

Marlies Koel

Non- understanding

NON-UNDERSTANDING

A brief guide

Dr. rer. nat. Marlies Koel

We pay little attention to "non-understanding"

Non-understanding, the condition of not understanding things, affects our lives more than we realize. How often in everyday life do we hear statements like "I don't understand this", "I don't understand you", "you don't understand me", "I don't understand the world anymore" or "Why ...?". We pay little attention to this aspect of our lives, but there is no area of life that remains unaffected by it. It influences us to our very core and also impacts how we experience the world. Non-understanding is a very diverse and multi-faceted subject. In this brief guide, I will touch on several aspects of it, placing special emphasis on some. What is non-understanding? How does it affect us? We are motivated by understanding. The question is, how do our expectations affect the results? How do motivation and expectations affect our world? Which expectation prevails?

Being mindful and attentive - a challenge

Discovering non-understanding in our everyday life and in ourselves in a mindful and attentive way in order to meet the world and ourselves constructively is one of the challenges in our lives – and an opportunity. The other challenge is to affirm what is, for it will always remain. Our inability to deal with it becomes more and more apparent the less we look outside of the box, the more we only have an eye on ourselves. We quickly forget that we live in a polar world: if we create abundance, prosperity, and surplus on one end, there will be an increasing shortage somewhere else in the context of polarity. The imbalance will continue to grow if we do not come together and care for one another.

We split away from ourselves and nature

We try to deal with non-understanding by means of knowledge. Due to increasing specializations and overly unified processes in everyday life, we can lose our non-understan-

ding in the course of an overall loss of the holistic view of humans, nature, life and the Earth. We are splitting away not only from ourselves, but also from nature and life itself. As humans, we are becoming a commodity, function units and "expectation fulfillment centers". As a result, our stress level increases as does the damage to our environment. Furthermore, humans are increasingly isolated and easy to manipulate. We have become slaves to time and money. It is as if we also want to place people into a monoculture. I like to call it "species-inappropriate human husbandry".

In the following, I will present the concept of non-understanding in various contexts, which are by no means meant to be complete. I would like to invite you to look at life and us from the point of view of non-understanding. It should be taken as a suggestion to reconsider your perspective.

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1. Which reactions are triggered by non-understanding?

Non-understanding determines not only our thinking and worldview, but also our sensory perception and behavior. Basically, our response to non-understanding depends on our basic responses and decisions. Does not understanding trigger a defensive reaction or rather curiosity and activity? If we take an in-depth look, reactions are always geared towards survival, continued existence and growth. This applies to the individual, a company, an institution or other system as well as to entire nations and societies. These basic individual patterns and their consequences for non-understanding usually persist for a lifetime. Unless you consciously decide to change.

Three basic reactions to non-understanding

Not understanding unknown new situations or conflicts triggers a series of emotions and reactions – besides the obviously unfulfilled need. In keeping with to our survival reflexes, the three basic reactions – moving on, walking away or standing still – can happen in varying degrees of severity. It is also possible that their activation differs depending on the situation.

Our behavior is based on affiliations

Our emotional response can go from positively excited and adventurous to withdrawal, doubts, fears, feelings of inferiority and worthlessness. The individual survival strategy determines our response. For example, our response to feelings of inferiority can – within the framework of polarity – range from asserting control and power to the opposite. Whatever strategy we have chosen, our behavior is always designed deal with the inconvenience and insecurities of life, to survive and find a safe place where we belong. Non-understanding can also be compensated with perfectionism, self-optimization, functional processes and similar strategies.

The fear of losing control is immense. What if non-understanding was the origin of our emotional world? The eternal question "Why?" and the urge to always want to understand everything.

Compensation for or reaction to non-understanding often manifests as control or power, through obsessive orderliness, perfectionism or artificial intelligence including technology and digitization. After all, technology is controllable even though it is man-made. The fear of having no control and thus being at the mercy of uncertainty is immense.

However, non-understanding can also lead to trust through a constructive self-encounter process, developing the certainty that the challenges of life can be mastered.

The new wants to be born

What if we approach our reactions and behavior patterns with interest? What if we let the underlying origin story be told? "The new wants to be born," writes Dr. Wolf-Jürgen Maurer. We are not beholden to our past, the injuries in our life history, the old patterns we have adopted from our parents – or from other people – and which consistently keep us from fully living our lives. Whatever the life story, whatever may burden us, we can leave it behind, make new decisions and a fresh start.

Exercise

Which reaction patterns do you know in yourself?

How do you react emotionally?

Ask a person who is close to you and whom you trust to show you how you respond.

2. The compulsion to understand everything

We are doing everything we can to understand everything, because it automatically makes us feel safer. We associate it with the idea of having everything under control. However, the flood of information to which we are exposed seems to have the opposite effect. Despite our more rational view of the world and our enormous scientific and technical development, we are still having to deal with ever more questions rather than fewer of them. In addition, we shouldn't underestimate the effects of everyday life, which is exhausting, as well as many possible distractions from the essentials. Common sense seems to suffer, because the expression of the use of potential, of new ideas and exotic things is seen as an expression of culture and the development of consciousness. Self-optimization and being special becomes the priority rather than one's own core being.

We choose our perspective how to see the world.

Who can still understand and properly classify all this information? How do we basically deal with non-understanding? The things beyond our understanding, the unrecognizable, the incomprehensible will always remain a part of our lives. Despite all progress, the basic human questions remain the same: who am I, where do I come from and where am I going? They are more likely to be pushed aside in our fragile culture. How we deal with non-understanding, in a constructive or destructive manner, is strongly influenced by our early experiences and decisions.

At the beginning of our lives, we literally understand nothing. In the course of our personal development in our respective environments, we decide how we see the world, which perspective we are going to espouse. Simply put, the glass could be half full or half empty.

Am I more concerned with my survival or am I living? Many different factors intertwine, leading to an individual reaction pattern and corresponding concepts of how we experience and view the world.

Our perception is our choice. Some see the world in a rational, objective way, while for others it is a world of suffering, hard work or play.

The deep longing for meaning

On the one hand, we are driven by our desire to understand. On the other hand, the willingness to let ourselves be distracted is growing. Using non-understanding as a constructive development engine – not merely on a material level – can be seen as one of the great challenges in our materialistic, increasingly digitized and functional world. There is a deep longing for meaning in us, which cannot be dispelled by anything.

Where do humans and humanity have a place in this world? What if we turned away from survival mode and towards life? Would our world be different if we could face all challenges constructively?

Exercise

Think of a situation (today) at work or at home in which you did not look for a "constructive" solution but may have raised your voice and become annoyed. Consider: What really led you to such behavior? What would you do differently in hindsight – and why? Can you imagine yourself behaving "constructively" in a similar situation in the future? Perhaps even providing conflict de-escalation with an all-too-human gesture?

What if you followed this guiding principle: Catch the other person as they do something good for you. What if we were to deal with conflicts with this attitude?

*"To see clearly, simply change the direction of the gaze."
(Antoine de Saint-Exupery)*

3. Non-understanding in communication

How often do we feel misunderstood? How often do we not understand statements, tasks, requirements? How often don't we dare ask for fear of appearing stupid? Of course, there is also the opposite. People who take a prominent part in conversations with more or less qualified interjections. How much of a struggle do we face in order to be heard in conversations? How much do we fear rejection on a personal level or even a simple "No"?

No might just mean that my counterpart has different needs than I do. Let's ask them!

Do we understand the language of the other person or do we just talk at each other? This can create a variety of conflicts. Do we remain appreciative in our language even when we disagree? What does a "No" mean to me? Is it a rejection of my person or ideas or does it just indicate that my counterpart has a different need? Do I hear myself? Am I listening? Can I assume the other's point of view?

In advertising, language is cleverly handled, needs are created in order to increase sales, to promote certain behaviors. The power of the media has grown enormously and leads to a flood of information. Pretty words entice us. Words that work. Some are left to wonder afterwards without knowing why they did something they didn't want. Sometimes against their better judgment.

Listen without reservations and communicate appreciatively

What would happen if we were to listen and communicate appreciatively without any reservations? What if

we were talking to each other without projecting? We all operate with selective perception, which can be more or less pronounced. Phrases like "Of course he only hears what he shouldn't hear" are part of our everyday language. Only when we know our respective strategies and patterns can we perceive our counterparts with all their concerns. We are able to listen and respond accordingly. Conflicts and crises can then become an opportunity.

