

Preface: Dr. Michaela Glöckler is the former Leader of the Medical Section at the Goetheanum, the School of Spiritual Science in Dornach, Switzerland having served since 1988. She attended the Waldorf School in Stuttgart, then studied German language, literature, and history in Freiburg and Heidelberg. She studied medicine in Tübingen and Marburg and trained as a pediatrician at the community hospital in Herdecke and at the Bochum University Pediatric Clinic. Until 1988 she was a colleague in the children's outpatient clinic at the Community Hospital in Herdecke and served as school doctor for the Rudolf Steiner School in Witten, Germany. Michaela has many publications in German. Her publications in English include *Medicine at the Threshold*, *A Healing Education*, *Developmental Insights*, and *A Guide to Child's Health*.

The Corona-Virus and Our Human, Health-Giving Forces

An Interview with Dr. Med. Michaela Glöckler

conducted by Yair Atala

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Campus A: Greetings, on behalf of Campus A and the Freies Jugendseminar, Stuttgart. I myself attended the Jugendseminar, and I am now working for Campus A, Stuttgart. We are grateful that you always accept our invitations to visit or speak to us, such as at our previous "Bildungsart" conference.

Currently we find ourselves in times of much change, and it is taking place at a rapid pace. Which is why we find it important to be able to speak to you again now. Three weeks ago we conducted an interview. However, the situation is constantly changing and the circumstances are now quite different.

We are wondering what is currently happening with us. Why are we so taken by surprise by this virus, individually and as a society, and why are we reacting in such an unprecedented way?

Dr. Glöckler: I can understand your question very well. Because, on one hand we are already familiar with the flu viruses, which recur each year. And we are apt to ask ourselves what makes the Corona pandemic so unique. We have known about viral strains since the 1960s. Their detection required extremely high-definition electron microscopes. But in the mean time the virus research has made enormous advances. And we know that the Corona viruses are a whole family or group of viruses. Up until now, the SARS virus has been become particularly well-known. And even back then (2003) everyone was fearful, given that it is also an acute respiratory infection, that it would take on similar forms to that which we are currently experiencing with the Corona Virus. This was what we feared during the SARS epidemic. However, this did not occur at that time. Which is also quite interesting.

In any case, the reason we are experiencing such a unique situation now (with Covid-19) is due to certain complications that arise. As was the case with SARS, most of the people who become infected are not even aware of it, while others have light flu-like symptoms. And then there is a certain number of people from the "high-risk-group", but also other individual cases, who develop a very dangerous lung infection. It is so dangerous because the fine connective tissue between the alveoli (in the lungs/bronchial tubes) becomes swollen and inflamed, and this restricts breathing capacity, so that a person feels as if they are suffocating due to lack of air.

Of course, this also creates panic. Even the conception that people now have - "I could fall into panic due to lack of air... I could suffocate" - frightens many people. Which is why I can very well understand why, worldwide, there is a somewhat panic-fueled reaction and all social interaction is being shut down.

On the other hand, it is known that we can only come to terms with a virus by means of so-called herd immunity, whereby a great majority of people have been infected by the virus without becoming ill and have thus acquired immunity - we humans as a herd, so to speak, would need to acquire immunity. And by means of a specific vaccine, which we, as of yet, do not have.

Insofar, I hope that as soon as the spread of the virus slows, we will rely on herd-immunity and power up the public social life and the economy, while, at the same time, making an attempt to financially prioritize -which we've started doing world-wide in the past few weeks - putting money into emergency medical care and everything that goes along with it, rather than subsidizing the economy.

Campus A: Of course - I believe it is all about priorities.

This time around it is so unique because although we are certainly fearful and in panic, we are, above all, compelled to have a sense of solidarity with our fellow human beings, especially with the high-risk group.

Dr. Glöckler: Yes, but we are capable of protecting the high-risk group in a targeted way.

Acquiring, herd immunity, does not mean infecting the high-risk group. On the contrary. The high-risk group should be unbelievably well-protected. However, the so-called healthy people who do not belong to the high-risk group, they should return to work, and meet each other, etc. and thereby, with light symptoms to no symptoms, immunize themselves against the virus. For if a certain percentage - 70 to 80% - of the population has been immunized, that protects the rest of the population. And if people who have acquired immunity then interact with the high-risk group it is no longer dangerous.

This is, so to speak, a different way of thinking, a different strategy. And I find it so important because particularly elderly people, lonely people, or sick people who are in the hospital or in a nursing home - if they can't receive any more visitors - will also die, suffer or develop depression. We must be incredibly careful in considering how many people, especially elderly people, are being harmed tremendously by the banning visitation rights, with the goal of perhaps saving a few others. I see massive ethical issues that arise in consequence of the visitation bans. That is why I advocate: protect the high-risk groups, intensively support health care -we should not spare any costs in health care - and, otherwise, allow young people who have a good immune system to become immunized.

