

# Memorandum - Easter 2021

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## For a necessary rethinking of Corona politics and a greater understanding of the diversity of opinions in crises.

The Corona Pandemic is not only an extremely complex event in terms of health, but it has also come at a time of great environmental, social and geopolitical change, and it is in itself a part of these changes. According to UNICEF, the pandemic will add another 130 million people to the 700 million who suffer from hunger worldwide, in addition to the problems we all face in the form of climate, hunger and poverty crises - accompanied by armed conflicts, refugee misery and hardship. These changes and hardships require a rethinking on both a large and small scale.

The Pandemic and the way it has been managed have confronted most of the world's population with the fact that much of what was taken for granted until recently has suddenly ceased to exist: the daily drive or walk to work, to kindergarten and school, the personal freedom of movement, shopping, participation in cultural events, weddings, funerals, family celebrations, leisure activities, and much more.

The screen has become the central meeting and communication place. However, the accelerated digitization of all areas of life is not only experienced as a blessing. Children and young people need first and foremost real-world experiences and contacts for their healthy development.

In addition, there is concern whether the consistent tracking of infection chains and vaccination proofs, as well as other control and monitoring instruments that are deemed necessary, will lead to a future in which we have to reckon that they will be used again at any time when national emergencies such as the threat of terrorism or pandemics occur. How must democracy be developed further, so that fear of violence, of disease and death does not become the enemy of freedom and individual rights?

Many people are asking themselves, what kind of future is in store for us? What kind of citizen participation is needed to keep democracy viable in the face of this changed overall situation? How can civil society be concretely involved in the process of a necessary rethinking - also in Corona politics?

Children and young people are particularly hard hit by this complex overall situation. They not only experience the fear and anxiety of the adults around them, but also have their own fears about their own future. In addition, they now experience social isolation, and many also domestic violence. Existing hot- lines and child and adolescent psychiatry centers are increasingly overburdened.

In view of these facts, it is understandable that society has become increasingly polarized into those who affirm, justify and support the previous Corona policy and a growing number of citizens who are less and less able to do so and are rebelling against it for a wide variety of

reasons. Disputes and conflicts in families, neighborhoods or at the workplace are the result. Experiencing this potential for conflict, but also the tabooing of the topic for the sake of social peace, has motivated us to look at the

different ways of thinking, some of which clash hard, leading to the different positions. For, depending on which view someone has, they back it up with the facts that go with it, and the possibility of mutual understanding is jeopardized.

However, if one can understand the other's way of thinking and allow oneself the search for solutions that do justice to both sides then tolerance and social peace have a chance. Rather, the motivation to engage together and find creative solutions in the face of stressful conflicts. Five of these thought approaches, which have especially contributed with their consequential arguments to the polarization are presented below. Our memorandum is dedicated to the goal of understanding these thought approaches and thereby contributing to a constructive dialogue.

### *1. What kind of thinking underlies the globally coordinated measures to successfully combat the pandemic?*

It is the way reductionist way of modern natural science. It assumes the COVID- 19 is a severe, contagious viral disease - not comparable to seasonal flu. Terrifying images of severe cases with fatal consequences and many coffins have etched themselves into the memory of billions of people.

The approach of government officials and the WHO resulting from this insight is clear: the virus must be combated at all cost. In addition, the reasoning makes sense: the health care system would quickly become overburdened and incapable of accommodating all the sick if the pandemic were given free reign. People with pre-existing conditions and of advanced age are particularly at risk, and they need special protected.

The consequence of this way of thinking is to do everything possible to break the chains of infection, to prevent the severe cases, and to prepare the population for the mass vaccination that will save it. This way of looking at things is consistent, with the 7-day incidence serving as the uniform basis of measurement. Clear figures and facts built on statistical evidence determine the procedure. One could be satisfied with that!