Exercise

For one week, take five minutes each day and do a short communication exercise. Tell your counterpart what you have experienced and then ask them to tell you what they have heard.

Ask questions if you don't understand something. "Did I understand you correctly?" "Can you please repeat this? I just want to make sure I understand." These two questions alone provide a better understanding of each other and express a high degree of appreciation! Try it!

Exercise

How do you respond to a "No" or a negative decision? Do you retreat or ask a follow-up question? Ask people you trust to describe how they experience and perceive you.

A better understanding and respectful cooperation in a conversation are also the result of mutual unbiased acceptance. It is not a question of imposing one's opinion on the other. Name-calling, insults, devaluations are verbal violence. It can destroy people in a way similar to physical violence.

Do I want to be right, or do I want to be happy? Both together is not possible. (Marshall B. Rosenberg)

A few years ago, an Austrian bank advertised with the advertising slogan: "Wealth is built through conversations."

3. Non-understanding in communication

How often do we

As beings born into this world, we do not understand how it works. It is an incredible achievement of babies not only to develop physically, but also mentally and socially. We have to integrate into our family, develop a sense of belonging and take our place. How does a young child experience the world? A child experiences everything much more directly. In the course of the development from newborn to adult, life is riddled with many experiences, mistakes, insults and much more. The child lives in a world of non-understanding and tries to find their bearings and discover a safe place. A nest where the child is simply okay, where they will be seen and heard and where their existence is affirmed without reservations.

It's all about trial and error

How does the child garner praise and attention? How can they avoid hearing "No", behaving badly and making mistakes? How does the child get their needs met? It's about trial and error, gaining experience, remembering what works, using the system's vulnerabilities – perpetually testing and pushing boundaries. This strategy is more or less successful. Many unconscious decisions are made. At this early stage, it is decided which survival strategy will be used and further developed for the rest of the individual's life. The deciding factors are the activated survival reflexes as well as the necessity to meet their needs and their basic emotional attitude.

A trust-based upbringing is essential

We should be mindful of what the beginning of a new

life means for a newborn. They understand literally nothing. Language, i.e. the meaning of words, has not yet been learned. Through sound and expression in communication as well as facial expressions, any situation is perceived "seismographically". Is it harmonious or tense? The child perceives very carefully how the mother is doing and reacts to that. The child makes many unconscious decisions to ensure their survival with this mother. The small human perceives constantly, interprets, evaluates, decides and then acts accordingly. They respond to the moods, whether positive or negative, within the family system. A natural upbringing based on trust not fear and worry is essential. One of the basic conditions for healthy development is care, not worry.

Survival strategies are developed on the basis of non-understanding which also determines how we see the world. Our perception of ourselves and the world is our choice. Accordingly, the world is perceived very differently.

Commonplace situations determine our survival strategies

The small human can only trust the mother. The following example is intended to show what might happen. A mother carries her baby in her arm around the house and both coexist in harmony. Various, frightening noises come out of nowhere, both from inside the house and from the outside. What is happening? Both are terrified. What does the mother do? She puts the child down in a safe spot and takes care of everything. After calm has been restored, she returns, driven by her great love for her child, and wants to pick up where she left off. How did the baby react to this frightening situation? Possibly with fear and panic, because the mother's safe embrace was gone or because the noises persisted for a while. Perhaps the child reacts as follows: they feel

helpless, panicked, desperate. Perhaps they are tense or react rather dismissively or with aggression. Or do they go into a rigid state of shock? It is possible the child unconsciously decides that the mother can never be trusted again. This can have far-reaching consequences for the rest of their life, because such everyday, commonplace situations determine our survival strategies.

Mothers report that they can remember exactly when everything changed. They cannot understand why, from one moment to the next, the bond between them and their child was broken. The child might make many decisions about themselves and the world. For example: "I am on my own", "the world is a dangerous place", "I always have to be careful", "I am not worth it". Of course, the small child cannot speak yet. We will find the words that match the feeling and the decisions later. There is a wide range of possibilities from constructive to frozen and incapable to act.

How can we ensure healthy development?

It is important to remember that our survival strategies and basic behavior patterns have developed from non-understanding, out of the need to survive and adapt to life situations. Many factors play an important role here, such as any needs that remained unfulfilled at that time or any emotion – either avoided or sought – that will influence the rest of our life. Which survival reflex has been activated? The chosen basic strategies will be further refined and adapted as life goes on. Are we more curious and approach new situations with an open mind? Or are we experiencing constant tension, always scanning our environment, because we always feel threatened on an existential level? In this process, many skills are developed to keep our place in the family system.

How can we facilitate natural, healthy development?

Does it make sense to leave a toddler at a daycare centre or with a nanny early on? At what age? How is a child doing, how does it experience the world in which it is supposed to function when both parents are working full-time? We could ask many questions at this point. But we should bear in mind that the adults have little or no influence on how the child experiences, evaluates and makes decisions in a given situation. How a child experiences a situation is fundamentally different from how we experience it as adults. There are many different possibilities. So we must ask the following question: How great is the interest of the parents to get to know the world of the child without trying to arrange or control how it should be?

Exercise

Try to imagine walking a mile in the shoes of a three-year-old child. Imagine yourself on a warm day, standing in a sunlit meadow covered in wildflowers. What does the child do? How does the child experience nature and life?

In our technological, materialistic and digitized world, we often lose touch with nature and life. The child knows nothing about that. In the worst case, they don't know what grass, snow and earth feel like. The child does not know what it is like to grow up in nature and live with the earth. The child can't know what possibilities are out there. The view of the world and its feasibility or usability is profoundly changed. Children can also get lost in a virtual world just as much as adults can.

Life is lived moving forward and understood in hindsight

The child cannot understand why things were as they were, and many adults look for explanations, especially in times of crisis. We often wonder about ourselves, do not understand ourselves. Our youth, with all its

upheavals, reorientations and restructurings, is influenced by our basic attitudes to life – from our early childhood to our lives as adults and as seniors. Our basic pattern runs like a thread through our lives. As adults, we don't understand some points of our biographies; we simply cannot grasp why we can't react differently in certain situations. Life is lived moving forward and understood in hindsight. Sometimes we manage to reconcile, other times we do not. We run the risk of becoming bitter if there is no self-reflection and self-responsibility and if we continue to live in the projection.

Are we aware how much our decisions are influenced by our fear-based thoughts, which are caused by non-understanding? This affects every individual, no matter what position they occupy as an adult. It is the foundation of our perception of the world and our personality. Put simply, is the glass half full or half empty?

We always want to be a part of a system

We always experience ourselves and the world in comparison and always want to be part of a system, have a safe place, want to be recognized, be something special and much more. Driven by the comparison, we create competitive loops for ourselves such as faster, better, higher, further, which puts enormous pressure on us. This can plunge us into conflict and dilemmas. Wanting to do justice to everything, to all others and to ourselves can be extremely exhausting. It is also possible to react in a completely different way depending on the survival strategy we have chosen. There are no one-size-fits-all solutions, only individual ones. We want to live instead of merely surviving. We are often unaware of this difference.

Even if we think we understand our respective systems and lives, it does not mean that we will decide and act accordingly. Our irrationality is based on our early deci-

sions. They stem from non-understanding and they have more control over us than we would like. We are not beholden to our past, our previous choices and old patterns that we have adopted from our parents or other people. Whatever our life story, whatever encumbers us, we can always make different decisions and start anew.

What if we were to approach the beginning and end with mindfulness and acceptance from the bottom of our hearts? We keep coming up to the limits of our development, going beyond them and widening our horizons. Everything is reclassified, re-explained, and we feel that we understand. People are constantly evolving and expanding their reference systems. The world is literally getting bigger and bigger.

Riddle of the Sphinx

"What is walking on four feet in the morning, two at noon and three in the evening?"

Exercise

Sensation and images are the language of the soul. Draw your inner house. Does the inner house have several floors? Is there a basement? What rooms are there? Does every room have a door?

Exercise

What is life for you?

Do you survive or are you living?

Take the time and space to explore these questions.

