CHAPTER THREE: MODES OF HUMILIATION

Introduction

Now we turn to the second strand of the triple helix and will be able to see how profoundly the experience of humiliation is shaped by the code of modernity in terms of which it is framed.

What is humiliation?

Humiliation happens when an individual, group or society has the painful experience of being outrageously and forcibly displaced or excluded from where they think they should be. They are forced down and/or out from a position they perceive as being rightfully 'theirs' within a group, network or hierarchy to which they feel they rightfully 'belong.'

That displacement may be violent and cause bodily injury. However, the pain of feeling humiliated is not physical. It comes from those at the receiving end being acutely aware of the difference between how they think they deserve to be treated in terms of consideration and respect and how they are actually being treated.

That is a distinctively 'modern' understanding of humiliation. If we go far enough back in history we encounter a more ancient meaning. In this older sense, humiliation does not just mean forced displacement or exclusion. It also means becoming humble, in other words,

- choosing to come down from 'on high' to share the situation of those 'at the bottom' (like a king moving among his people in the clothes of a

pauper in old folk tales, or like the descent of Christ amongst humankind in the Christian myth) or

- deliberately inducing a humble attitude in oneself by (for example) reminding oneself that all human beings are small before the majesty of Nature, God, or Society.

Table One
Humiliation: Ancient and Modern

I	The humiliating event carries the following message:	'Who do you think you are? You are less important than you think. You need to be brought down and put in your proper place.'	
II	Response of those at the receiving end:	outraged resentment	humble gratitude

In its ancient usage, the term 'humiliation' refers to everything described in table 1. In other words, it includes both acceptance and rejection, by those due for humbling, of the 'message' that a process of humbling is necessary. The individual, group or society may, indeed, deliver the 'message' to itself; for example, following a process of religious conversion. In its modern usage, 'humiliation' means forced displacement or exclusion leading to outraged resentment but not humble gratitude.

The rise of the modern, narrower meaning of the term humiliation is closely related to the spread of the human rights code. This code emphasises the norm of equality and is unsympathetic to the idea that 'lowliness,' implying subordination, might be a good thing. However, feelings of equality among citizens might still co-exist with feelings

of humility before God. So, for example, we find the old use of humiliation still alive and well in 1863 in the United States.

In the middle of the American Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln declared a 'day of national humiliation, fasting and prayer,' adding the thought that since 'nations, like individuals, are subjected to punishments and chastisements in this world, may we not justly fear that the awful calamity of civil war, which now desolates the land, may be but a punishment inflicted upon us for our presumptuous sins, to the needful end of our national reformation as a whole People?'

Lincoln declared that Americans, 'Intoxicated with unbroken success,' had 'become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us, then to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.'[i]

The modern meaning of 'humiliation' is much narrower. You can see this when you consider China's 'day of national humiliation.' This was recently designated as September 18th, the anniversary of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931.[ii] In this case, national humiliation refers not to a period of humble collective self-examination but to an unacceptable and violent infringement of rights by another country. From now I will mainly be using the term humiliation in its modern sense.

What humiliates us?

Human beings are susceptible to humiliation because we can be deprived of things we regard as essential to our being, things we find it unacceptable to be without. Having these things depends to a great extent on the complicity of other people, and that complicity can be withdrawn against our will.

Table Two
Agency, Freedom, Recognition, Security

Freedom	The absence of intolerable or unreasonable constraints upon the exercise of agency; being able to do what you want the way you want to.
Agency	Exercising one's will through action (including speech); making choices and putting them into effect
Security	Being protected against the potentially humiliating consequences of circumstances that limit or reduce your capacity to exercise agency effectively enough to fulfil one's needs and wants
Recognition	Having your capacities, needs and wants, acknowledged and taken seriously by others who feel a desire and/or obligation to respond in a way that respects your identity and interests.

Of course, we are also vulnerable to our own bodily weaknesses and our exposure to the work of natural forces. However, the main point is we depend on people, things or processes outside or beyond our own desires and intentions. When those dependency relationships fail to provide support or confirmation of our basic sense of who we are and how we fit into society, the likely result is our humiliation.

The list of 'essential' things that people need includes the following: the capacity to act on one's own behalf; in other words, exercise *agency*; the *freedom* to do so;

recognition by others that one is worth taking account of; and the provision of *security* for one's interests (see table 2). The lack of them is a powerful indicator of humiliation.

Lack of freedom

Amartya Sen shows that to overcome deprivation, destitution and oppression, a society must undergo development, strengthening its economy, political foundations and civil society in ways that make life more pleasant and satisfying for all. If a society is to develop, its people must acquire freedom. This is an instrumental necessity, not just a moral preference, a means as well as an end of development. The 'capabilities' of people to develop themselves and their societies are greatly enhanced when they acquire five things: '(1) political freedoms, (2) economic facilities, (3) social opportunities, (4) transparency guarantees and (5) protective security' (Sen 1999, 10). This approach is very influential in the Human Development Reports published by the United Nations.

Martha Nussbaum has developed her own list of necessary 'central human functional capabilities' based on cross-cultural comparative research. It includes being able to (1) live a life of normal length, (2) have bodily health, (3) enjoy bodily integrity, (4) use the senses, imagination and thought, (5) develop a full range of emotions, (6) engage in practical reason, (7) develop affiliations with others under conditions of self respect without humiliation, (8) show concern for other species and for the world of nature, (9) play, and (10) have control over one's environment, both politically and materially.