Campus A: By means of ever day social intercourse?

Dr. Glöckler: By being together, by working together, by socializing, by participating in cultural life, attending events, by dancing, and so on. Yes, precisely!

Campus A: Many of us are asking about the significance, from a spiritual point of view, of the fact that Covid-19 is an illness affecting the lungs and that it is a pandemic.

Dr. Glöckler: Well, the lung is a very wonderful organ that connects us with the entire atmosphere of the earth. It is the most social, most communicative organ that we have. For example, when people are in a room together they mutually breathe in the air that the other just breathed out. We rarely make ourselves conscious of this. Via the air we are not only connected with our fellow men and with all of humanity, but we are also connected with all of our sins and offenses, in view of environmental pollution. We must not forget that the majority of lung complications have arisen in the most polluted metropolises - not in the countryside. We are ruining the air we breath and should not wonder that the lung is less and less able to cope with the bad air we are producing. What I am trying to say is that, if the lung is increasingly confronted with air-pollution, deriving from our industrial way of life, there comes a point when the lung is no longer able to cope. At this point the lung becomes more susceptible. And I certainly do see a correlation.

Although we have done much to improve the air in the past few decades worldwide, it is not enough by far. Furthermore, the air we breath has not only a physical aspect. We experience - by way of speech, music, light - everything that the air bestows upon us. Sunlight is only visible due to the atmosphere. The air makes the light visible. And the air is vitally essential for life, and the air transports speech, music and all sorts of wonderful things.

But it also transports the sounds of the animals - the tormented sounds coming from our agonizing industrial livestock farming. This is also carried in the air and we take it in with our breath - the suffering of animals. I also find there is a link between how we treat animals and the fact that the viruses that are most prevalent in the animal kingdom have developed the ability of cross-species

transmission. More and more frequently, we are faced with the fact that the viruses are able to cross the boundary between animal and human... in order to call our attention to the animal kingdom - I cannot say it in any other way! We live and breath with the animals in the same, shared natural environment, and yet we handle them in such an unworthy, undignified manner - we could not conduct ourselves any more disgracefully.

- With only a few praiseworthy exceptions!

Campus A: We belong to the same ecosystem.

Dr. Glöckler: Yes.

Campus A: And now I have another question that came to me rather spontaneously: Let us say I belong to the high-risk group. What can I do to build up my resistance to this new virus that we, as of yet, know so little about?

Dr. Glöckler: Well, if we think along the lines of integrative medicine, there are different levels we can consider: First of all, the physical level, which is now being practiced worldwide. We call such preventative measures "exposition prophylaxis" - this includes: social distancing, (hygienic rules), etc. Basically it means that one exposes oneself to the virus as little as possible. For example by wearing a face mask when interacting with people in the high-risk group, such as in hospitals. Basically, certain physical measures can be taken, by means of avoidance.

However, I find it most important to look at which factors come into consideration when it comes to strengthening the immune system in general. And here it is first of all very, very essential to have sufficient sleep - but also a healthy diet and a good work-life balance, which includes getting enough physical movement. It has been found that even a half-and-hour of deliberate, brisk walking outdoors immediately stimulates the immune system - joyful walking... not slinking around depressingly! We must not allow ourselves to underestimate these completely everyday activities - sleeping, eating, moving.

Then, there are also some very good eurythmy exercises. Eurythmy is very beneficial for those who are familiar with it. Meanwhile there are also video clips on how to learn certain eurythmy exercises that can be of help.

Then, most crucially, (beyond the the physical) we must consider building up resistance on the level of the soul (the mental-emotional level).

Campus A: The Psychosomatic

Dr. Glöckler: - Psycho-neuro-immunologisch. Since the 1970s, it has been well established that our immune system reacts positively to positive, good feelings, such as: joy, devotion, humor, thankfulness appreciation. Positive feelings in human relations have a immediate, stimulating effect on the immune system. Whereas, fear and depression impair the immune system, as does hate and any negative feelings.

However, one more very important thing just came to my mind, regarding the physical level of building resistance to a virus: a good treatment of fevers, "fever management", is often neglected when people get the flu. This not only pertains to prevention, as you asked about, but already regards treatment. Of utmost importance in the treatment of viral infections is that the fever symptoms are handled

correctly. Because fever in the body's only weapon for killing off viruses. But many people do not know this. And fever-sinking drugs and antibiotics suppress this natural immunological reaction of the body, thereby harming the immune system.

Campus A: For example Ibuprofen?