5. Who am I? A self-encounter

Our non-understanding is always about us. We cannot understand that our counterpart does not understand us. Often we do not understand ourselves and the world. Often, we don't recognize that our counterparts, whether human or a system, are so preoccupied with

themselves that they don't have any capacity for our concerns. A deep human need is to lead a meaningful life. Another need is be able to say YES to ourselves without reason or reservation and to be complete and simply all right.

How do I encounter myself if I am attacked for no reason or if something unpredictable happens? The world turns upside down sometimes and nothing is as it used to be. Or we face a dilemma and do not know how to choose.

We are more or less blind to our own concerns. We always need someone to reflect, question and broaden our perspective.

It always starts with us

It is our decision whether we continue to face non-understanding with our survival strategies or whether we begin to question things in a constructive and mindful manner, to encounter our dark side and our shadows, to make new decisions and open up a new path through life. Self-knowledge, the confrontation with ourselves, the choice of our language, self-care, compassion – all this enables us to work successfully with ourselves, with others and with the planet. It always starts with us.

Sometimes, we do not understand various points in our own life story, or we do not understand our behavior or the behavior of others. Often, we do not have access to adequate reactions and are faced with a wide range of emotions – from helpless and powerless to desperate to aggressive. Non-understanding and thus uncertainty and doubt happen on different levels: personal, professional, social, spiritual. Regardless of the sphere in which we are moving at a given point, the issue remains.

*It doesn't matter who you are or where you come from.
Much more important is how you are and what you do.
(Author unknown)*

The more we think we understand, the safer we feel

We are offended and offensive emotional beings. Based on all the moments and situations we experienced, assessed and interpreted, we have developed an image of how and what the world is and who we are. That is what we have decided. The more we think we understand, the safer we feel. We develop the idea of being in control of our lives. This gives us a sense of direction; we can make our plans and usually implement them.

We are often unaware of the influence of society, religion and advertising. We sometimes feel driven by the abundance of trends – nutrition, exercise, fashion and appearance. This can lead to a very stressful need for self-optimization. One consequence is that we lose touch with ourselves and no longer trust our own truth. We are becoming more and more separated from ourselves and can become "expectation fulfillment centers". As a result, we neglect common sense and being true to ourselves.

*We are all born originals – why is it so many of us die copies?
(Edward Young)*

*It is not easy to find happiness in yourself. But it is impossible to find it elsewhere. If you lose yourself, you lose the other, too.
(Author unknown)*

Who takes the time to question themselves?

Who takes the time to question themselves in our busy world? Humans need to have meaning; they want to

be special and say YES to themselves without reservation. At the same time, we want to be "normal," whatever that may be. We want to be what we think we need to be. However, we can detach ourselves from this and say YES to ourselves without reason or reservation. This is not a rational process. It works through deep emotions and self-encounter, even with our dark side.

How does our perspective determine how we see ourselves and the world? What if you live every day as if it were your first?

Life presents us not so much with what we want but rather with the things we need to keep getting the chance to evolve. Are we really ready to face our shadow world and our dark side in order to find the patterns, the common thread in life? What does it take to develop the joy of discovering your own shadow world? In a Hero's Journey or Epic, the hero must face their deepest shadow and redeem themselves before successfully mastering the challenge. Our shadows lead us to ourselves, to the person we truly are. They take us to our roots and allow us to discover – and tell – many stories. They always give us the chance to make new decisions. We can learn to ride out the waves of life or continue to fight against them. Expand our perception of what is possible. I can only approach and reach something if I know my starting point.

Do we have the courage to encounter and question ourselves? It is important to remain in touch with our inner self and others, despite all rejection and denial.

Exercise

Take a deliberate look at yourself in the mirror. The mirror only reflects and is completely neutral. We can immediately see for ourselves whether or not we believe various statements. Who do you see when you look in

the mirror? Can you say unreservedly to the mirror image "You are okay", "I'm your best friend", "I like you as you are"?

Do you feel joy when you look at yourself and do you act from a joyful place?

When was the last time you truly followed your heart?

Exercise

How do we recount events? We often tell our past stories not only as drama and tragedy but also as if they just happened recently. How about rewriting them? What could change as a result?

The facts remain. You can rewrite it as a comedy or use absolute past tense for older events.

Self-encounter is important not only for the individual, but also for a people or society. What do you think is the soul of your people? When I participated in trainings with international groups, I was often told that the Germans – my people – always find solutions. Sometimes, people expressed regret, however, that they only seem to find the solution once it is too late. One vision could be to act as a catalyst and solution provider to future challenges.

How do you encounter yourself and others?

How do you deal with your own dark side?

How do you approach life?

How do you encounter nature?

How do you meet challenges?

We see people or things as enemies or threats until we know their story. We fear the stranger. Perhaps it is the fear of the stranger in us. When we understand ourselves, others, or even certain facts, we feel safe. The other no longer seems alien to us once we understand.

6. Non-understanding in everyday life

What does our everyday life look like? In our lives, everything is largely planned and organized. If everything goes as we imagine, we feel safe. The more the processes are understood and planned, the better this is achieved. Life then seems easy and simple, everything flows. We move in fixed frameworks and structures, sit in our comfort zones and feel able to regulate ourselves decently well. But oh dear, when everyday life stops working, suddenly the floor is pulled out from under your feet, and everything seems wrong. Sudden unforeseen changes, regardless of their cause, can throw us completely off kilter. In many cases, we do not understand how the disaster could have occurred.

Changes are part of life

At the same time, changes are a part of life. They are always there. The beginning of the school year, changing school, starting a new job, switching jobs – all of them changes that seem common and familiar to us. Since we never know what to expect, changes are often accompanied by insecurity, uncertainty, doubt and fear. The way we respond to this determines whether we approach them in a positive or negative way. In everyday life, the feeling of stress, overwork and overload can build up quickly – and that is in addition to a number of other emotions that weigh on us. In everyday life, we sometimes do not understand our behavior or the behavior of others. Foreign cultures or rituals, technical, social or political changes are poorly understood because they are incomprehensible to many people. It follows then that there is a wide range of reactions to change.

Our desire to travel is an example. Some people love adventure trips, others like all-inclusive club vacations in secluded areas. Neither group understands the other.

Non-understanding lurks at every turn in everyday life: prompts, instructions from parents, teachers or supervisors are not understood and can lead to conflict. Nor are we able to understand the behavior of others, certain sets of facts or even ourselves. Statements such as "we don't think outside of the box" or "the big picture is missing" are relevant here.

In hierarchies (social, corporate, institutional, administrative) the people at the bottom don't feel understood by the higher-ups and vice versa.

If people spoke only of what they understood, there would soon be a great silence on Earth. Confucius said, I cannot understand how a man can be without sincerity.
(Confucius)

Our imperfection lurks behind every corner

In different family systems, the individual members do not understand each other, or we do not understand ourselves. There are many everyday situations where non-understanding prevails, and we nonchalantly ignore it. How quickly do we say, "I don't understand this" or "Am I supposed to understand this?".

We encounter our own inadequacies every day. The same goes for unpredictability and uncertainty. Our imperfection lurks behind every corner. We get to decide how constructively we want to approach it and use it as an opportunity for development.

Exercise

What are the moments when you reach your limits in everyday life? When does non-understanding enter your everyday life? What does it take to discover and embrace the magic of everyday life including its inherent non-understanding?

What gives you balance and direction in everyday life?

Do you take the time to reflect on yourself and life? Time is one of the most precious things we possess. Do we lose this awareness in our daily lives? What if you could see life as a journey through branching systems of possibilities?

We are stardust. We perceive stars as constants in the sky and in our lives. Stars fascinate us. The light of some stars is so old that we cannot be sure whether the stars emitting still exist. Nevertheless, the stars are one of the few constants in our lives. Every evening they twinkle down on us. They give us orientation, making it easier for us to navigate, to pinpoint where we are. We use them to define our place in the universe. The stars also encourage us to think about ourselves and life.

7. Life and We

Our life here on Earth takes place in polarity and is based on variability, diversity and multiplicity. The polarity between plus and minus allows for movement and – with a little imperfection mixed in – also continuous development. Life is based on information, movement, change and energy flow. It always involves decisions, whether consciously or unconsciously. Either I decide or things are decided. Either way, the decision is always made. Do I stay in my comfort zone or do I dare to try something new?

