

POTSDAM MANIFESTO 2005

“We have to learn to think in a new way“

*

Faced with the worldwide dangers of nuclear wars, Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein issued fifty years ago a manifesto calling on us, humankind, for a new way of thinking to ultimately ban war as strategy of conflict resolution.

In the meantime, it has become obvious that military power strategy, with its preliminary culmination in weapons of mass destruction, is only one of much more far-reaching and deeper-based power strategies. We are experiencing an escalation of structural violence with political and above all economic components. Geopolitical, socio-cultural, and economic power strategies and the unlimited expansion of a globalized market economy, with its compulsions to produce, threaten and destroy the spatial and material limits of our earth. The destructive effects of an unrestrained and unreflected civilization on the coexistence of nations, on the interrelations between society and nature, and not least on individual people are obvious.

For centuries, the predatory exploitation of people and nations and of nature was perceived as a side effect, even worse, as an admissible evil. Hopes for and successes in the development of better and extravagant prerequisites for an easier life and the consequential far-reaching appropriation of the world disguised the direct victims and the creeping devastation that were already tied to the early phases of such power. Today it is obvious that the one-sided implementation of these successes to the advantage of the European/North American initiators of the new civilization and of their imitators around the world amounts to a cold war against everyone and everything that can be turned into resources to increase this material appropriation or that what seems to hinder this appropriation. Particularly threatening thereby is an accelerated destruction of the bio-ecological diversity of whole complexes of life, to a degree seemingly unique in the history of the earth. But also the diversity of human ways of life and the treasure store of the cultures is similarly being irreversibly reduced, and in this process the spectrum of possible strategies and lifestyles and future developments. Conflicts over the distribution of affluence, over the opportunities for access to public goods, and over the rights of individuals and communities endanger the fundamental structures of humankind's cohesion and ability to develop.

This wide variety of crises today confronting us and threatening to exceed our ability to cope are the expression of a mental crisis in the relation between us humans and our living world. They are symptoms of deeper causes that we have thus far neglected to seek and reveal. They are closely connected with the materialistic-mechanistic worldview favored all over the world today and with its prior history.

Our deep worry that we, as members of the species *homo sapiens*, are increasingly reducing the living diversity of our earth and of our creative developmental possibilities, thus irreversibly endangering our survival in peace and our mutual exchange gives us the courage, and our awareness that we have to take new paths gives us the occasion, to compose this manifesto.

We must expand our thinking and fundamentally correct our current behavior. We believe that precisely the revolutionarily expanded insights of the new physics could thereby provide a helpful starting point for a defusing and solution of the problems, since they permit by their opening a new orientation. This will be *our* approach. But it is intended to serve as a catalyst to stimulate others to a new way of thinking.

NEW ORIENTATION

The insights of modern physics – of quantum physics – suggest a new interpretation of the world that carries us beyond the materialistic-mechanistic worldview. Instead of the world assumed until now – a mechanical, temporally determined “reality” of objectifiable things, the real *Wirklichkeit* (a world that effects) turns out to be basically “potentiality”: an indivisible, immaterial, temporally essentially indeterminate and genuinely creative bonding of relations that determines only “can”-probabilities, a differentiated potential for a material-energetic realization. The *Wirklichkeit*’s fundamentally open, creative, immaterial omni-connectedness permits us to regard the inanimate and the animate world as merely different – statically stable respectively open and statically unstable, but dynamically stabilized – articulations of an all-embracing “pre-living” cosmos.

The immaterial, information-bearing, pre-living interconnections prevailing in the micro-world are only indirectly operative on the meso-level of our world of experience. Usually they average out and, in this “diffused” form, express themselves in the familiar, “classical” behavior of inanimate nature. Instability, however, functions like an enormous amplification factor, preventing averaging: Animate nature draws its ability for continued, creative differentiate and cooperative integration from its “pre-living” (microphysically recognizable) primordial ground, whose “information”, through instabilities, rises enhanced into the meso-sphere, where it unfolds in more intense and richer form. The “pre-living” realm thus organizes itself in the complex variety of our “higher” bio-ecological vibrancy, as we encounter it in everyday life. Cultural-ecological variety and its developmental forms, i.e., its processes of transformation and balance, ultimately also results from this context.

