

A Brief Spiritual Reflection on the Current Pandemic

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Human life on this earth is transient and cannot but be combined with dangers, disasters and tragedies great or small. The sacred scriptures of various traditions are there to remind us of this truth and to guide us to draw the right lessons from these occurrences. Traditional humanity lived in a world in which the cosmic ambience participated in the moral and spiritual principles that governed human

life. Even in the West, where the idea of a totally secularized cosmos, devoid of life and any spiritual significance, was first propagated, and where nature was reduced by the modernistic worldview to an "it," a dead but complicated machine, until recently many would assemble in churches or public squares during natural disasters to recite together the beginning of the *Gospel of John* in Latin, *In principia erat verbum...* Similar events can be seen to this day in the Islamic world, Hindu India and elsewhere. How quickly has modern man forgotten the underlying principles of such practices.

Nature is, however, alive with an independent life of its own and its own harmony and rhythms whether we see it as such or not. Sooner or later it reacts to human iniquity and teaches man a lesson, as the Quran asserts in so many verses. Nature teaches us a spiritual lesson. Fortunate are those who are able to learn from it. Theologically speaking, modern man suffers from the sin of pride, of hubris. Let us hope that the present global crisis will teach us how to overcome that hubris, how to live with greater humility and compassion, not only towards other human beings but also towards all beings, all creatures great and small. The present crisis can be an occasion for spiritual awakening and be seen as a gift from God to open our eyes again to the spiritual realities that so many have forgotten.

The present crisis affords us an opportunity to turn more inward, to turn to introspection, to become more familiar with our inner self, to view nature as our spiritual friend and a realm of reality governed not by blind forces and laws but by the Divine Will. Decades ago, Frithjof Schuon wrote a message that is so timely *a propos* our present situation. In his book, *Light on the Ancient Worlds*, he stated, "Man is astonished at the calamities of this world, without it occurring to him that they may be acts of grace, since they rend, like death, the veil of earthly illusion and thus allow man to die before dying and so to conquer death."

When the earth suddenly opens up under our feet, we have but two choices: Either to sink into the abyss below or to grow wings and fly into the illimitable sky. Let us grow wings and fly, remembering the Quranic verse, *Kullu man `alayhâ fân wa yabqâ wajbu rabbika dbû'l-jalâli wa'l-ikrâm*, which can be rendered as, "All other than Him perish, and there remains the Face of thy Lord, Possessor of Majesty and Generosity." That Face is also in a sense the face that we turn to God. May the present tragedy aid us to turn not our back but our face to Him.