Painful personal, social, cultural and economic collateral damage, however, clearly indicate the extent to which living conditions suffer from this one-sided approach. Especially since impressive current figures from the RKI and WHO, prove that about 20% of the positively tested persons are symptom-free, and the majority of the remaining almost 80% infected show only mild to moderate symptoms. From this point of view, it seems essential to include further points of view and to stimulate a discussion on how these can be combined in such a way that more life-friendly options can become effective.

*2. The salutogenic thinking approach asks: Why don't all infected people get sick and of those who do get sick, why don't they all get seriously ill? What keeps people healthy?*

Understanding health requires a more complex way of thinking. Health is the unstable equilibrium between the factors that can damage the organism and the regenerative possibilities and resistance forces, which we summarize under the term immunocompetence. Following this thinking approach, the virus is not the only cause of the pandemic - the susceptibility of the organism is another. However, it depends on this susceptibility whether symptoms of disease can develop or not. This fact is also reflected in the current infection figures of the WHO and the RKI (as of March 21, 2021):

**Globally, on the whole earth live 7.87 billion people**

**Of those tested positive so far:** 122.542.424 = 1,58%

**Of those tested positive, deceased:** 2.703.620 CFR = 2,21% (CFR=case-fatality rate).

**Comparing Germany:**

**Population:** 83 million

**Tested positive:** 2.659.516 = 3,2%

**Of which died:** 74.664 (CFR) = 2,8%

These numbers indicate that on March 21, 2021, of the world's 7.87 billion people so far, 122.5 million have been reported Corona positive and that of those reported positive 2,2% have died (CFR). In Germany, on the same day, the RKI reported a total of 2.66 million people tested Corona positive. This is 3,2% of a total population of 83 million. Of these 3,2% reported Corona positive, 2,8% died of or with Corona (CFR). At the same time, it is known that up to now 89 % of the deceased were over 70 years of age and most of them had pre-existing conditions. Both these factors indicate a limited or age-related decline in immunocompetence.

This means that the more robust the immune system is and the associated defense situation of the body, the lower the risk of falling ill. In view of these figures, it is understandable that many citizens and experts feel that the government's pandemic regime is disproportionate and ask, for example: Why is there no investment in the healthcare system and in the training of additional nursing and specialist staff? What can be done in terms of health policy so that hospitals are not primarily run for profit but are patient- oriented and equipped for a pandemic? Why not protect the risk groups at a high level, provide high- quality protective clothing for visitors in senior citizens' and nursing homes with quality-tested FFP2 mask protection?

Why are procedures not developed for real risk assessment on site in the companies, in kindergartens and schools together with those involved, which not only take into account the potential fact that the virus can theoretically affect anyone, but also reckon with the much greater probability that most people will remain healthy? Especially children and adolescents, where severe courses of complications are extremely rare?

*3. The psychoimmunological thought approach: What does the fear of illness and death do to us? and what gives us courage?*

Already during the first lockdown, a commentary by Dieter Fuchs in the Stuttgarter Zeitung of April 17, 2020, stated, "11.4 million families with young children will be forced to somehow organize gainful employment, learning and child care, in extensive isolation from other people who could help (...) Their basic rights to education, freedom of movement and social exchange will be ignored. A society that places this burden on parents and children for months at a time will pay a heavy price."

Since then, the warning voices have increased exponentially. But adults are also paying a high price. Depression increases, chronic diseases worsen. Fear of illness and death, worries about one's own existence, one's job, financial survival or having fewer good educational opportunities - all of this weighs on the mind. What can you do to counteract this?

Why don't the media also highlight what can give courage and what strengthens the immune system in parallel with the daily infection and death figures? At the beginning of the second pandemic wave in the fall, for example, intensive care physician and internist Harald Mattes, professor at Berlin's Charit® and leading physician at Havelh°he Hospital, called for a shift away from crisis management toward "risk- stratified action. Don't we need round tables where such proposals are discussed and then the possibility of practically implementing creative proposals under controlled conditions? How do you strengthen the citizens' own responsibility for their health?

