security dilemma. The point is that we live in a new reality today, and I believe that human rights represent a normative framework that is better adapted to the emerging interdependence of our world. I therefore wish to encourage every inhabitant of the globe to abandon “we/they” differentiations and define themselves as “we”, as “we humanity”, who, instead of pointing fingers at each other, search together for the best ways to provide our children with a liveable world.

And, as discussed above, the new framework is not only more suitable for a world of global interdependence at macro levels, but also for human health and well-being at the individual level. Many equate globalisation with local and global abuse. However, globalisation has many facets, malign ones and benign ones. Among the benign aspects is not only the emerging sense that humankind is one single family which is jointly responsible for its tiny home planet – a sense that feeds the human rights movement. The emerging sense of “One World”, a better understanding of human health, all this can be understood as a down-to-earth and pragmatic push towards equality in dignity for all. It is the ingathering of the human family and its shared challenges that gives the ideal of equal dignity a chance to flourish. However, humiliation can spoil this fragile flower. If the feelings of humiliation that accompany the rise of the human rights ideals feed cycles of humiliation instead of being handled in a Mandela-fashion, no reconciliation can occur. What globalisation needs today, is more than anger-entrepreneurship. It needs to be humanised through the hands-on implementation of not just the rhetoric, but the reality of a world where everybody is enabled to live a dignified life without humiliation.

The transition towards equal dignity evolves from creating conflict – no longer accepting habitual subjugation – towards solving it by reconciling it into a new level of concord in which humiliation has no place anymore. At that level, mere justice is inadequate, decency has to be achieved. Avishai Margalit (1996) wrote *The Decent Society*, in which he calls for institutions that no longer humiliate citizens. Decent societies transcend humiliation. Decency reigns in the global village when dignity for all is made possible and humiliation is removed from the “tool box”. Decency reigns when reconciliation is no longer sought through forcing underlings into submission, but by including everybody as worthy of equal dignity, and worthy of being protected from humiliation.

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