

► **Post Corona ReStart: Impulses for Discourse**

Life after the pandemic won't be the same.

That's what everyone says. Yet there are few concrete ideas about what should actually change and how. Stop climate change, of course. Limits to growth, perhaps. Re-think our work lives. But beyond that? What comes after freedom, democracy and endlessly increasing prosperity through new trade agreements? Restrictions, regression, entropy? New systemic conflicts, a Cold War with China?

The pandemic has pushed these questions into the background. Instead, it has confronted us with something we have increasingly forgotten: the fact that we humans are bodies. Suddenly we're dealing with the fact that touch and closeness aren't only basic human needs, but also play a significant role in the function of our immune systems and our ability to think.

In a world where facial expressions and features disappear behind masks making it difficult to breathe, where we are forced to radically reduce touch and physical closeness or eliminate it altogether, where we have been catapulted into the brave new digital world of work, the medium has become the message: *The future is digital. Now we have to figure out how much body, how much physical closeness, how much movement and nature we – as human beings – actually need.*

Throughout the pandemic our knowledge society has proven to be surprisingly dysfunctional – too few caregivers and hospital beds, too few teachers and educators, and thinking beyond the pandemic, too few craftsmen. It's irritating that a society that has accumulated so much knowledge and made it available to everyone is less and less capable of solving practical problems. For instance, now we know more than ever about human developmental psychology, about what good education requires, about logistics and building functional systems, yet we often still fail precisely at these tasks.

The evolution of humankind is also the story of an increasingly differentiated, increasingly abstract form of intelligence. For a long time, this intelligence was believed to be located in the brain. In recent decades, however, various research disciplines including medicine, neuroscience, cognitive science, many areas of biology as well as psychology (from developmental psychology to psychotherapy), and finally, philosophy, art and AI research, have all come to the realization that we need to correct our understanding of human thinking.

The idea that sophisticated, abstract thought belongs exclusively to the brain, and that the brain is a super computer floating in a tank, is simply wrong. It turns out that the entire body is significantly involved in our thinking processes, and that in order to produce thought, our bodies are in constant motion. Philosopher Shaun Gallagher put it in a nutshell in his book title „How the Body Shapes the Mind“: how and what we think depends on our body and its movements.

Post Corona ReStart offers a framework to ask the following questions and more:

- Can new ideas for a society of the future be developed from the principles of embodied cognition, principles that include the physicality of our intelligence and perception?
- Can language and embodiment practice be combined in such a way that we arrive at new perspectives and come to new conclusions?
- How does our thinking change when we understand basic human needs as a part of our intellectual capacity, including emotion as information mediating between bodily perceptions and thought processes?
- How does the gender debate change when the bodily aspects of our thinking emerge more clearly? What happens when the body, including our perception of the body, but especially our perception through the body, are understood as part of our intellectual capacity?
- If we view thinking as a physical activity, what conclusions can we draw about the design of educational and working environments as well as our relationship to nature?
- What does embodied thinking mean for the AI debate, often heavily influenced by fear, and the shaping of our digital future?

► **Body Talks + Insight Labs**

For each **Body Talk** experts from the fields of embodiment, neuroscience, medicine, education, arts and social sciences will be invited to speak and share their expertise on the following question: *What role can embodied thinking play, both for individuals and in a society looking for new beginnings?* As a practical component, each **Body Talk** will be followed by a ca. 45-minute interactive **Insight Lab**, where simple physical exercises will be combined with thinking tasks and discussion relating to what we as individuals and as a society face both during and after Corona.

An Innovation Camp on the topic is currently being organized by difgl – German Institute for Good Living, Embodiment at Work and other cooperation partners.

Project Initiators:

M.A. Katja Anclam, media scientist and managing director of difgl
Dipl.-Inform., M.A. Christoph Henseler, computer scientist and managing director of difgl
Dr. Kerstin Lücker, author and collaborator for difgl
Emily Poel, co-founder of Embodiment at Work

The Initiators



Katja Anclam

Katja Anclam is a historian, media scientist, TV producer, Co-founder of female.vision e.V. and executive director of the *German Institute for Good Living* (difgl). Katja has long been irritated by the fact that in political and social debates about what constitutes a good life we tend to forget that we are all human beings, and therefore bodies. As a communications professional she is committed to changing this perspective through the Body Talks series.



Christoph Henseler

As a computer scientist and historian, **Christoph Henseler** conducts research at the interface of technology and society. He is the founder and managing director of difgl. Looking at the role of crafts in our knowledge society, he is concerned with the question of why we, as materialists with a worldview shaped by the natural sciences, still so strongly cling to the separation of body and mind. He hopes that the Body Talks series will provide ideas about how we can preserve and promote not only knowledge, but also embodied human skills in the digital age.



Kerstin Lücker

Kerstin Lücker is a humanities scholar and author. Since writing *A History of the World with the Women Put Back In* (Zurich, 2017), she has been preoccupied with the fact that misogyny manifests itself not only in a gender hierarchy, but also in an overall imbalance of values: mind over body, abstract knowledge over craft, culture over nature. Theories of embodiment challenge these dichotomies. Through her work with Emily Poel, she has come to understand embodiment training as comprehensible experience too valuable to stay hidden in esoteric drawers.



Emily Poel

Emily Poel has worked internationally as a choreographer, performer and creative consultant after completing her BA in history and dance performance. She has been an embodiment trainer in Berlin since 2004 and recently co-founded *Embodiment at Work*. Emily combines her physical work with a deep knowledge of literature on the subject of embodiment, looking at theory from the angle of practice. With the BodyTalks series she looks forward to building bridges between theory and practice in many different areas of society to improve our lives in the future.