This new viewpoint also opens up the opportunity for us humans to recognize and believe in the genuineness and not merely imaginary quality of creativity and the gift of intentional action in relation to the community. This way of looking at the world provides the basis for our striving for freedom and individualization and allows us to be different, without losing the underlying omni-connectedness. This is expressed in a well-developed tendency to “organismically” contribute our specially developed abilities to a higher whole in cooperation with others.

NEW THINKING

“We have to learn to think in a new way.” If we take this call radically seriously, we have to take new or unaccustomed paths of learning. From this new viewpoint, the world – the *Wirklichkeit* – no longer appears as a theoretically closed system. This leads to an inherent indeterminism that results from the fundamental indivisibility and that is expressed in an inherent limitation of the “knowable”. Strictly speaking, we are thus forced to speak about the *Wirklichkeit* only in parables and analogies. There are in principle no longer answers to all the questions that, from a human standpoint, we believe we can pose, because the answers go nowhere.

The individual person, like everything else, is in principle never isolated. In our only seeming smallness, we are simultaneously involved in and significant in the omni-connected commonality in an infinite variety of ways. The variety of influences and impulses of other people and of our geo-biosphere has a part in all our actions, and not only over the bridge of material-energetic interactions mediated by our senses, but also directly through the immaterial, potential connectedness common to us all. Our action influences in equal measure the entire composition of our society and changes the constantly dynamically shifting potentiality of the living *Wirklichkeit*. Thus, the uniqueness of the individual is a carrying component of the process of our common cultural evolution.

We humans and human communities, with our cultural worlds of ideas, our mental processes, and our moving exchange, represent a special, deeply connected sphere of the living world. Pre-livingness is a characteristic of everything, including the world of things, which is usually regarded as “dead”. We need to reach a fundamentally new way of thinking and a more comprehensive understanding of our *Wirklichkeit*, in which we, too, see ourselves as a thread in the fabric of life, without sacrificing anything of our special human qualities. This makes it possible to recognize hu-

manity in fundamental commonality with the rest of nature, without thereby falling into a conventional naturalism or simply invoking cosmologies that may have corresponded with the world-views and ways of life of cultures that remain close to nature.

The materialistic-mechanistic worldview of classical physics, with its rigid ideas and reductive way of thinking, became the supposedly scientifically legitimated ideology for vast areas of scientific and political-strategic thinking. The progressing uniformity of all ideas of value and affluence, habits of consumption and economic strategies on the pattern of a Western/North American/European knowledge society is still legitimated by a way of thinking that argues for a rational objectifiability of the *Wirklichkeit* on the basis of secured scientific foundations. Where conflicts arise, a lack of instrumental knowledge is diagnosed and compensatory delivery is prescribed. The foundations of this orientation are seldom questioned, though there is reason enough to do so.

Modern societies are in a cold war against diversity and change, difference and integration, open development and movements to balance through risks and opportunities: a cold war against everything that is the source of living evolution in nature, and with it in us – down to the “pre-living” ground that sustains us and all of life.

This ignores the many possibilities of a living world that, in creative processes of a continual differentiation and simultaneous or subsequent integration of what is different (a plus-sum game), grow into organismically more diverse forms of life, in which the whole is more than the sum of its parts in a very comprehensive and differentiated sense.

Continuous change is a characteristic of cultural evolution and equally a criterion for cultural sustainability. If this is lacking, a cultural model's rigidification to the point of collapse is preprogrammed. If the ability to change, to take part in a process of cultural evolution, is rigidly attached to economic systems via culture-immanent structures and if these economic systems are tied to material preconditions, then the culture can develop further only within the limits of the material world. When these limits are reached, this leads to a cultural evolutionary standstill and ultimately to dropping out of the dynamic evolution of life.