It is good to learn how to surf on the waves of life

It is good to learn how to surf on the waves of life instead of fighting against life's flow. Our problem is not life itself but our resistance and non-understanding, because things are not as we would like them and imagine them to be. We wish for abundance and the like without considering that we live in a polarity. If I

multiply something in one place, it is taken away in another place. We often live at the expense of others and the planet without being aware of it or understanding it. We chase illusions and refuse to see life as it is. We keep looking in the wrong place or refuse to affirm life the way it is.

The lost key - a parable!

Mulla Nasruddin was on all fours crawling outside under a lantern when a friend came along. "What are you doing, Mulla?" the friend asked. "I'm looking for my key that I've lost." So his friend also got on his hands and knees, and both searched for a long time in the dirt under the lantern. Not finding anything, his friend eventually turned to Nasruddin and asked, "Where exactly did you lose the key?" Nasruddin replied, "I lost it in the house, but there's more light out here."

*Life has many stairs, but not always a banister.
(Thomas Romanus)*

*Life's not about expecting, hoping and wishing, it's about doing, being and becoming.
(Mike Dooley)*

Handling a situation in a constructive or destructive way?

In each situation, we are able to decide whether to deal with it in a constructive or destructive manner. We assign ourselves a place/value and create more opportunities for ourselves. This enables us to build a basic sense of trust.

Our mechanistic and materialistic view makes it difficult for us to truly explore and understand life and its processes. In our civilization, we act against life, by

producing monocultures for instance. This doesn't just apply to farming and animal husbandry. We also want to produce standardized people.

What would change for us if we were to strive for a holistic view of life? Do I let myself live or am I alive?

Exercise

What could your colorful bouquet of life look like? Is it filled with laughter and tears? Are you free to follow your heart?

What are the constants in your life? What gives you security and support in life?

Greet life every morning with a smile. Life is a valuable gift and should not be taken for granted.

Are you aware that we as humans always have to kill in order to live and to feed ourselves? We kill plants, too.

What does being human mean to you? Do you let yourself be deeply touched by it?

LEARNING TO LIVE

Learn to spread warmth from the sun, learn to push from the clouds, learn to drive from the wind, learn from birds to gain height, learn to be steadfast from the trees.

Learn to shine from the flowers, learn to stay from the stars, learn to renew from the bushes in spring, learn passion from the storm.

Learn to pour yourself out from the rain, learn to be nourishing from the Earth, learn to change from the moon, learn to be one of many from the stars, learn from the seasons that life begins anew.

(Uta Latendorf)

8. Is our society still based on coexistence?

All communities and societies are based on rules to make living together possible. Systems are based on cooperation, togetherness and mutual support. They are hierarchical arrangements with control circuits. Societies have laws, orders, rules, etc. Although not all members of society understand the rules, there is usually a consensus of compliance. On what basis were societies and cultures built? What was the cause of their downfall? Some factors have been found to be consistent for different cultures. One of the factors is the lack of understanding of ecological contexts, the overexploitation of natural resources and its consequences. Failing to understand other societies and systems can cause divisions so drastic that they might lead to massive reactions that can result in a society's demise.

More and more restrictive laws and rules are being set

Systems have their limits. Once these have been reached, it is necessary to simplify so that the system can continue to grow. The human reaction is the opposite. More and more restrictive laws and rules are being set. This is often met with incomprehension. People do not understand it. Humans are constrained in their creativity and innovation. They are, so to speak, deprived of the air to breathe. If people are cornered, it may trigger irrational actions. Or they create new temptations and distractions. Alternatively, a regime of fear must be created. I call this "species-inappropriate human husbandry". We attempt to create functional units, preferably like agricultural monocultures. Everything that has a beginning also has an end. Life wants to live.

The people who are at the top of the hierarchy often lose contact with the base. They want to maintain or expand their power. The possibilities of technology/digitalization and media can have a detrimental effect on society.

Creating transparent hierarchies is an enormous challenge. As long as something is under construction, it's going well. After construction comes consolidation and at some point, the limits are reached. The basic mechanisms of many systems are not well understood, and we need enormous amounts of self-reflection, awareness and the courage to simplify so that everyone has a place in the system again.

What could a society of constructive coexistence look like?

What could a society of constructive cooperation and coexistence look like? Which tools are helpful? What new visions should be developed?

Can there be cooperation on an equal footing while respecting the hierarchies? How many times have civilizations failed on this very issue? Have you ever dealt with the Rotterdam "sociocracy model"? It is interesting to observe how difficult it is for new interesting models to gain ground if they are based on coexistence and do not focus on profit.

Life seeks community!

Being part of a system is a basic human need. People want to belong and have a safe place. Each person has developed their own strategies for this, based on early experiences. The fear of not belonging is deeply rooted, because it usually amounted to a death sentence in early societies. And if we can't understand why we are being excluded, the stress grows enormously and we make decisions about ourselves such as "I'm wrong" or "something is not right with me," and so on. According to the prevailing survival reflex, there is a range of reactions to this. Some people withdraw, avoid contacts and try to secure their place through achievements. They often exhaust themselves to the point of a "burn-out hazard". Others may be more aggressive in trying

to gain control through power strategies. People might react in a variety of ways.

Exercise

What was your place in your elementary school class community? Look at old group pictures. In many cases, we position our adult selves in communities just as we did in elementary school.

A digitized society changes our self-image and our sense of self

Culture means humanity. What is a society without culture? Human culture is an extremely fragile commodity. A loss of culture is very dangerous, because health is not only a question of physical condition but also of mental constitution as well as education and personal happiness. Humans are social beings. Is there a danger that we will lose our cultural memory? Who are we without our culture?

A materialistic culture takes its toll. A digitized society changes our self-image and our sense of self. Our whole being, our thinking, our ability, our desires, our sense of self and our values are changing. It may change not only our bodies, but also our souls. Can this be understood and, more importantly, is it desirable?

What does progress mean to us?

An algorithm may simulate the functions of a brain, but it doesn't think. How does the digital world change us? How much do we already depend on it? To what extent do we still have an impact on our data? Digitization creates a distanced coexistence and changes our usual way of communication, of getting in touch. How are we being isolated? This also changes our self-image and cultural understanding. Can we speak of an insult to humanity? Does personal contact still have a future?

What does progress mean to us?

Exercise

Take a day to greet everyone you meet with an inner "Namaste".

Mahatma Gandhi explained the importance of the Namaste to Albert Einstein as follows:

I honor the place in you where the entire universe resides. I honor the place in you the light, love, truth, peace and wisdom.

I honor the place where, when you are in that place and I am in that place, there is only one of us.

Irish saying:

Take the time to be kind.

That is the way to happiness.

Take the time to laugh.

That is the music of the soul.

9. Our story - what could it be?

Our entire history and development is determined by non-understanding and its side effects. Otherwise, it would be hard to explain why we do not learn from our past, both historically but also in our lives.

History is the distant 'finished' past and not something that has just happened. Still, it is interesting to observe that both historical and personal events are often recounted in a present perfect format.

In our early development history, every moment was marked by insecurity, unpredictability, and uncertainty. Humans didn't understand what causes lightning, solar eclipses, natural disasters or anything else. Explanations had to be found in order to develop a sense of security and thus a sense of control. So there were various gods and other entities. These stories arose from a lack of

knowledge. Early humans already had a sense that there was something bigger, something above them. They developed various models of explanation, which were further refined in order to exercise control and create an illusion of security. At the same time, the majority of community members believed this, even though they did not understand it.

A minority creates algorithms and influences our lives

Today we live in a flood of information, a plethora of knowledge that no individual can manage anymore. Within the spiral of our evolution, we might be in a similar position as we were at the beginning of our development. Information overload, technology, digitization and algorithms can also lead to insecurity, non-understanding and uncertainties. We should be aware that a minority commissions someone to create the algorithms and thus influence our lives. This, in turn, can open the door to the temptation of control, power and restriction. Who doesn't like to give up a bit of freedom if they get more security for it, even if some things remain misunderstood? The basic pattern is the same.

Also, non-understanding, combined with insecurity and uncertainty, has opened the door to superstition. It has created some absurd concepts and behavioral structures in some communities.

Human history might also be seen as a struggle of power, need for control, folly and wisdom.

