

Thoughts in a Nutshell:

To all opponents of the lockdown

Darwin or Schumpeter? They're both retired!

As a biologist, I have a relaxed attitude to epidemics. It's a natural mechanism to reduce excessive population density. After that there is food and habitat for everyone again and Darwin is praised for his findings.

The Spanish flu a hundred years ago, long before good medical care and lockdown, took 25 to 50 million people away in three waves and showed us impressively how epidemics work.

Over the last few centuries, we humans have increasingly shied away from biological mechanisms, and today we are full of praise for the achievements of civilisation based on science and economy, on feasibility-mania and the hamster wheel, which normally complement each other so wonderfully.

Among other things however, we have forgotten how to die and consequently we save every single (human) life as long as possible from death. That is ethical.

COVID-19 confronts us for the first time globally with the decision to choose between science and economy. The decision has been made tacitly on the basis of ethical standards and priority has been given to medical feasibility in order to save lives that would otherwise be lost. After all, our governments are advised by physicians, not biologists.

It all makes perfect sense, since ethical and cultural rules are there to guide our actions and decisions. The lockdowns in the various countries are perfectly in line with our current attitude towards fragile elements of our society. Governments that have decided otherwise are accordingly morally pilloried.

While the first wave is now fading - possibly due to the lockdowns - it is not unexpected that representatives of the economy are raising their lament. Stop the lockdown, quick! And actually it was complete nonsense to risk a recession just in order to keep a few retired people in the pension system for a few more years. Hurry, otherwise everything will collapse, the fear is great! Some people even dare to refer to Darwin and biological paradigms, after they have discarded all references to nature and the environment over the past decades. Every argument seems to be welcome that allows the globalised value chains to rotate again and the stock market to recover. Not back to biological paradigms at all, but to those of Smith and Schumpeter.

But the biggest fear is that things will go back to the way they were before, only worse.

What we want to revive is precisely the set of instruments that did not work. Society in burnout. Margins in the basement. Useless products. Waste. Decreased purchasing power at full employment. Over-indebted countries. The environment collapsing.



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It could be so very different. We have cultural values that have made us care about our fellows and our planet. We have more scientific and technological skills than ever before to sustainably manage our ecosystem including humans. We even realized during the lockdown that we can do without many things, that cheap labor is valuable and that less can be more. Saw what would be possible. Noticed that it is important to have a meaningful job and how nice it is to go there every day and that we are all jointly responsible for whether there are jobs for our neighbours, too. We have EVERYTHING to make our future great, if we don't give it back into the hands of those who organized the world for us until February 2020.

The Corona crisis shows in every country long known (and mostly wiped away) disparities in great clarity. The differences between skin colour, origin, income, city and countryside and whatever else.

I wish that a new difference would become visible: between those who want to learn from the crisis and consciously shape the future and those who want to get back on the hamster wheel and run even faster than before.

And that the former are stronger this time.

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