Sen and Nussbaum specify the 'contours' of freedom by indicating what people must be free to do and what rules and resources are needed to help them do it. In a similar spirit, David Held has produced a blueprint for 'cosmopolitan governance' within a democratic global order, identifying seven key 'sites of power,' viz. the body, welfare, culture, civic associations, the economy, organized violence, and legal institutions (Held 1995).[iii]

Figure Two
Beyond Humiliation

Freedom Amartya Sen Martha Nussbaum David Held	*Security* Barrington Moore Peter Singer
Recognition Axel Honneth Avishai Margalit Richard Sennett	*Agency* Michel Foucault Mary Kaldor Hannah Arendt Zygmunt Bauman Jonathan Glover

The capability approach identifies the roads that must be travelled but where is the dynamic human energy needed for those journeys going to come from?

Lack of agency

Michel Foucault exemplifies the energy required for effective agency. He wants to act as well as understand. However, his work expresses utter suspicion of all modern institutions. Their discursive practices are, he believes, intrinsically humiliating and cannot be significantly 'improved.'[iv] The only creative action is to escape from them or reject them. For a more optimistic programme of agency, see the work of Mary

Kaldor who has outlined five versions of civil society and their global implications, arguing that global civil society is properly concerned with '"civilizing" or democratizing globalization, about the process through which groups, movements and individuals can demand a global rule of law, global justice and global empowerment' (Kaldor 2003, 12). [v]

For her part, Hannah Arendt finds that most modern human beings are quite unfit for life in a non-humiliating world. They are used to being told what to do and think. She reckons that Hobbes correctly predicted this situation centuries before. Hobbes was able to outline the main psychological traits of the new type of inactive person who would fit well into modern society with its tyrannical body politic; that is, a 'poor meek fellow who has not even the right to rise against tyranny and who, far from striving for power, submits to any existing government and does not stir even when his best friend falls an innocent victim to an incomprehensible *raison d'état*' (Arendt 19 , 146).

Arendt is more optimistic than Foucault about the possibility of improving matters. She puts her faith in revolutionary moments of 'natality' during times of social breakdown or crisis. During such moments, human beings are able to experience the excitement and utility of cooperating with each other in a spirit of solidarity and open dialogue, creating the germ of a better type of society.[vi] For a while, Zygmunt Bauman had similar hopes, believing that the spirit Arendt looked for could be cultivated in the public sphere under the leadership of enlightened intellectuals. More recently, he has looked for flickering signs of a more basic human solidarity between the 'I' and the 'other.' In other words, pockets of non-humiliating human interaction

may be created. One possible outcome is that in time they may expand and link up with each other.

Lack of security

Peter Singer locates the key locations of agency much higher up in the socio-political order than the individual citizen. He looks towards the future creation of an effective form of world government. He conceives global society as potentially 'a world community with its own directly elected legislature, perhaps slowly evolving along the lines of the European Union' (Singer 2004, 199).

Singer elaborates some ethical principles that should guide our actions in a globalised world. For example, we should not use more than our strictly calculated per capita share of the atmosphere's limited capacity to absorb our pollution.[vii] A major element of his approach is the need to provide security for the weak, vulnerable and marginalized. Singer refers to the Canadian government's commission of intervention and state sovereignty whose report was entitled *The Responsibility to Protect*.[viii] He looks forward to a time when the United Nations is provided with the means to act as the '"protector of last resort' (149).

The work of Barrington Moore adds strength to this general position with his principle, set out in *Injustice*, that members of a polity have a legitimate expectation that the government will exercise 'rational authority,' meaning that it can be convincingly shown that decisions are based upon the most effective use of available means to optimise the welfare of those citizens who are affected by those decisions;[ix]

Lack of recognition

Barrington Moore is, along with Edward Thompson,[x] one of the more empirical scholars cited by Axel Honneth in his work on recognition. Drawing on Hegel, Mead, Winnicot and others, Honneth explores the interplay between what people need if they are to realize their potential as human beings and the way relations of mutual recognition develop within societies. He distinguishes between primary relationships,[xi] legal relationships and relationships within the 'community of value' (see table 1).

Table Three
Honneth on recognition

Primary relationships (eg within the family) generate friendship and love which nurture *self-confidence.*	Legal relationships (eg within the polity) generate rights which sustain *self-respect.*	Relationships within the 'community of value' (eg within the national or global society) generate 'solidarity' which supports the *self-esteem* associated with occupying a particular social position.

Honneth is right to emphasise the social and relational character of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem.[xii] He is not alone in his focus on recognition.[xiii] Avishai Margalit argues that the institutions of a decent society should not reject anyone from the human commonwealth, or deny their humanity, or diminish their control over their own lives, or demean their cultural identity, or undermine the dignity which is the external sign of their inner self-respect. In other words, societies should not humiliate their members.[xiv]

Jonathan Glover looks for ways to build an acceptable morality based upon the actual psychological make-up of human beings as they are and, realistically, could be. Like Bauman, he is aware that the human capacity to empathise with others and recognise

their moral identity may be eroded under certain conditions. Bauman focuses upon bureaucracy,[xv] Glover more specifically upon military combat and the tug of 'tribalism' (Glover 2001, 133) with its taste for revenge. His message is that we should use intellect and imagination to avoid being trapped by false beliefs and a climate of fear.

Richard Sennett develops related themes, arguing that 'inequalities of class and race clearly making it difficult for people to treat one another with respect.' He looks at how 'the strength of self…diminishes others, the ill fit between self-confidence and the regard of others' and the way 'social forces shape such personal experiences' (Sennett 2001 46-7).

Ambiguities, conflicts, deceptions

This list contains ambiguities and potential inner conflicts. It also allows for some ideological sleight of hand. It is worth noting that:

- people who enjoy a state of *freedom* do not necessarily possess the resources, skills and knowledge needed to exercise *agency* in ways that advance their interests or sustain a satisfying sense of identity – free people may lack what they need to escape poverty, for example;
- it is difficult to combine high degrees of *security* with high degrees of *freedom,* especially when security is enacted through extensive surveillance, regulation and control – more security may mean less freedom, more freedom may mean less security;
- those who seek *recognition* for themselves may be keen to deny it to others

Those ambiguities, conflicts and potential deceptions can be confronted as long as they are recognised. They emerge in different forms in the honour code and the human rights code as described in the previous chapter.