We believe we can really control everything

The inability to understand life is with each and every one of us. In the course of our progress, we have found many scientific explanations for different areas of life. And yet, non-understanding remains a core feeling in our lives. For example, we always like to know what the

next moment and the future will bring. We love horoscopes, believe that we can plan our lives and have everything under control. Our highly technical and digitized world makes us believe that we can control absolutely everything. However, life shows us time and again that this is a deceptive sense of security.

Let us consider digitization from the point of view of non-understanding. Who creates the algorithms, who builds the artificial intelligence, preferably self-learning? Most people don't understand how all of this works. Supposedly, it should all be for the good of the many, so that we are no longer exposed to the calamities of life. Can this be seen as a strategy that affords us some control and an assumption of security or is used as an instrument of power? Humans relinquish responsibility to artificial intelligence. What does this mean for us, for being human? Is there still a natural life? Can these strategies be regarded as a product of patriarchal ideas and structures?

A certain degree of insecurity and uncertainty remains

Life teaches us time and again that understanding behavior or facts keeps eluding us, whether by nature, illness, unforeseen events or other occurrences that change everything in their wake. Even at a high level of technological sophistication, a certain degree of insecurity and uncertainty as well as non-understanding will always remain.

Our story was written by the victors and thus from a specific perspective.

The history of the world is but the biography of great men.

(Thomas Carlyle)

All history is a record of the power of minorities.
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

Winners usually believe that they understand everything, that they were right and have it all under control. However, any situation can be seen from many perspectives and points of view. The same holds true for actions, ideas, concepts and truths. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why we have never learned from history.

As a brief example, let's say that two people were eyewitnesses to an accident. Both give different accounts, because each think they have seen something different. It's a common situation.

What is history? What other approaches could we find? What does it take for us to learn from our history, both personally and as a society?

When people don't understand something, they seek the most plausible explanation that provides satisfying answers for people. The respective explanations must be as comprehensible as possible to everyone, even if some people know how absurd the whole thing is. Have humans ever learned from their history?

Exercise

What values are important to you? Write down your five most important values and observe where in your everyday life they are securely anchored and whether there are situations in which you might give them up?

Exercise

How do you recount past events? Which tense do you use? Has something been, or was it? Do you rather tell the story as the victim or the savior?

History, the past, was there is no "has been" about it. We usually tell old stories in present perfect tense, every-

thing „has been“, which makes the events stay with us. If we were to recount them in past tense, the events would be behind us. Write down an older story in the tense you normally use and see how you wrote it down. If it is not past tense, please write it again in that way. Does something change for you?

10. Mistakes, guilt, injustice and non-understanding

We have learned that mistakes are something negative, a failure. We have to include the moments when you "must admit" that you don't understand something. This can trigger a range of emotions such as shame. We must make an effort not to make mistakes or at least not to make the same mistake twice. To this day, we continue to learn through trial and error. Without mistakes, there is no development, and we cannot build an internal reference system. Many inventions were created by failed attempts or experiments, not by rational deduction. Of course, we draw on experience and knowledge for new ideas and developments and we don't have to reinvent the wheel all over again. And yet, we must try new things.

I decide whether I will deal constructively or destructively with mistakes. Some people feel wrong or guilty, even ashamed when they make a mistake. Others inspire it and the spirit of research and pioneering is activated. The cause of these different ways of responding to mistakes lies in our early childhood.

Do we learn from trial and error?

Every day, we hear and say things like, "I just don't understand why I make the same mistake over and over again." Of course, we try to avoid mistakes, because they always smack of failure, of something being wrong. Mistakes are either covered up or we take responsibility for them. Do we learn from our mistakes or not?

Do we learn anything from trial and error, from insights or because we want a solution?

If we consider mistakes as experiences and challenges for new insights, a wide range of possibilities opens up for us. The experiences will enrich us, make us more authentic and even wiser sometimes. If we accept mistakes as constructive experience, we are able to shrug them off and say, "So what?" Let's take toddlers learning to walk as an example. When toddlers learn to walk, they fall down again and again and decide to get up again and again. The toddler learns from their experiences of not succeeding, implements the insights, overcomes possible frustration and moves forward.

We have a sense of justice, yet we also experience injustice

In addition to a sense of failure, mistakes are often linked to feelings of guilt and shame. We feel guilty or ashamed and don't know why. On the one hand, many of us have a deep-rooted memory of standing in a corner facing the wall, shamed because we did something wrong. On the other hand, guilt is an extremely powerful tool in interaction on a personal level. Statements such as the following can be very destructive:

"It's your fault that I'm feeling bad."

"You should have been a boy/girl."

"You were not wanted."

"I feel ashamed for you."

If we are wrongly accused of having made a mistake, we can't understand it, which triggers a cascade of reactions. We have a sense of justice, yet we also experience injustice. In our world, there will always be both. One of the challenges is to learn to when injustice can be redressed and when that might not be possible. Overcoming injustice and reconciling with it is a great

challenge in case things cannot be changed. The issue of injustice is complex.

An example from everyday life: Parents give their two children exactly the same gift. The parents come to the limit of their understanding when one of the children feels disadvantaged.

Exercise

What are mistakes for you?

What does it take to say "Yes" to mistakes or injustice?

11. Non-understanding and medicine

How can it be that, despite the enormous increase in knowledge in medicine, human beings, and thus society, have become increasingly sicker rather than better and more wholesome? Do we still have a healthy environment? What is disease? Do we just consolidate a collection of symptoms into a disease? How do we define disease? Do we still not understand the nature of health, of illness?

The definition of illness by Hans Kruppa is still the most interesting to me: Illness is a symptom of a misguided life. It throttles the pace of wrong movement, because slowed life finds its way back to itself. The body refuses further superficiality and forces life into its depths.

Often, we don't understand what makes us offended and ill

Being offended makes us sick. We are offended and offensive sensitive beings with individual reaction patterns, strategies and inherited basic conditions. Often, we don't understand what makes us ill. We react very differently to offensive behavior: from avoidance and withdrawal to aggression and control mechanisms in order to avoid further insults. What matters is how we handle offense. Do we take it as an opportunity? Are we ready to uncover

ourselves and our basic patterns and break new ground? The mechanistic worldview has also led to high-tech medicine with an effective billing system – including a pharmaceutical industry with great lobbying power. Everything is compartmentalized and specialized. It is hardly possible anymore to gain a holistic view of humans, because we often don't have the time or the necessary understanding. A thorough understanding of the complex structure of the soul, mind and body is largely lacking in our modern medicine. The social structure, the individual's world view, work, family circumstances – all of these factors must be taken into account. Taking care, listening, recognizing the invisible behind the visible requires mindfulness and time. Understanding coexistence, interactions on all levels is important, both physical and non-physical.

People often say that they don't understand why they have come down with this or that disease. The responsibility for a healthy, balanced life is gladly abdicated. It's best to take a pill and keep on going.

Humans are very resilient, but everything has its limits

Our soul cannot write or speak but speaks to us in images, sensations, symptoms and diseases. Humans are very resilient and can go far beyond their limits for a long time, but everything has its limits.

Native proverb:
A sick body is the result of a weakened soul that doubts itself and is beset by ominous thoughts. A knowledgeable man fights the disease with bright, luminous thoughts.

Advertising touts many ways to maintain health and fitness. Food trends are booming and all sorts of things are being advertised. The simplicity and naturalness of

life has little room here. As so often, the goal is functionality and performance as well as profit.

Native proverb:
Do not linger on the noisy surface of things. Learn to unite with them. Within you there is a world of beauty and love, free, invulnerable, over which time holds no sway. Leave your fear behind you, for the human spirit does not die – it is eternal.

Holistic natural medicine always tries to look at the whole person. Individualized medicine is also gaining importance. Our overall system (soul-mind-body) is a regenerative system. Given the right impulses, improvement or healing is always possible. When the mind and soul heal, the body can follow. It is crucial to uncover the basic patterns/stories and thus to discover the root cause of symptoms. Through the body or the mind, the soul tells us that there is no inner order.

How would our health change if space and time were available to get to the bottom of the cause of disease and if humans were examined as a whole? If each person and life was perceived and accepted in its uniqueness?

What is necessary for humans to allow themselves to be human and for us to encounter and experience each other as human beings?