Health and resilience research in the 1970s and 1980s, as well as psychoneuroimmunological research, have in any case amply demonstrated the extent to which negative feelings such as stress, fear, insecurity, powerlessness, persistent worry and despair impair and even damage the immune system. Whereas positive feelings such as courage, hope, confidence, trust, closeness and security strengthen it. Last but not least, it is well known how prayer and meditation can awaken and stabilize positive feelings, especially in times of crisis.

#### *4. The Grassroots Democratic Thinking Approach: Autonomy, Participation and Co-Responsibility*

When the well-known American computer expert Josef Weizenbaum visited Germany for lectures and interviews in the "George Orwell" year 1984, he was also asked whether the computer would bring the surveillance state. He could only confirm this and reported that his research and development work had been and is still fully financed by the US. Department of Defense. However, he then immediately made it clear (the interview was published in 1984 under the title "Course for the Iceberg") that if it were to come, the surveillance state, it would not be the fault of the computer, *but of the people who did not defend their freedom*. Hitler and Stalin would have demonstrated that surveillance states are not dependent on computers.

Democratic systems, in order to remain functional, need on the one hand the "allure of freedom" (Novalis), on the other hand the joy of dialogue at round tables with those who think differently, in citizens' forums and a fair culture of debate. What conditions are needed in education and training so that such skills can develop?

This question has been explored by education experts like Gerald H;ther for a long time. In his book "Dignity," he calls for an education that helps children and young people to develop an awareness of human dignity and freedom. But how can this be achieved if prescribed norms and regulations tend to increase rather than decrease? Not to mention the additional pressure on children and young people to adapt to the pandemic conditions. It is obvious that a great deal of

sensitivity and willingness to talk is necessary in order to agree on a risk-stratified action for the kindergarten- and everyday school life among the responsible educators, parents and authorities. This makes every effort in this regard on site all the more worthwhile - because school time is precious development time!

### *5. The Spiritual Thinking Approach and Worldview Issues*

Anthroposophy, founded by Rudolf Steiner was banned at the time of National Socialism, and when the Second World War was over, accomplished significant achievements in the fields of agriculture, medicine, therapeutic education and pedagogy, as well as social economic forms - not only in Germany but also worldwide. Even though these achievements are respected and recognized, their "spiritual superstructure", that is, the spiritual way of thinking, called spiritual science by Steiner is viewed rather with a lack of understanding and questioning why this should be necessary in order to create such achievements.

Of course, in the prevailing materialistic-scientific way of thinking there is no place for a science of the spirit as it is represented in Anthroposophy or other spiritual directions or philosophies. But it is - de facto - not indifferent whether one's own thinking and acting imagines the human being in the theoretical superstructure, better put, in his own thinking - which conception of the human being one makes for oneself. Depending on the way of thinking and imaging, the picture of man and the answers to the question of the meaning of life differ. The way we deal with illness and death and the possibility of a spiritual pre-existence and post-existence are also influenced by this. To develop respect and tolerance for this is the core of a humanistic culture.

In view of this fact, it is all the more important to strive for mutual understanding and tolerance of the other ways of thinking and seeing things. Then the best possible compromise for each situation can be found through negotiation - in accordance with this very fitting saying: Those who want to, find ways - those who don't, find reasons.

### **Conclusion**

The five approaches discussed here are intended as a plea to allow for more interdisciplinary and different ways of looking at the pandemic. Life is a complex process and so is what serves it. Moreover, a development towards freedom and dignity cannot be had without risk. By complementing each other's ways of thinking and the resulting options for action, and by putting claims to sole responsibility into perspective, it is easier to do justice to life in all its complexity. As necessary as a political framework is to contain the pandemic, it is also essential to encourage the population to take personal and shared responsibility and to assess risks realistically on site.

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**We would be pleased if you would support this Memorandum and especially now during this Easter time, circulate it in your environment. Thank you very much!**