Those who are successful in terms of the honour code demonstrate their own capacity to exercise agency, enjoy freedom, demand recognition from others, and forcefully protect their own interests. They do this by *weakening the capacity of others* (their enemies and victims) to do the same. The honourable victors, the glorious 'top dogs' may choose to recognise the interests of some of those they have defeated. They may choose to give some of them freedom and invest them with the resources (such as money, land, and weapons) needed to exercise a limited amount of agency. They may also choose to give special protection to those they favour. They may also deny these things.

The lurking shadow of the honour code in the midst of human-rights societies helps to explain, for example,

- how the strength of self may diminish others (see Sennett),
- how the force of tribalism raises its head in battle situations (see Glover),
- how the urge to humiliate may persist in the would-be decent society (see Margalit), and
- how societies which develop legal rights fostering universal self-respect may have socio-political orders within which specific groups, roles or occupations are systematically demeaned in the mass media and popular culture (see Honneth).

Experiencing the unacceptable

Humiliation happens when human essentials such as agency, freedom, security and recognition are wrenched away and those at the receiving end find themselves rudely displaced from where they think they ought to be and are brutally told, by words, actions or events, that they are not who they think they are.

Humiliation is the experience of being, unfairly, unreasonably, forcibly and against your will, displaced, pushed down, held down, held back or pushed out.[xvi] This forced displacement or exclusion is normally followed by anger or resentment on the part of the victim, which needs to be contained, defused, released or recycled in some way. That resentment provides a deep reservoir of energy which political and military leaders may try to use for their purposes. That is what makes 'humiliation' much more explosive than 'mere' exploitation, domination, or alienation.

But, first, what is 'experiencing' humiliation? By 'experiencing' I mean interpreting perceptions that occur within social relationships. This process is influenced by particular ways of understanding and reflection built into specific cultures and languages.[xvii] Since cultures differ, so do the particular ways in which the experience of humiliation is triggered, recognised and undergone. However, in every case, those who suffer humiliation have their own sense, albeit complex and often ambiguous, of the following:

- who they are,
- what is happening to them,
- who or what is debasing them, and

- how this affects their own or their group or society's capacity to live their lives in the way they are used to, desire, value and expect.

Humiliation is a process that occurs within social relationships, not simply a 'feeling' that 'happens' within the body and mind. On the one hand, an act or event is humiliating insofar as it is perceived and interpreted as such by specific persons or groups. On the other hand, this experience of humiliation is an event and a condition within their network of social relationships and affects how those relationships develop.

A common reaction to humiliation, from the victim's point of view, or that of sympathetic onlookers, is to make comments such as: 'that's outrageous,' 'we can't stand for that,' 'how impossible,' or 'that is going too far.' The message is basically that the thing being done is 'unacceptable.' In practice, people often have to acquiesce in the unacceptable but their intense unwillingness to do so is a powerful indicator that something humiliating has occurred.

What does 'unacceptable' mean here? It means more than one thing.

1. An act may be regarded as unacceptable if those judging it believe it infringes the society's code of justice. For example, it may be regarded as a denial of citizenship or universal human rights.

2. However, what if neither those who perform the act, nor those who endure it, nor, indeed, those who witness it believe in citizenship or universal human rights? What if

the act occurs in a lawless place where there is no shared code of law or justice to which anyone can appeal with the confidence that others will understand or recognise it?

In these circumstances, an act can still be experienced as humiliating by the victims and understood as such by anyone able to empathise with their perspective. The act is humiliating if it forcefully overrides and contradicts the claim an individual, group or society is making about 'who they are' and 'where and how they fit in.' It is humiliating when another party forcefully and successfully dismisses their assumption that they rightfully occupy a certain position (for example, a tribal existence on the North American plains) giving them a particular identity as well as specific interests which they believe or take for granted should be acknowledged and respected.

In this situation, it is impossible for those concerned (the 'victims') both to accept the viewpoint of those wishing to sweep them aside and, at the same time, retain their existing identity, enmeshed as it is with a specific way of life. So, 'unacceptable' has two possible meanings:

- impossible to reconcile with whatever overarching code governs the social relationships within which the humiliating act or event occurs; and/or
- impossible to reconcile with the humiliated party's own sense of their identity, interests and worth.

3. Matters become especially complicated when the overarching code in a society or global-region is focused on citizenship and human rights but specific groups have

their own version of the honour code which conflicts with this in important respects. In such cases, it is both necessary - and imaginatively difficult - for those adhering to the overarching code to recognise that they may be dealing with a group that is not only, as they see it, 'in the wrong' but also feeling humiliated by the efforts of 'outsiders' to override their particular approach. However, it is rarely a straightforward case of, for example the honour code versus the human rights code. Most communities work with a mixture of both. The very claim to have your particular version of the honour code respected by others is an appeal to the universalistic human rights code.

Conquest, relegation, exclusion

We can distinguish between three types of humiliation (see table 2). One is conquest humiliation. This happens when a person, group, institution or society that is used to having a high degree of relative autonomy (in ordinary language, freedom) is overwhelmed by another person, group, institution or society. The conquered party is forced into subordination. It is, so to speak, held down. A hierarchy is formed with the conqueror at the top. This happens when, for example, a military invasion is successful, when a feudal lord makes those he defeats into his vassals, or when captives are turned into slaves.[xviii]

It is exceedingly unpleasant to be on the receiving end of such treatment. According to Elias Canetti, each command a ruler gives is bound to cause deep resentment: 'Every command leaves a painful sting in the person who is forced to carry it out' (Canetti 1973, 67). This becomes 'a hard crystal of resentment' (360) that can only be overcoming by reversing the power situation. In other words, the urge to revolt, to

resist humiliation, is endemic within all hierarchies.[xix] Humiliation is, in fact, a profound source of social energy: 'What spurs men on to achievement is the deep urge to be rid of the commands one laid upon them' (355).