*"Be prepared," the soul told the body, "people don't listen to me; maybe they'll listen to you."
 "I will get sick, then they will have time for you", the body replied to the soul.
 (Ulrich Schaffer)*

Exercise

Start the morning with 10 minutes of exercise, e.g. yoga.

12. Death, suffering, finality and eternity

Life reaches beyond death. As a rule, we are not aware that our metabolism is regulated by building up and breaking down. Nor are we aware that we kill every day to live, not only the animals but also the plants we eat. With every step on this earth we kill microbes and other things. The true nature of death remains a mystery to us. For thousands of years humans have been engaged in patriarchal thought patterns of overcoming death. Eternal life is still a recurring theme in our modern world.

Every ending holds a new beginning

We attempt to exclude death from our society and thus the finality of our physical existence. We want to live forever! At least that is the desire of many in our Western world, who try to achieve the goal in quite bizarre ways. We forget that everything that begins must also end, and that every ending holds a new beginning. This includes the end of life phases, relationships, systems. Often the end is associated with a lot of suffering for us. Statements such as "Why is life so unjust?", "Why is there death?", "Why do I have to suffer so much?", "Why did he/she have to die so young?" are common in our everyday lives. Asking why always causes suffering. However, we could also make new decisions and approach the issue constructively, with great openness and mindfulness.

Giving life more life and living every day as if it were the first

It is our decision how we face life. Deciding to embrace what is happening is a first step in this direction. Even if we do not really understand death, we can embrace it as a part of life. Embracing both our non-understanding and death itself takes a lot of pressure and stress off our shoulders.

Life is only possible with death. For each of us, the time of death will be uncertain, just like the manner in which we will die. How can we face the fear of death? From our very birth, we are on the path to death. Our birth involves the finite nature of our physical life. Life should focus on life. Giving life more life and living every day as if it were the first.

How would our lives be affected if we opened ourselves to the incomprehensible, the inconceivable?

Perhaps love also means learning to let someone go, knowing when it is time to say goodbye. Not allowing our feelings to stand in the way of what is ultimately better for those we love.
(Sergio Bambaren)

Exercise

What does death mean to you?
What do you live for?

Give death a symbolic place in your life. The end of a life phase is also a form of death. Develop a ritual for yourself. Indigenous peoples model this for us with their use of initiation rituals, for example, when a boy/girl transitions into manhood/womanhood.

13. Imperfection, uncertainty, unpredictability and reasonlessness (baselessness)

Are you aware that imperfection is our highest good? We usually perceive imperfection as not being good enough, as poor performance, insufficient and the like. We always experience ourselves in comparison and usually we perform badly and don't do enough. We develop compensation strategies, often in terms of extreme willingness to perform, perfectionism, self-optimization – or we give up and sink into resignation.

Now, thoughts like "you are nothing, you will never amount to anything" might fall on fertile ground. However, things can also go in the opposite direction to an overinflated ego. We forget that if everything is perfect and balanced, there can be no development. Progress flatlines. A little bit of imperfection is very important as it enables us to develop – towards the positive or negative. The ideas of transhumanism -evolution to the perfect human being – are worth being re-evaluated from this point of view. Perhaps we should just be born as robots right away then.

Are we chasing illusions and refusing to see life as it is? And all because we refuse to question our survival strategies? The strategies of control and planning to avoid insecurity, uncertainties and unpredictability only work to a certain extent. In the end, the supposed security we attempt to build is always doomed to failure. It is quite shocking to see what humans are prepared to give up for the idea of safety.

In the physical world, there is limited security. What if we espoused the view that the world and life are more than just matter? Part of this issue is dealing with finiteness, because everything that has a beginning must also have an end. This holistic view seems to be avoided in the industrialized and digitized world. It does not seem to be understood but perceived as rather disturbing.

Our lives can change in the space of a heartbeat

Despite all our planning, unforeseen events can completely change our lives within seconds. Then we have to deal with it, find a new way and make new decisions – even if we do not understand the reason why.

The German word "Grundlosigkeit" is hard to translate. I mainly use the word reasonlessness. Non-understan-

ding and reasonlessness (baselessness) are concepts humans find hard to accept. This may be one of the causes of our primal fear. We do not understand the plan behind it, the Divine, the source or whatever we want to call it. This becomes evident in statements such as "How can God allow this?", "What is the reason for this?", "What have I done wrong?" Underneath these sentiments lurks the fear of rejection, of hearing "No", of not being okay.

It always comes back to the fear of the unknown, of worthlessness, loss of control, reasonlessness (baselessness) and thus of non-understanding and, ultimately, of death. This fear and non-understanding of the reasons why something is the way it is can be utilized in a positive way or exploited in a negative way. Fears, especially the fear of the finite nature of things, can make people docile very quickly. This opens the door to all kinds of abuse of power, making space for rigid and fundamentalist structures that are against life.

Things are seen as adversarial until we know their story

If we understand the reason for conflict, it is easier for us to deal with it. We avoid getting involved in the baseless. In appreciative communication there is the following saying: "Things are seen as adversarial until we know their story." We feel stressed by things until we know and understand their reason, roots and history. This is certainly one of the reasons why people are always looking for explanatory models. They give us a sense of security, predictability and control. We always find a reason why we need to optimize things, change them, make them more efficient and move towards process optimization. Likewise, we always find a reason why it is justified to perform actions that go against life and its principles. Humans are very resourceful in finding justifications.

If we lose the ground under our feet, we will plunge into a crisis, into the abyss, into chaos. When reasonlessness and non-understanding come together, they create a feeling of futility. If we add vagueness, incalculability and unpredictability to this mix, we often feel as if we are drowning. We flail wildly and are grateful for any kind of rescue.

Exercise

Are you aware that everything that has a beginning must also have an end?

How would your life change if you could embrace baselessness/reasonlessness, imponderability and non-understanding?

14. Religion, spirituality and mysticism

Very early in evolutionary history, humans were aware that there was something greater, something above themselves. Many different cults and gods emerged, eventually leading to the development of monotheistic religions later on in the course of civilization. It is noteworthy that the latter are based exclusively on male founders.

The willingness – or unwillingness – to believe was there from the beginning. Various systems and efforts aimed to reduce ignorance and non-understanding, in order to explain the inexplicable to people thus giving them a sense of security and meaning.

Narrow-mindedness - can we still afford that?

One function of religions could be, in a very simplified way, to provide large crowds with a common set of values for coexistence. Giving people support and orientation in everyday life. The different religions, above all Judaism, Christianity and Islam, keep being at war with each other, even though they have more in common than things that separate them. The inconsistency bet-

ween what is preached and how people act often poses a great challenge to understanding and faith. There are many different directions in every religion, which can certainly be in competition with each other. Dogmatic or even fanatical groups can quickly gain a foothold. They are always a danger to human coexistence. It's hard to understand why. Why can't we focus on the things we share that unify us? Why can't we prioritize togetherness, doing things for each other? We all live on this one planet and must work together if we want to overcome our challenges. Narrow-mindedness is more likely to be destructive. Can we still afford that?

"Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I'll meet you there." (Rumi)

Non-understanding, lack of tolerance, fears, the urge to be better than others, and a number of other factors can lead to the emergence of rigid principles. This can also lead to wars, especially if we want to be right at all costs – and if economic interests also play a part.

*Do I want to be right, or do I want to be happy? Both together is not possible.
(Marshall B. Rosenberg)*

*Religion was created to support our plans for the world.
(Author unknown)*

In times of insecurity, fear and hardship, we often seek support in religion and spirituality. In many cases, people get lost in sects or other dubious groups. Upheaval and turmoil offer a foothold for rigid dogmatic and even fanatical branches of religion.

Imperfection creates the foundation for development

No matter how highly developed our consciousness

might be, as long as we are in the physical body, we carry flaws within us. Our imperfection can also be regarded as our most precious good. We decide whether or not to use it constructively for our development. Imperfection creates the foundation for development, whether constructive or destructive.

The incomprehensible, knowledge that goes beyond the material world, often triggers discomfort. In mysticism and spirituality, there is an awareness and certainty that there is always something above us, greater than ourselves and that we must surrender to it. It goes beyond our limitations and our understanding. It eludes us yet deep down we feel its resonance. It is remarkable that in pure mysticism fanaticism and dogma and even a will or desire do not exist. No matter which belief system mystics – men or women – espouse, there is no competition or power struggle among them. They are rather inconspicuous and do what is necessary. Their statements often seem cryptic to the outside world and are not generally understood. Our language is hardly suitable for describing the incomprehensible.