Quantum physics – and not just it – challenges us to emancipate our thinking from rigid structures so that flexible relationships can take their place. It becomes possible to loosen and gently dissolve the monostructural, centralistic constructions, forms of expression preferred by the materialistic-mechanistic worldview. The destruction of all values through the mechanisms of the markets, where strength in the form of power demands absolute primacy over development and justice, loses its liberal legitimation once and for all. The new way of thinking merges the fullness of our perceptual abilities and mental movements; conscious and unconscious motives for human thinking and action are equally acknowledged; Here, a new evolutionary level is emerging in which a complex, unfragmented perception – an intimation (a sort of ‘Ahnung’) – of *Wirklichkeit* is the foundation of our thinking, feeling, and acting. In this way, we can transform our goals and strategies into patterns and movements of adapted action.

Learning urgently needs living examples. But teachers and spiritual leaders are not the only ones who show us paths. We all have insights with the capability to remind each other of the potential inherent in us and on whose basis many lives have been successfully lived since primordial times. In a common dialogue, in a learning culture of mutuality, we can learn to draw on it as a species. The organisation of patterns and forms of living structures and bio-complexes that have grown in interaction into the moving life-complex of the earth and that have been dynamically adapted and “tested” over billions of years, indicate to us accesses and forms of behavior to organize a decentralized-dynamic, many-celled, organismic working together of the living entirety on earth.

We learn that we, like everything else, are participants inseparably connected with this wondrous earthly geo-biosphere.

NEW REQUIREMENTS

We have to abandon narrowed and mechanistic strategy patterns, reductions, and averaging and

replace them with mobility, openness, and empathy in order to make openly malleable spaces for creation and action possible. This will open for us a cornucopia of genuinely creative vibrancy, integrated through organismic cooperation. Inherently genuine creativity in a temporally essentially open world is what will here burst the seemingly indestructible fetters and open up an immense variety of successful lifestyles. An ever more vibrant being, a continuous becoming can take the place of a rigidified affluence of possessing. The individual gains increasing openness in his intense participation and through his embedding, across time and space, in the living, interlocking system of the earth. This dynamic interplay among people and between people and their living surroundings is what will create the first real well-being and challenge and foster humankind's entire being.

It is urgently necessary to enable an integrative cooperation among the diverse economic exchange strategies among people, communities, and their natural surroundings as well as among the patterns of distribution in production, use, and supply, in order to ensure the provision of the necessities of life and the structural and institutional prerequisites for socio-economic exchange. The development of new decentralized and polycentric structures of production, supply, and decision-making has special relevance – indeed priority.

Economics must be measured against local and regional socio-cultural relationships, strategies, traditions, and desires if it is to do justice to what is needed and to be sustainable, rather than falling into artificial homogenization and rigidification that develop an increasing potential for dangers. To this end, the greatest possible degree of decentralized initiative to achieve, of supply sovereignty, and of subsistence are needed. This simultaneously demands a global networking and an elastic compensation through the supply of goods with global relevance. An optimal and flexible complementarity between plural economies of local, regional, and continental significance, in synergy with intercontinental infrastructures for the exchange of goods and services produced in a global division of labor, is an essential sustaining prerequisite for this.

The material framework conditions and the accessibility of limited sources and sinks in earthly nature and their regeneration cycles substantially determine the communal goods. This is why the ecological foundation of the earth has the character of a spatial and temporal community. It must not be further centrally administered or monopolized, neither privately, nor by the state, nor by a supra-state body. Everyone has the same share in the totality of the earth's communal foundations of life and, where he lives and acts, has local to intercontinental "trustee" obligations toward the global communal goods. The limitations are only given by the material limits of the place we live, the earth; the mental-cultural space can grow multifariously with us.