Another variant of conquest humiliation is the conquest of the individual by the group. For example, in many societies new recruits into the armed services and the police are put through humiliating experiences, often ritualised, which tell the newcomer: 'you will learn to think our way, you will identify strongly with this group, or you will suffer for it.'

The anthropologist Victor Turner (Turner 1969) describes tribal societies in which, every now and again, the sense of hierarchy is temporarily weakened so that the feeling of belonging to a united group can be strengthened. When the 'grid' of high and low statuses is relaxed, it allows all members of the tribe to share a sense of communitas, or mutual immersion in the encompassing group. These are moments of liminality[xx] during which, for example, rites of passage take place, notably the preparation for office of a new chief. During these rituals, the chief-to-be (shrewdly) adopts an attitude of great humility while being subjected to intense criticism and even abuse.[xxi]

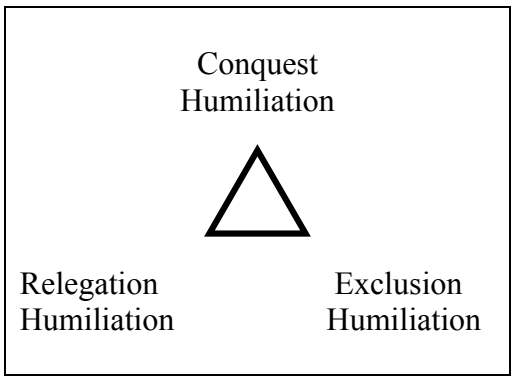
A second type is relegation humiliation. This happens when an individual, group, institution or society is forced down an existing hierarchy against their will and in a way that conflicts with their perception of their social identity and interests. It is intrinsic to the experience of humiliation that the relegation should be perceived as 'unacceptable' although in some cases the 'victims' may eventually find themselves

accepting, or at least, acquiescing, in it. Perhaps the most recent geo-politically significant example of relegation humiliation has been the toppling of the European empires, whose old rulers have been forced to accept the global lordship of the United States. At their height, these empires were themselves responsible for imposing relegation humiliation on kings, princes, and chiefs throughout the world. Like conquest humiliation, relegation humiliation produces intense resentment.[xxii]

A third type is exclusion humiliation.[xxiii] In this case, those at the receiving end are forcefully excluded or ejected from membership within specific groups, hierarchies, or networks to which they believed they had a right to belong. Examples include: the excommunication of heretics by the Church, the ejection of religious and ethnic minority groups from specific territories, the expulsion from foreign embassies of a diplomat suspected of espionage and declared 'persona non grata,' and campaigns to exclude or eliminate pariah groups such as German Jews (under Hitler) and the Russian kulaks or rich peasants (under Stalin).

The experience of being made an excluded outsider may, ironically, be a majority experience. According to Mary Douglas in *Natural* Symbols (Douglas 1970), this condition is especially likely to arise in situations of strong grid but weak group. This category includes not only 'Big Man' societies in Melanesia[xxiv] but also modern urban-industrial societies in which 'men see the world as a morally neutral, technical system which is lying there for themselves to exploit with their special gifts' (160).[xxv] In this modern, highly competitive world it is winner take all. Losers get very little. As Douglas puts it, the 'sense of being excluded, disregarded, of being made to feel of no value is a regular experience in the system of strong grid' (166).[xxvi]

Figure Two
Three types of humiliation



Finally, there is reinforcement humiliation. This is a kind of shadow of the three types of humiliation already described. Reinforcement humiliation occurs when insulting behaviour is enacted towards those who have been humiliated, reminding them of their degraded status in the eyes of others. This might include, for example, the use of demeaning stereotypical terms to describe particular races, nations, religions or groups such as women or old people, the delivery of kicks and blows to those in inferior positions such as slaves and servants, the deliberate management of body language to convey disgust towards those held to be inferior or untouchable, and the wilful transgression of personal space as an expression of blatant disrespect for those who are 'below' or 'outside.'

Escape, acceptance, and rejection

Humiliation may totally destroy those who experience it. However, normally it does not completely eliminate agency, the capacity to respond. But what response is best?

One of the most famous depictions of exclusion humiliation occurs in John Milton's epic poem, *Paradise Lost* (Milton 2004). The story begins with the forced removal of Satan and his followers from Heaven. After describing this spectacular event, Milton

takes us into Pandemonium, the fallen angels' debating chamber, where the Devil and his lieutenants are discussing what to do following their recent humiliation at the hands of the Almighty.

Moloch recommends *rejecting* their fate and fighting back because

> 'what can be worse
> Than to dwell here, driv'n out from bliss, condemn'd
> In this abhorred deep to utter woe;'

Belial takes the opposite point of view. Fighting back will indeed make things worse. Far better to *accept* the way things are since

> '……This is now
> Our doom; which if we can sustain and bear,
> Our Supream Foe in time may much remit
> His anger, and perhaps thus farr remov'd
> Not mind us not offending, satisfi'd
> With what is punish't;'

Beelzebub offers another response. In effect, he is saying: don't bother either accepting or rejecting the humiliating circumstances God has thrown us into. Instead, he says, let us get the Hell out of here. We should make an *escape* from Hell and find a new empire to conquer, not back in Heaven but on the still unspoiled territory of Earth. He reminded his listeners,

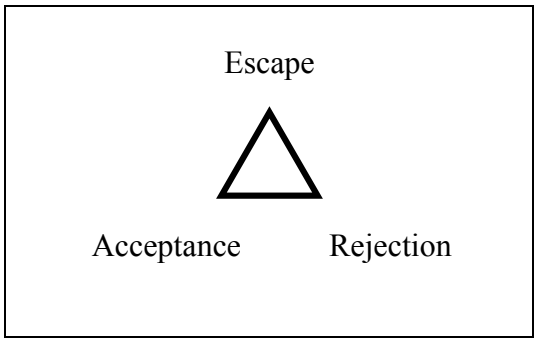
> 'There is a place
> (If ancient and prophetic fame in Heav'n

Err not) another World, the happy seat

Of som new Race call'd MAN….'