Here is a statement by Christian mystic Master Eckhard: "One in one, one with one, one by one and one in one forever". And: "Here God's reason is my reason, and my reason is God's reason."

How do we handle or even process such statements? Do they have a place in our functional world? Are they understood? When something happens for no apparent reason, we think of injustice long before we think of mysticism. We like to ponder things like causality, reasonlessness (baselessness) etc. I like to say that all humans want to be loved without reason, the baseless/ reasonless YES from others. In my experience, the idea of love without reason holds greater depth and dimension for people than the usual phrase 'unconditional love'.

Is this for our own good or for the good of Creation?

Do we hold dominion over the Earth and make it the way we want it to be? Is this for our own good or for the good of Creation? Who speaks when someone preaches? Is it the individual with their ideas, hopes, visions? On the one hand we 'order' from the universe, on the other hand society is shaped by means of power structures in a way that a minority consider desirable. What are the consequences of this behavior? The inconsistency in the big three religions: what is preached and what do people actually do? The results are a great challenge for our understanding. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that even in the different religions, there is more to unify people than to divide them.

The unspeakable and indescribable was expressed in mysticism through poetry. Today, we try to approach them with quantum physics and consciousness research. What if it is all about deep feeling and experiencing pure being?

*Do not seek the light on the outside but find the light inside of you and let it radiate from your heart.
(Rumi)*

Do we need a world with all its inequalities and imbalances, its imperfection, so that we may develop ourselves, our consciousness and our spirituality? What if creation had nothing to do with all the suffering here on earth? What if God/the universe/the source of all considers the free will given to us to be taken literally? Does God create suffering? Or do humans create suffering?

Exercise

Take a moment to ponder the following statements.

Change happens when someone becomes what they are, not when they try to be what they are not.

(Arnold Beiser)

No matter what dream we dream here – simple or complicated, colorful or bland – it is and remains a dream.

(Author unknown)

The gift of never forgetting what you were, the courage to be what you are, the power to become what you want to be gives every day the chance to become the most beautiful day of your life.

(Author unknown)

Believe nothing because a sage said it.

Believe nothing because everyone believes it.

Believe nothing because it is written.

Believe nothing because it is considered sacred.

Believe nothing because someone else believes it.

Believe only what you have recognized as true.

(Author unknown)

15. Economy, politics and the professional world

The corporate world is governed by supply and demand. Information is collected, strategies and targets are set, plans are made to be prepared for the uncertainties of the market – with all eyes firmly on the potential profit. In addition, the economy enormous influence on politics. Growth and success at all costs is the motto under the guise of making people's lives easier and giving them more freedom. In doing so, greed for profit drives the consumption of finite resources. In many cases, humans are reduced to their usefulness and material assets. What is the value of a human being as a production unit and worker and even as a spare parts warehouse? Profit optimization requires that humans are seen as a useful commodity.

Does this benefit humans?

Should humans become functional units?

The entrepreneurial influences, especially of the global players, on our culture, our humanity, our nature should not be underestimated. The self-optimization mania seems to fuel this. But it leads to an increasing loss of ourselves: to want to be what we are not? Should man become a functional unit, best standardized and preferably without social contacts? In order to be able to work in certified uniform workflows worldwide? I like to describe this as "species-inappropriate human husbandry" and monoculture. Does that really help us?

I observed that globalization came with increasing efficiency, more profit and greed for profit, more self-optimization, etc. Our belief in science, technology and progress could cost us our humanity. What do we want? Do we want to develop our humanity, or do we want to be optimized functional units and expectation fulfillment centers?

Greed not only eats its children, but also Mother Earth.

Given the greed of a few, we forget that we are all in the same boat, i.e. we just have this one planet. Furthermore, it is incomprehensible that increasing the profit in one place means increasing shortage and exploitation in another. How can the greed for profit be reconciled with Christianity in the Western world?

Everything is geared towards growth which works to the detriment of human culture. Corporate culture is becoming more and more negative, because we only look for profit. Not only do we forget that we can't take anything with us at the end of our days, but we also lose ourselves.

Consequences of non-understanding: from breakdown of communication to war

Non-understanding of our counterpart with their needs and situation leads to dissonances in all areas of life – in our personal and professional lives, in leadership, in business, society and politics. Massive consequences might ensue, from a breakdown of communication to outright war. As in all other walks of life and at all levels, it is always a matter of a specific need that needs to be met. To what extent are we aware that human beings with all their specific personal shortcomings and needs determine our economy, politics and life? What are our expectations of our leaders? Which skills should they possess? What ethics and value systems would make sense for executives?

Humans have become slaves to time and money. They are reduced to work resources and even their very organs have monetary value and are traded in the medical sphere. The loss of culture, of humanity, is willingly accepted. Profit is the priority and the overexploitation of humans, the Earth is progressing faster and faster. The greed for profit disturbs the natural course of life. Life is based on diversity and variability, in coexistence and mutual support. The extent of economic abuse of the earth, its resources and of human beings is unfathomable, especially since we only have this one planet. The greed of a few, who are also part of the whole, comes at the expense of others. Developments in science and technology are often used and abused for this purpose.

Who really understands the constant compulsive pursuit of growth

We can coexist and cooperate with the planet, or we will destroy it. Our decisions now determine what our future and the future of the Earth will be. Who really understands the constant compulsive pursuit of

growth, the greed for profit, as well as the hunger for power of a few, to which humankind, nature and the planet will ultimately fall victim? What is the real motivation that drives these people?

It seems that the motivation is either not understood or perhaps forgotten. Or maybe it is of little importance in the context of increasing efficiency and global standardized workflows. Our belief in science, technology and progress, which is the engine of our economy, could cost us our humanity. The increasing digitization also enables new power structures. There are completely new options for control and power – and all of that just so we can live a life that seems safe to us. This alienates humans not just from themselves and each other but also from nature and life itself. We develop strategies for distraction, while all kinds of exhaustion symptoms become a common phenomenon.

The issue seems to preoccupy us on an unconscious and increasingly on a conscious level. Counter-movements are being formed. However, various fear scenarios allow for a further expansion of the negative trend. And yet, everything that has a beginning will eventually come to an end. Any one of many unforeseen events can suddenly change everything. We are never fully secure and in control, and there will always be things we do not understand.

"Do I want to be a human being or an optimized functional unit?"

Each individual can only answer the following question for themselves and then decide and act accordingly: "Do I want to be a human being or an optimized functional unit?"

What if we turn towards each other here, away from ideas of competition, constant growth and greed?

If you love what you do, you will never have to work a day in your life.

If obedience is to be achieved by law and order is to be achieved by punishment, people will try to evade the laws and punishments and lose all moral scruples. If, on the other hand, we respond according to moral principles and order is achieved by observing customs and rituals, people will not only have scruples, but will also conform out of conviction.

(Confucius)

Exercise

Do you work or are you busy?

What does abundance mean to you? Do you define it in material terms or otherwise?

What if the economy stops using the world's finite resources for its profit and instead creates real solutions for the benefit of all?

How about this: Centralization creates monoculture, while decentralization creates diversity by taking into account the relationship between place, time and humans, making the overall system more resilient.

16. Science and research

From the very beginning, humans have always searched for explanations and knowledge. We are addicted to knowledge and explanations. Knowledge means power and control. We have elevated mechanistic science and research as our Golden Calf. Our understanding of science is rational and characterized by patriarchal thought structures. This limits our understanding. What does it take to add other aspects of science and research in order to arrive at a holistic view? Quantum physics has shown us the interaction between observer and object, how our assumptions and projections influence our results. How open are we to unconventional approaches?

More questions than ever

We live in the illusion of being able to understand and control the world better and better and to subjugate it. Science brings new insights and thus new possibilities every day. Yet we have more questions than ever. Knowledge is now so complex that it has led to many specializations. Keeping an eye on it all is a big challenge and hardly possible anymore. Moreover, knowledge can be used in a constructive or destructive way.

Whether we really managed to understand life itself and death remains to be seen. The idea from stem cell research – eternal life with a physical body – is a typical patriarchal idea. The idea of eternity and total control. Another important concept is that knowledge means power.

