

November 16, 2020

ORF.at

Austrian News interview with Riane Eisler

<https://orf.at/stories/3187108/>

We Can Change the Rules of the Game

The coronavirus pandemic has turned the world upside down, nothing seems to be the same as it used to be. However, many see precisely this as the opportunity for a great new beginning - not least from our economy. The US scientist Riane Eisler is a pioneer in this field. In an interview with ORF.at she explains how our economy has to change, what role caring plays in it and what cats have to do with climate deniers.

The coronavirus triggered a global economic crisis that, according to World Bank forecasts, could plunge up to 115 million people into extreme poverty. At the same time, the wealth of the rich and super-rich reached "new heights", as the "Billionaires Report" shows. Some millionaires felt compelled to demand higher taxes, even the Pope became a critic of capitalism and the World Economic Forum has already started a new initiative called "The Great Reset".

The US sociologist Eisler has been calling for economic change for decades. Your book *The Misunderstood Foundations of the Economy*, which has now also appeared in German for the first time, seems more relevant than ever in the midst of the coronavirus crisis. According to Eisler, the coronavirus and the associated collapse of the global economy have uncovered many deep problems in the current system. But: "We can change the rules of the game."

In the foreword of her book, she describes today's economic system as "neither sustainable nor fair". It is not able to cope with current or future challenges. The pandemic is forcing us to question our "old normal", after all, problems cannot be solved with the same way of thinking with which they were created, Eisler quotes Einstein here.

"We have to move on to an economic system that I have called the 'Caring Economy of Partnerism'", says Eisler in a calm but firm voice. In an interview with ORF.at, Eisler paints a detailed picture of an economic partnership system that is based on care. Caring for people and nature.

It is a model that recognizes the value of environmental protection as well as care and welfare, starting with the earliest childhood, by taking into account economically "vital" contributions from private households, communities and nature. A change in the economy can ultimately only succeed if what counts as economically productive is redefined, according to the idea.

Eisler's Center for Partnership Studies has therefore developed the key figure for the Social Wealth Index (SWI), which - unlike the gross domestic product (GDP) - makes the profitability of investments in care for people and the environment visible. Because only through the careful

handling of valuable human and natural capital can "true" prosperity be generated.

"The life-sustaining activities in private households, in the non-profit sector and in resource management form the basis of our economy, and yet they are missing in both capitalist and socialist economic theory," criticizes Eisler. Both models are not only incomplete in the post-industrial era in which we are, but also simply no longer up-to-date.

"Both socialism and capitalism are rooted in a dominant tradition. For (Adam) Smith as well as (Karl) Marx, nature was only there to be exploited", explains Eisler. It was similar with the women: They were entrusted with caring for the household - unpaid of course. A basic problem that persists to this day, but is mostly overlooked by economists. As an exception, Eisler names the Indian economist and philosopher Amartya Sen, whose research on global justice was awarded the Nobel Prize for Economics.

Eisler's partnership system can be understood as the "opposite pole to the capitalist and socialist dominance system". But are humans really made for such a system? A look at the world and the past few months raises doubts. Doubts that Eisler does not want to accept and is able to refute with a series of examples from cultural history as well as with the latest findings from neurosciences.

Charles Darwin, for example, was completely misinterpreted, since human evolution was never about the survival of the strongest or the most adaptable. Rather, cooperation and empathy played the decisive role in evolution. The transition from partnership to dominant societies only happened 5,000 to 10,000 years ago.

And: 9,000 years ago, in the Neolithic Age, both men and women used spears and projectiles to provide the community with meat, as a new study has now shown. There was no division of roles according to gender, as has always been assumed up to now. Women were both collectors and hunters - more on this in science.ORF.at.

Neurological experiments would also show that human nature is still "predestined" for a partnership system. When we take care of others, pleasure centers light up in our brains - even more so than when we defeat someone. Incidentally, it is the same for men as for women.