So, here are three potential responses to the challenge of humiliation: rejection (Moloch), acceptance (Belial), and escape (Beelzebub). Just for the record, Satan backed the strategy of escape.[xxvii]

Table Three
Responses to humiliation



Milton scholars will know that *Mammon* has a different take on things. He wants his colleagues to improve their situation by *transforming* Hell into a better place and waiting for the chance to make their relationship to God less humiliating. He puts his faith in a combination of cognitive therapy and creative action. He says, let us look around, look at ourselves, and realise that we can make things better;

'This Desart soile

Wants not her hidden lustre, Gemms and Gold;

Nor want we skill or art, from whence to raise

Magnificence;'

We will look into some possibilities for transforming humiliating into non-humiliating relationships in the last chapter. For the moment, let us focus on the other three responses.

Escape. The first possible response is *attempted escape* from the humiliating situation. Escapees may experience a feeling of *rebirth* in the process but at the same time they are likely to feel *wounded* and *fearful* as a result of the humiliation they have suffered in the past. The attempt to escape, and its aftermath, may be successful in some cases. In other words, the wounded but 'reborn' victims of humiliation may succeed in establishing a protected special place of their own. Having done this, they may succeed in building trust within the relationships upon which they depend for a secure, peaceful, non-humiliated and non-humiliating existence. But that is a very difficult challenge.

The danger is that the wounded but reborn victims of humiliation, having made their escape, will continue to have high levels of fear. They may be inclined to exaggerate the dangers lurking in their environment, becoming very 'jumpy' and inclined to look for excuses to take aggressive action against the objects of their fear. They may even make pre-emptive attacks to remove the perceived danger. The problem is that the victims of these attacks are likely to complain and strike back. In fact, aggressive action of this kind typically leads to embarrassing entanglements. If the aggressors manage to extricate themselves, they may withdraw once more into their protected special place until rising fear levels stimulate another round of this *fear cycle* during which those who are trying to escape humiliation impose it on others. .

Acceptance. The second possible response is *attempted acceptance* of the humiliating acts within the relationship while trying to interpret them as non-humiliating. A common way to do this is by identifying with the values of the humiliating party. For example, by adopting the role of *shamed penitent* the role of *victim* might be avoided. In such a case, penitents try to turn humiliation into shame by acknowledging responsibility for what has happened to them. They say, in effect: 'we got above ourselves and deserved to be taught a lesson, but now please accept us once more, even though we realise our status is bound to be a diminished one from now on.' In this case the preferred outcome, as far as the victims of the humiliation are concerned, is reintegration into the group or hierarchy. They also want those who were responsible for their humiliation to give them support in improving their behaviour, attitudes, and understanding.

However, suppose the tormentors think their victims are intrinsically degraded. In such a case the victims' continuing submissiveness and self-blame will simply confirm the abusers' perception of the victims' unworthiness. The latter's claim to humane treatment will be ignored. The likely result is a *victimization cycle* perpetuating humiliation.

Rejection. The third possible response is *attempted rejection* of the humiliating acts and, possibly, also the person, group, institution or society that has carried them out. The object in this case is to diminish the impact of the humiliation on the intended victims. Rejection may take the form of passive or active *resistance* and/or the search for a satisfying *revenge.* A successful strategy of resistance would be one in which the humiliated party deploys its resources as effectively as possible in a carefully directed

and controlled effort to do two things. The first is to limit the destruction produced by humiliation. The second is to conserve and nurture its capacity to act in an autonomous and effective way in pursuit of its objectives.

In the case of the rejection response to humiliation, a revenge cycle might be stimulated. Such cycles are perpetuated when at least one party to the humiliating relationship rejects the other's worthiness, right to occupy the place they do and even, in some cases, their right to exist. Acts of retaliation continue because each side believes their own attacks are justified while those of the other side are outrageous and unjustified.

The changing standards of humiliation

In 1550, as for centuries before, successful rulers were feared, recognised, and admired for their capacity to humiliate those around them, at home and abroad. This capacity was exercised in various ways, for example through regular public executions. These signs of greatness were expected and relished. At a lower social level, honourable masters beat their servants and inflicted verbal insults upon them as a matter of course.

Tribal societies, 'divinely-appointed' monarchies, absolutist empires and arrogant aristocracies all developed strong codes of honour. Honour in such contexts means independence, mastery[xxviii] and successful performance, all of which should command recognition, respect and approval on the part of superiors, equals and subordinates alike. The honourable person, family or group is able to fill their proper place in society with style, employing their own resources. They renew and expand these

resources through their confidence, strength, initiative and courage. These qualities are proven in action by victory and conquest in conflict, especially in battle.[xxix]

The way it works is as follows: the more complete the victory, the more utter the conquest, and the more valued the conquered prize, the greater the honour acquired. The basic honour code is centuries old and is still widespread, though with local variations. It justifies slavery, massacre, forced marriage and domestic servitude for women. The prizes and conquests most valued within this code are other people and their possessions, including their land, residences and livestock. Honour is enhanced in several ways: by destroying other people and their possessions, or by taking those possessions and making their previous owners bow down to you, by making others suffer pain and degradation, or by making them flee from you in terror.