A theory applies until a new one replaces it

Even if we can explain the world, life and the universe better than ever before with our enormous progressive knowledge, all of it is based on constantly evolving theories. A theory applies until a new one replaces it. If a theory is confirmed, it is elevated as a truth. Although we can explain and understand a great deal with our enormous scientific knowledge, there will always be a remnant of non-understanding and thus of uncertainty, unpredictability and imponderability.

We still do not know how our atoms were imbued with life and how life managed to hold on to them. The transition from the inorganic to the organic world is still a mystery to us and is not understood.

The hunger for profit, power and control

If "knowledge is power" is the creed, scientific knowledge and progress can have a detrimental effect on all areas of life. Development is more important than wanting to understand, seeing imbalance, experiencing

curiosity and is equated with progress. The more knowledge we gained, the bigger our world became. Science has been given the status of an idol, which stemmed from our will to survive and gain control so that we would no longer be at the mercy of life's calamity. This is accompanied in our society by the hunger for profit, power and control over, well, everything. We have literally fallen to the temptation of the matter. In advertising, this reads as "my house, my boat, my trip..."

Of course, our scientific results and achievements are wonderful. We just need to decide how we will use them, in a positive sense for the benefit of all or in a negative way. Which values and standards do we follow? Because every new invention involves both; we can use it for good or ill.

The abuse of scientific development for greater economic efficiency and power causes increasing imbalance and disparity. They often end in exploitation and war (at whatever level). This in turn drives more research and science. The economy is flourishing again, and the idol of progress is once again worshipped.

Some people think they know what is right and good for others!

Individual philanthropists or power brokers with appropriate contacts and resources can rise up. They use their knowledge and think they know what is right and good for others. Is this the right way to go?

What if scientific achievements and their consequences were first thought through for several generations?

Is science able to grasp the miracle of Creation? Is there a dimension, a space outside of the reach of science?

Exercise

What does progress mean to you?

Do you see limits for research/science that must not be exceeded?

When did you deliberately break the rules to open up a new space for your life?

17. In what world do we want to live?

Can you understand how we are gambling so recklessly with our children's future? Ecology and the environment are literally burning issues that are often sidelined due to the greed for profit, the delusion of progress and the drive for status of a small minority. It is well known how important species diversity and environmental protection are for us. What are we doing about it? Are there perhaps quite surprising solutions? The issues are becoming more and more urgent. We only have this one planet. What will our lives look like in 50, 100 or more years? Does life have a chance? Do we as human beings have a chance to live a species-appropriate life?

We are surrounded by monocultures, be it in farming or animal husbandry. Everything is geared towards efficiency and maximum profit. Plenty of chemicals and many other things are used to achieve this. As a result, various industries have emerged and continue to grow. The notion of naturalness was sacrificed to this purpose.

Of course, within the framework of polarity, there is also a counter-movement. Both sides are often hardened and tensions are rising. The goal of living together and supporting each other not only among humans but with the worlds of plants, animals, microbes and minerals is still a long way off.

Unpopular decisions are needed

Even in advertising, the issue of sustainability, climate change and environmental protection is now ever-present. The extent to which the slogans are supported by serious efforts will only become apparent in the future. The current hype is of course exploited for economic gain. There are a number of interesting solutions, but they do not feature in the media, are unprofitable or simply not of any interest. What if each individual were to contribute more to developing the art of future living? A world in which a worthwhile life is sustainable at all levels – on land, in the air or in the water.

It is difficult to grasp and ultimately incomprehensible that we give so little thought to long-term life on Earth. Unpopular decisions are needed. Or we can wait until all is lost.

Globalization does not stop for the environment either. Changes in ecosystems caused by non-indigenous influences are unstoppable and the consequences are unpredictable.

We live in a world of expectations, peppered with motivational training to achieve more and more. We are driven not only by the longing for understanding but also by the motivation to meet these expectations.

Exercise

What do you think life on Earth should look like in 50 or 100 years?

What can you do on a small scale every day?

What world would you like your grandchildren live in?

Can you imagine living together with strangers and cultures, plants, animals, nature and the planet?

Even if you don't understand how everything is connected?

18. What if ...?

Humans imagined as a socially and culturally sensitive being: soul-mind-body. Our place in the system life is very complex and can only be considered holistically. The increasing specialization and compartmentalization into different areas of life presents a major challenge if we want to get a good view of the big picture. We are witnessing an increasing split into a multitude of individual areas. It created a desolate, disorienting situation from our small individual perspective as well as on the whole. It affects us, the planet, nature and the whole world. The foundations of life and the grasp of it are lacking. From my point of view, one root cause is non-understanding, because the increasingly mechanistic view of things leads to fragmentation. Humans and the entire planet are increasingly regarded and treated as commodities and functional units that can be used. Economists like to say, "Good for sales, bad for people and nature". This points to the great discrepancy. Shortages, imbalances and their consequences are synchronized at all levels. A modern form of indentured servitude is created – with time and money as the masters.

Understanding, even with our feelings?

What if understanding was possible not only through rational thought but also through our sensations, feelings and emotions? Could this change our behavior, our view of the world, and our development? If instead of "I think, therefore I am" we could say "I feel, therefore I am". In the 18th century, Edward Young asked, "We are all born originals - why is it so many of us die as copies?" This fascinating question has lost none of its relevance.

What if we chose life and ourselves instead of mere survival? The effect of the current patriarchal strategies is our materialistic world view, peppered with greed, exploitation and destruction.

What if we chose to work together and to unite at all levels?

- What if we chose a holistic view?
- What if we chose a livable, natural, meaningful life with the planet?
- What if we resisted the temptation of the economy, alienation and separation from our true essence and wholeness?
- What would change if we overcame fear-based thoughts?
- What if we stayed in touch with ourselves and follow through on that?
- What if we activated common sense and stand up for our freedom?
- What if I took individual responsibility?
- What if we learned to embrace non-understanding?
- What if we were to overcome competition, envy and greed?
- What if we understood everything and there was no longer any non-understanding, how would that change our lives? What would happen to the mysterious, the interesting things, life itself?
- What if we felt with our hearts again and knew who we are?
- What if we could distinguish where understanding makes sense and where we can embrace non-understanding?
- What if we were to overcome life-limiting fears?
- What if we also embrace death as the end of a life phase or as releasing our physical body as a normal process?
- What if you lived every day as if it were your first day ever?

- What holds us together at our core if all this is stripped away?

The planet needs peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers

Healing is possible at all levels, even with the recognition of some non-understanding. To paraphrase Mahatma Gandhi: The future is what we decide and do right now.

The question might also be: "What thought changed everything?" or "What thought changes everything?" More on this in the article on patriarchal thought structures.

Dalai Lama:
The planet does not need more successful people. The planet desperately needs more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind. It needs people who live well in their places. It needs people of moral courage willing to join the fight to make the world habitable and humane and these qualities have little to do with success as we have defined it.

19. Exercise for everyday life - the narrative mode

Every day, life affords us a wide range of opportunities and chances to get to know each other better if we choose to do so. The following exercise describes how we can deal constructively with ourselves and with others. It is an opportunity.

Let's assume that we find ourselves in a situation where we feel exposed, hurt and offended. The following approach is possible:

1. What emotion do I feel? Where do I feel this emotion in my body?
2. How old could I have been when I felt this emotion for the first time in my life? Limit the period by asking

yourself, "Before kindergarten, during kindergarten, school time, when?"

3. Set the stage: Who was there, what happened, how did I assess the situation and what decisions did I make about myself and others?

"Do I want to be happy, or must I always understand everything?"

4. What would be necessary to make a different decision today?
5. I can meet with the person who triggered this at a later date and tell them about my discovery. For example: When we were in this situation, I felt and that made me feel and I have discovered that Then we can ask if our counterpart if this seems familiar to them or how they feel about the story? Would they have behaved differently, etc.? Can you make new decisions and change your perspective? Maybe look at the whole thing from a bird's-eye view?

This can lead to a different dialogue and perhaps also a greater understanding and tolerance for ourselves and others.

The quote *"Do I want to be right, or do I want to be happy? Both is not possible."* can perhaps be rewritten to "Do I want to be happy, or must I always understand everything?"