Dr. Glöckler: Yes, for example. Meanwhile, there is evidence that one should substitute Ibuprofen with other products, because it has been shown to be harmful. But, the thing is that none of these other products are good either. And as a doctor I would only recommend the use of such products if the body is unable to control the fever! Otherwise, one should use physical means to practice healthy fever management.

Campus A: Super.

But there is one more important point regarding prevention, on the soul level (mental-emotional level). Some people ask: well how can I generate positive feelings now while I am sitting alone at home? One can pray and one can meditate. Thus arises devotion, and such things put us in a good mood. We can light a candle. We can read something that connects us with spirituality, with our notion of God, with higher beings, with eternal thoughts, or of dear loved ones who have passed away. Because, although we cannot see thoughts with our eyes, they are precisely our invisible bridges into the spiritual world. And to renew a connection with the realm of our thoughts - I find that so important.

Campus A: And perhaps, through meditation and a connection with the spiritual world, one can receive something in the spiritual world during these times that will help one to discover new chances in the world... Which brings me to my next question: How will this crisis affect us - not only regarding the outer consequences, but regarding new chances that could arise?

Dr. Glöckler: Well, I hope very much, along with very many other people, that when this is all over, we do not think that our way-of-life prior to Corona was super and that we can now just continue along in the same fashion. I sincerely hope that economically, in the way we do business, and ecologically, in the way we treat nature, something changes. I hope that we do not simply relapse back into the way things were before. That is actually my greatest wish. And even though many things are now functioning digitally and, due to isolation, digitization has gained major impetus, it is very important that we make it clear to ourselves that digital technology is not healthy for the neurological development of children and adolescents. They need to spend their developmental years in the real world before they accustomed themselves to the virtual one.

And I am very actively engaged in this area (see ELIANT), because the ability to think independently requires 16 years of healthy brain development. In fact, the frontal lobe needs 15 to 16 years to develop to the point where one possesses the capability for self-control and independent thinking. In order not lose sight of this, we will have to think carefully and pay much attention when the current lockdown comes to an end. We mustn't allow ourselves to suppose: "we no longer have a need for many of the things in the real-world. Now one can induct children and youth straightaway into the online world." - That would be very bad.

And last but not least, in the name of pandemic-management, the move towards a total surveillance is currently being rehearsed - this is simply a fact - up to the point of enforced lockdown and monitoring us via our cellphones. Whether this takes place anonymously or not, everyone knows the gravity of such a policy statement. We must be very vigilant regarding our free, democratic values, so that, with this pandemic, they don't go down the drain.

Without wanting to stoke fear, there is one thing that I do wish to emphasize. It is something that Joseph Weizenbaum - who helped build up practically the entire computer industry in the USA, and who played a pivotal role in the development of the computer - said in 1984 (Orwell year) in an interview in Germany. It is printed in a small book that is still very relevant today, entitled "Kurs auf den Eisberg" (On course for the Iceberg - the responsibility of the individual under the dictatorship of technology, 1993) And even back then in 1984, the interviewer asks whether or not computerization and digitalization is an enormous facilitator of the surveillance state, the Orwellian State. And Weizenbaum answers: of course it is. We've been working systematically towards this goal, for only with the computer is total surveillance possible. Then Weizenbaum says: but - and this is the big but - we should realize that mankind has managed to create the most appalling surveillance states even without a computer. He says that he would not be concerned about the future of computers and the surveillance state, if humans were to have sufficient morality. Because, then they would be able to employ the technology in a good way and use it to defend democratic values. Weizenbaum says very succinctly: the appalling form of the computer-driven surveillance state will primarily be a consequence of human beings who no longer wish to defend their freedoms and no longer take any interest in their freedom.

And I find this to be the most important point for the post-Corona times: that we reflect upon our core values of freedom and dignity, that we apply the surveillance state in a good manner, and that we only employ it for the security and protection of the population - and not to expand the government's power and authority.

Campus A:?.... Technology and Digitization can sometimes lead us to us become less responsible; isolation also has such effects. And on the part of the State, there is also not the proper feeling of responsibility towards human beings and towards its citizens, but just a pure desire for power. I totally agree. And it is such a pleasure to hear your thoughts on these issues.

Dr. Glöckler, we thank you very much for you time. Perhaps you have few parting words for us at Campus A and for those listening?

Dr. Glöckler: Yes, of course I wish you all the best for the times that will come post-Corona. I myself belong to the high-risk group - my life time is limited. So naturally I am thinking primarily about the young, and I am always glad to do what I can to encourage them to become engaged in their unique future challenges. Each and every person is needed who has a vertical backbone and for whom truth, love and freedom are essential human values.

Campus A: Wonderful! Thank you very much indeed, Dr. Glöckler!

Dr. Glöckler: With pleasure! Goodbye!