Virtuoso performances in the field of honour, for example in feuds, duels and military campaigns, are almost certainly going to bring humiliation for the losers. Consider, for example, how the Ottoman army treated Marcantonio Bragadino, the governor of Famagusta in Cyprus when this city fell after a long siege in 1571:

'Bragadino's officers and staff were beheaded in front of him, so that a rivulet of blood flowed across the hard dry ground and washed over his feet. Then he was ceremonially disfigured, with his nose and ears hacked off like a common criminal…After prayers on Friday 17 August the Ottoman army gathered on the siege works that surrounded the city. Brigadino was brought before them…forced to his hands and knees, and a mule's harness was put on his back, with a bridle and bit in his mouth. Two heavy baskets filled with earth were loaded on to the harness, so that he

bent under their weight….Throughout the morning he was led back and forth in front of the troops, in and out among the tents, whipped forward and abused by the mass of the soldiers. Each time he passed the Ottoman commander's tent, he was forced to prostrate himself and eat a handful of the dusty soil…(Later, he) was hauled to the topmast of a galley, in front of all his former troops, now galley slaves…(and afterwards) taken to the marketplace and tied to a whipping frame where all the people of Famagusta could witness his humiliation.'

Let us skip the gory details of hacking off his skin while he was still alive. The skin was later stuffed with straw, paraded on Bragadino's horse through Famagusta, left hanging on the yardarm for several weeks, and finally put on show in the galley slaves' prison in Constantinople 'as a mute warning to any who thought to resist or rebel' Wheatcroft 2003, 22).

The audience of galley slaves, Bragadino's former soldiers, had all suffered the common fate of war captives in honour societies: this was to be consigned to a lesser category of subjugated humanity, forced into back-breaking labour. Miguel Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*, who fought on the winning side at the battle of Lepanto soon after the ending of the siege of Famagusta, had personal experience of being a galley slave. Following the Christian success at Lepanto, sweet revenge for Bragadino's humiliation, equally gruesome and dramatic, was taken upon the unfortunate losers.[xxx]

The status of humiliation has changed profoundly since those days. A new standard has arisen centred on the ideas of human rights and universal citizenship, given wide

publicity by the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. Cruel and aggressive acts that used to be seen as 'honourable' are now widely seen as 'abusive.' By 1950 many national governments were providing their people with the benefits of the welfare state. In other words, they were setting themselves the task of guaranteeing all their citizens legal, political and social rights intended to *prevent* them suffering a wide range of avoidable humiliating circumstances such as poverty and ignorance.

According to this new standard, the humbling of others, bringing them back to a 'proper' view of themselves, is permitted in appropriate circumstances using appropriate methods, but not humiliation, which involves degrading their humanity.

This represents a radical change compared to the honour code. Honour culture thinks vertically. It 'wants' hierarchy. When tribes or dynasties are locked in feuds, each of them is struggling to be top dog and push rivals down. If a king emerges and forces his old 'peers' to accept a subordinate position below him, members of the 'pacified' aristocracy still hanker for the field of honour. They battle with each other constantly, in jousts and duels, each aiming to put themselves higher up the pecking order and force their opponents down or even out.[xxxi]

By contrast, the human rights code thinks horizontally. It 'wants' equality. It assumes that *every* competent and rational human being equally deserves to belong to a society organised in such a way that they are all able to exhibit independence, competence and successful performance. That means making sure all such citizens get the knowledge, skills and material resources they need. It also means having a powerful

agency such as the state to ensure that each citizen is treated equally in these matters, that each is accorded equal respect.

The honour code is alive and well

On the face of it, the spread of the human rights code and citizenship culture seems like an effective way to abolish humiliation. But the strong residual influence of honour culture has, historically, in real political situations, been the force dictating 'common sense' answers to the question of who is 'competent and rational' and therefore entitled to full citizenship in practice.

What about women? What about slaves and ex-slaves? What about people without any property to speak of, men and women routinely described as 'losers' in the West? What about colonial subjects? What about those on the losing side in political or military conflicts? In other words, what about members of those categories that are traditionally the victims of humiliation in honour societies?

When the introduction and expansion of citizenship comes onto the political agenda, it is tempting for those with vested interests in the old honour system to treat groups that have been systematically humiliated in the 'old days' as inadequate, inferior, degraded, and, therefore, unfit for citizenship. So, in many cases, women, slaves or ex-slaves, people without property, and colonial subjects and ex-colonial subjects are given inferior versions of citizenship or denied any substantial rights. Furthermore, the idea of an 'official parliamentary opposition' is slow to develop in many 'democratic' one-party states with strong traditions of tribal, ethnic or dynastic

honour. After all, why give rewards (in other words, political 'rights') to humiliated losers?

What happens when those who control the state in societies with a strong tradition of honour decide to introduce citizenship or broaden its scope? There is intense opposition, as happened, for example, in the national states of Europe, North America, and Latin America during the nineteenth century, and in many parts of the world during the twentieth century. Major internal conflicts developed on these issues. The American Civil War was a major example. These conflicts continue and affect many people's lives today.

The idea and the promise of citizenship and human rights very often travel faster and further than the actual implementation of citizenship in practice. This has a paradoxical consequence. As people within an honour society hear about the promise of potential emancipation, this has the effect of intensifying their experience of humiliation. The blows do not become harder. But they become less acceptable.

However, in the early twenty-first century, the new standard has not wiped away the old. They live together, side by side: the old honour code, which recognises the validity of humiliating others as a way of establishing personal, social and political credibility, and the new human rights code, which teaches that all people should expect to be able to live a decent life and not become victims of events and circumstances that can be avoided or alleviated.