NEW ACTION

It is high time to implement new thinking in new action and thereby to use the power of the differentiated, the moving, and the changing for ourselves in a learning way. To this end, parallels between new institutional, individual, and societal developments are necessary. The current strategies for humankind's economic, political-cultural, and ecological interaction are still dominated by centralized power structures that we can and should replace.

The construction of polycentric economic structures that complement each other is needed. Monetarily-oriented market economy institutions must unite with civil-societal social, cultural, and subsistence-economic initiatives and institutions in mutual enrichment. In parallel, decentralization and differences among economic, political, and socio-cultural institutions must be supported by adopting flat hierarchies in their decision-making bodies among those carrying out these decisions. To this end, we need a reduction of the monopolistic power structures of a few companies in favor of a variety of economic enterprises – both those borne by the market and those borne by civil actors. Their cooperative interplay must and can be politically, legally, and infrastructurally ensured from the local to the intercontinental level.

To ensure global supply worthy of human beings and communities, competition, i.e., cooperative rivalry, can develop in a fostering and protective way only through innovation and creative productivity, while using the dynamic driving forces of a cooperative-dialogical interaction among the

cultures and people of the earth. Dialogue and exchange must and can be installed in all layers of life, particularly in the institutional and spatial overlaps between cultures, and must constantly dynamically adapt. In this way, tension and conflicts can be dynamically absorbed, balanced, and diverted into moving discourse.

The creative-inventive potential that is expressed in the individual peculiarity of one's own path increases the richness in ideas for and development of a variety of lifestyles and of new and further development of what already exists; it is thus of irreplaceable value. The high productive potentiality of human creative action thus also pays off economically in the sense of a plus-sum game enriching everyone.

The economy's formal emphasis on maximum efficiency in the allocation of resources – a pillar of economic globalization – leads to artificially homogenized, monoculturally reshaped living spaces and people's maximum dependence on external factors they cannot influence. These are not inherently fixed, but are negatively provoked in escalation. When we consider the escalating problems currently burdening humankind, they are almost wholly a consequence of the concentration of power and of economic inequality, controlled and pushed by a financial network hostile to life that, instead of strengthening the network of relations between people on behalf of people, has degenerated into an insatiable end in itself. The uncoupling of the unlimited growth of monetary capital from the spatially and materially limited earth helps drive this mechanism. The international money supply can and must urgently be stabilized and dynamically steered into economic activities that augment the quality of life and global supply. The prerequisite for our survival and for peace among humankind is compliance with the many tolerance limits of the geo-biosphere's dynamic stabilization, of the limits of the robustness of our natural foundations of life and their regeneration cycles. This must find its correspondence in the creation of closed production and material cycles, a sustainable consumption of energy, the internalization of ecological externalizations, and the minimization of ecological risks.

This means a strategic orientation toward the paradigm of what lives.

WE ARE LIFE

If we continue to “tilt” our common playing field of life by unrestrainedly striving for power, so that the majority of humankind and a great part of all living creatures are slipping off, our problems will grow into a catastrophe.

But the ground on which a new, sustainable organismic cultural variety grows is well prepared. A new and yet familiar image of humankind is emerging, originating from empathic people. The confrontations and distortions we daily experience in our civilization should not allow ourselves to be led astray. Our existence as human beings today shows us that we, too, are the successful result of a similar development that has already gone on for billions of years. Our confidence is not unfounded. We must create new knowledge and act in such a way that liveliness increases and flourishes diversely. We can trust that this power is active in us. For omni-connectedness, which we can also call love and from which life springs, is fundamentally inherent in us and in everything else.

Sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Education and
Research of Germany - Bundesministerium für Bildung und
Forschung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BMBF)

Issued by the Federation of German Scientists - Vereinigung
Deutscher Wissenschaftler VDW e.V.

V.i.S.d.P.:

Prof. Dr. Hans-Peter Dürr

Dr. j. Daniel Dahm

Prof. Dr. Rudolf Prinz zur Lippe

Berlin, October 2005