The emotions that Freud found in his early work on therapy and sexuality, shame and disgust, apparently surprised and puzzled him. The first of these two emotions played a large role in his study of hysteria (Freud & Breuer, 1895/1966). Freud suggested that shame was the main cause of hysterical neurosis. However, his attention quickly shifted away from shame to guilt, which became the principal emotion in the work he did for the rest of his life.

In terms of a broad understanding of the shape of everyday life, Freud's shift may have been unfortunate. Guilt can be a continuing presence in some neuroses, but it figures only intermittently in ordinary lives. Shame and embarrassment, on the other hand, may be virtually omnipresent, whether in the form of the emotion itself or, more frequently, in anticipating it and struggling to avoid it. At least that idea haunts the work of Erving Goffman, the sociologist of social interaction. In his best known work, Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1969), and in many other books and articles, Goffman gave detailed
descriptions of the plight of the harried individual constantly trying to stave off embarrassment or humiliation by “impression management” (Chapter 6).

One of the reasons that Goffman is widely read and appreciated is that most of his work provided telling examples with which the reader may easily identify. He offered portraits of every person trying his or her best to make good impressions, but, alas, often one's best is not good enough. These examples apparently strike a familiar chord with his readers.

His use of examples is also problematic, however, because it is usually difficult to determine what point he was making. Goffman often attempted to define his concepts, but he seldom stated a general thesis (Scheff, 2006). This gap may be narrowed by the Fuller and Gerloff handbook *Dignity for All: How to Create a World Without Rankism* and by Fuller's earlier books (2003, 2006). Gerloff, an educator and journalist by training, has helped Fuller summarize his approach in brief, emphasizing its practical implications.

Unlike Goffman's, Fuller's work is not only illustrated by examples, but his theses are explicitly stated. Even more unlike Goffman, Fuller teases out both the theoretical and the practical implications of his approach. Although Fuller developed his ideas independently of Goffman's writings, his work is quite parallel but much clearer.

I believe that Fuller has made a powerful contribution to our understanding of some of the enigmas of our time, one that has the potential to help us surmount them. His assessment of the problems of inequality and violence may be a still greater contribution. He has had an illustrious career: first as a physicist, then as president of his alma mater, Oberlin College; as a citizen diplomat in Russia during the Cold War and chairperson of the Board of Internews, as well as many others that inform his work. During the Cold War, his person-to-person contact with Russians of many ranks and in different contexts helped him develop his own social psychology of cooperation and conflict.

There are two main components in his approach: *rankism*, on the one hand, and *dignity*, on the other. The term rankism does not concern rank per se, only the abuse of rank. Some systems of rank are inherently abusive: White over Black, male over female, hetero-over homosexual, Christian over Muslim, extreme nationalism, and so on. But even legitimate systems of rank, those in most organizations, are often abusive, if not in principle, then in practice.

Fuller's principle concern is with dignity, which is identical to what Goffman called *face* and *facework*, as in saving or losing face. This perspective offers what seems to me to be a distinctive solution to the problem of inequality. That is, it doesn't concern economic rank or political hierarchy directly, but dignity and its opposite, *humiliation*, the term that Fuller uses rather than Goffman's *embarrassment*. This focus, as will be suggested below, may help with a problem that probably cannot be understood in strictly economic or political terms: gratuitous and/or interminable conflict.

Fuller's analysis begins with what he calls microinequalities, the withholding of dignity by one person from another. At work, if your boss continually interrupts
conversations to take phone calls, it is a slight, a small indignity, but slights add up. If they are frequent enough, one can feel like a nobody. The boss may not intend it, but to be slighted consistently is humiliating.

Much of Goffman's work concerns this same issue. It also is crucial to his construct of impression management. One seeks to manage the impression one makes on others in order to maintain one's dignity, and at times, the dignity of others to avoid embarrassment or humiliation. Goffman was concerned only with face-to-face interaction, but Fuller extends the dignity/humiliation process up to the traditional problem of macroinequalities between groups.

All contact between persons and between groups has an effect on a third idea in his approach, the bond, which is maintained, strengthened, or disrupted. Helping the other person or group maintain their dignity maintains the existing bond or strengthens it; disrespect disrupts it. There are no exceptions: Contact cannot occur without maintaining or changing the bond. Secure bonds lead to cooperation; disrupted ones, to conflict. When the bond is entirely broken, as is often the case, other people can become mere objects.

Fuller's approach is powerful in several different ways. It is applicable to many ostensibly different issues: race, interethnic and internation relations, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and so on. It also implies a theory that may explain gratuitous and/or interminable conflict between individuals and between groups.

For example, the Serbian attack on the Muslims in Bosnia in the 1990s can be traced back to a defeat of the Serbs by Muslim Turks hundreds of years earlier. The Serbs took this ancient defeat as a humiliation and harbored vengeance until it became possible to seek some redress. Similarly, France plotted for many years to regain its honor (read dignity) after defeat in the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, and Hitler won over the German people by promising to regain the honor they lost in the defeat in 1918. Humiliation spawns humiliation, and it can strike deep. The dignity/humiliation framework seems to reach into the very core of human conduct.

Finally, Fuller uses terms that are understandable by everyone. Audiences all over the world have responded enthusiastically to his speeches. Indeed, his work could provide the foundation for a social movement to create dignitarian organizations and, ultimately, to build a dignitarian society. For these and other reasons not mentioned in these brief comments, Fuller's ideas are well worth our attention.

References