The most dramatic recent example of the rough co-habitation between the two codes is Iraq following the American invasion in 2003. On the one hand, much speechifying about freedom and the liberating impact of the free market, and frantic efforts to establish a new constitution based on the principles of parliamentary democracy; on the other hand, local tribal, ethnic and religious interests engaged in bloody duels with each other according to the age-old practices of the honour code.

You do not have to go to Iraq to see the intertwining of the two codes. Almost any western or, indeed, non-Western, society will illustrate the case. Consider the following:

1. The tabloid media's habit of belittling and tearing down well-known personalities in politics, sport and entertainment or 'crucifying' members of professions that can be presented as 'getting above themselves' such as teachers and social workers, or fomenting hostility against various groups that can be depicted as 'outsiders' such as 'asylum seekers' – all forms of inflicting humiliation according to the customs of the honour code.
2. The depiction of relations between men and women in many forms of pornography.
3. The rhetoric of sport, which encourages supporters to take delight in 'slaughtering' their rivals.
4. The popularity of religious creeds whose leaders emphasise the 'wrath of God' and sometimes encourage their followers to bring their enemies low on God's behalf.
5. The retention of capital punishment in the United States, sometimes taking the form of semi-public execution when interested guests (such as relatives of murder victims) are allowed to sit in an adjacent room and watch.

6. The habit, perpetuated by the Cold War and still not shaken off, whereby states find it convenient to make a gruesome stereotype of their 'enemy' which they can manipulate and degrade just as Bragadino was turned into a straw-stuffed dummy;

To sum up, the honour code and the human rights code are the two main frameworks people use to make sense of what life does to them. In the early twenty-first century these two codes are both vigorous and co- exist in various forms of pragmatic compromise. The kind of compromise that that we make between them will be crucial to our prospects for making a world worth living in during the twenty-first century.

Summary

In this chapter, we have: distinguished between the ancient and modern meanings of humiliation; investigated the part played by the lack of freedom, agency, security and recognition; considered how humiliation is experienced by its victims; contrasted three forms of humiliation (conquest, relegation, exclusion); looked at three forms of response (escape, acceptance and rejection); and seen the implications of the honour and human rights codes for our understanding of humiliation.

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[i] The day set aside was April 30, 1863. The proclamation was issued on March 30, 1863. See 'Proclamation appointing a national fast day' in Lincoln 1953, 156-7 or http://www.leaderu.com/bpf/pathways/lincoln.html.

[ii] See, for example, http://english.people.com.cn/200409/19/eng20040919_157545.html (28 March 2005)

[iii] See also the papers in Held and Held and McGrew 2002; Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2003.

[iv] For his part, Norbert Elias thinks the disciplining effect of discourses can produce individuals with 'civilized' ways of thinking, feeling and behaving, These self-disciplined and rational people are able

to build more rational societies. These will not be prey to fantasy-filled ideological discourses but will act on the basis of objective knowledge. For a discussion Elias, see Smith 2000.

[v] Stiglitz calls for more transparency at the IMF, more concern for debtors as opposed to creditors, and better awareness of the social and political damage done by its existing policies.[v] He notes that 'Those, such as in east Asia, that have avoided the strictures of the IMF, have grown faster, with greater equality and poverty reduction than those who have obeyed its commandments' (Stiglitz 2002, 248). Georg Soros thinks along similar lines and also has a political agenda, a plan to foster a global 'open society,' especially by encouraging civil society in Southeastern Europe. Soros 2000, 301-60.

[vi] Less radical than Arendt, Martin Albrow emphasises the importance of 'performative citizenship, (Albrow 1996, 175), in other words, a readiness to enact the skills learned within nation-states even when acting outside that political realm.

[vii] See Singer 2004, 43. Singer also discusses issues such as the organisation of the WTO, international monitoring of elections, and the role of national sovereignty. On the issue of global security, Brzezinski nods towards a 'Trans-Eurasian Security System' with an expanded NATO, involving Russia, China and Japan. TESS might 'gradually relieve America of some of its burdens, even while perpetuating its decisive role as Eurasia's stabilizer and arbitrator' (209). Something of the same 'friendly lion' spirit is found in Ikenberry who envisages the US as standing at the centre of 'A sort of layer cake of intergovernmental institutions ' that 'extends outwards from the United States across the Atlantic and Pacific' (Ikenberry 2001, 254).

[viii] For further details, see Singer 2004, 126

[ix] For a discussion see Barrington Moore on 'rational authority.' Moore 1972, 52-6

[x] See Thompson 1963; Thompson 1991. Thompson is discussed in Smith 1991,

[xi] According to Adam Phillips, parent-child relations cannot be free of humiliation, however well-meaning all concerned might be. In *The Beast in the Nursery* (Phillips 1998) he argues that every child has to learn the uncomfortable lesson that 'the viable self is a diminished self' (48), a self that is less than the one it wishes to be. In Phillips's view, 'Once you know who or what humiliates you, you know what it is about yourself that you truly value, that you worship' (96). The child's rage evoked by humiliation stems from its angry recognition that it depends on others who can choose not to satisfy it: 'there is an inevitable element of humiliation in simply being a child' (101). To get along in society, the child has to learn, partly through language, to want what it does not really want. Phillips contributes

to a debate that leads not only towards Freud and Foucault but also towards Rorty and his remarks on ironism and theory where he notes that 'Redescription often humiliates' (Rorty 1989, 90). See also Shklar 1984, and Scarry 1987.

[xii] Other writers, such as Lacan, in turn influenced by Alexander Kojève, have drawn on Hegel's discussion of recognition. See, for example, Roth 1988, Kojève 1969, Lacan 1977.

[xiii] Recognition may be uncomfortable to handle and in some cases may not be nurturing but destructive or embarrassing. Harold Garfinkel has examined the conditions of what he calls 'status degradation ceremonies' (Garfinkel 1956, 420) such as show trials through which people are stereotyped, denounced and belittled. In *Stigma* (Goffman 1968), Erving Goffman explores how interactions between 'normal' people and people with 'spoiled identities' are managed to avoid humiliating situations.

[xiv] See also Margalit 2002 and a special issue of *Social Research* (64, 1, September 1997) devoted to a discussion of *The Decent Society*. Turning to 'recognition' in the global context, Robbie Robertson and Martin Albrow, both argue that a change of mental attitude is crucial. Robertson described the gradual development of a 'global consciousness' (Robertson 2003, 3) over three waves of globalization stretching across several centuries. Albrow stresses the need to be open to both pre-modern and non-Western concepts as we enter the global age. Jonathan Sacks (Sacks 2002) makes a plea for respectful open-minded conversation, education, and the market as a source of diversity.

[xv] On Bauman, see Smith 1999.

[xvi] Humiliation means: knocking someone off their pedestal, stopping them getting above themselves, asking them who they think you are (before showing them who they *really* are), cutting them down to size, putting them in their place, grinding them into the dust, kicking them out, giving them the cold shoulder. The victims of humiliation feel they have been sat upon, flattened, kicked in the teeth, let down, put out, shown the door, and told where to get off. These examples are taken from the English language. An important project would be to explore and compare how discourses of humiliation have developed in a number of different languages.

[xvii] Caution is required since the experience and understanding of conditions such as fear and anger seem to be influenced in very complex ways by the historically-produced and always subtly-shifting configurations of social bonds in which they occur. See for example Rosenwein 1998; Rosenwein

2002; James 1997; Barbalet 2002; Barbalet 2005; Miller 1993; Scheff 1990; Scheff 1997; Greenblat 1980.

[xviii] Or when a monarch succeeds in pacifying feudal warriors and turning them into pacified courtiers. For an insightful study, see Norbert Elias *The Court Society* (Elias 1983) and, more generally, *The Civilizing Process* (Elias 1994).

[xix] Also relevant is empirical evidence of the ill-health associated with the inequalities created in hierarchical societies. See Wilkinson 2005. The impact of globalization on inequality is the subject of debate. See, for example, Firebaugh and Goesling 2004; Milanovic 2002; Ravallion 2003; Ravallion 2004; Sutcliffe 2004; Wade 2004.

[xx] Liminal individuals or entities are 'neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremony' (Turner 1969, 95). On liminality, see http://www.liminality.org/about/whatisliminality/

[xxi] See, for example, Turner 1969, 82-98, 158-60.

[xxii] Max Scheler, writing just before World War I, provided an acute phenomenological analysis of *ressentiment* as a 'unit of experience and action' (Scheler 1962, 39). Scheler found this response especially among social groups that had been relegated socially, driven down the status order. *Ressentiment* is not the same as 'resentment.' Resentment is a feeling of angry indignation that occurs within a specific relationship in response to particular events. By contrast, *ressentiment* is a long-lasting frame of mind, an emotional climate and even a physical state that permeates the whole being of a person or group. It influences their feelings, attitudes and behaviour in a wide range of relationships. *Ressentiment* is felt by those who have been displaced; those who have lost out in ways that undermine their identity. Scheler sees *ressentiment* as a compound: on the one hand, hatred, envy and vengefulness; on the other hand, a feeling of impotence, of being able neither to escape humiliation nor strike back against its source. *Ressentiment* grows when the state of humiliation has to be accepted as a permanent condition of existence: 'the injury is experienced as a destiny' (50). Being humiliated becomes part of an individual or group's identity. This identity is expressed and reinforced by a constant stream of complaints against real and imagined oppressors. This discourse of '*ressentiment* criticism' (51) constructs a specific worldview, one that castigates those historical events, social structures and cultural values that led to the victims' humiliation. The main object of attack was the old aristocratic social order. The discourse of the humiliated attacked feudal hierarchy, wasteful

pleasure-seeking, and good fellowship. In their place, it recommended the 'modern' values of equality, asceticism, utility and universal distrust. See also Scheler 1962, 71, 143, 152-4; Coser 1962.

[xxiii] I now prefer the term, 'exclusion' to the term 'expulsion' I used in earlier formulations such as Smith 2001; Smith 2002.

[xxiv] For a balancing analysis of big women in the South Pacific, see Lepowsky 1993.

[xxv] For another account of life within the grid, especially the urban grid, see Sennett 1994.

[xxvi] Humiliation is at the heart of Weber's Protestant Ethic thesis. The doctrine of predestination said human beings were sinners who had 'wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation.' They had given up control over their own destinies. They had no choice but to accept God's power 'to ordain them to dishonour and wrath,' however worthy their lives were in human terms (Weber 2002, 71-2, quoting the Westminster Confession of 1647). As Weber puts it, 'The humanly comprehensible "Father in Heaven" of the New Testament, who rejoiced at the return of a sinner…, has here become a transcendental being remote from any human understanding, a being who had allotted to each individual his destiny according to his entirely unfathomable decrees, and who controlled the tiniest detail of the cosmos' (Weber 2002. 73). In other words, human beings have lost the freedom to chart their own course towards Heaven or Hell. God has taken over that task. At the same time, God has done a disappearing act, leaving the faithful behind. Puritans had to cope with the feeling of being thrust away from God, denied his presence. This was, above all, exclusion humiliation, manifesting itself in tremendous 'inner loneliness' (73) in this life reinforced by the threat of eternal Hellfire in the next.

[xxvii] See also Hirschman 1970.

[xxviii] The use of the term 'mastery' signified the masculine character of the honour code.

[xxix] See Kaplan 2002.

[xxx] For other illustrations, less graphically described, see Thucydides 1972. The *History of the Peloponnesian War* was written in the fifth century BCE

[xxxi] For an interesting take on conflict, hierarchy and equality, see Gould 2003.