

BREAKING THE DEADLOCK

WHEN THE CORONAVIRUS GIVES RISE TO HOPE AND OPTIMISM

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In these times of uncertainty, the crisis we are going through takes on a particular dimension. It seems surreal. It arouses concern and leaves no one indifferent. It concerns us all equally and no one enjoys special privileges in the face of it. It reminds us of our limits as human beings and our dependence on things that are beyond our control.

It leads us inexorably to become aware of what really matters in life: health, family, friends, solidarity, inner peace, faith.

The confinement and the slowing down of our life rhythm, imposed by the existence of this virus, which has suddenly burst into our daily life, is an opportunity to take the time to stop for a moment and ask ourselves the question of our *raison d'être* and of our future. In this particular context, everyone is predisposed to listen to this inner voice that invites us to meditate on the essential. In the age of hyperconnectivity, I have the opportunity to meditate, with a clear head, on the meaning of my existence, to change my life habits and to question myself on the idea of death, which, after all, is inevitable and which our rational mind actually struggles to accept.

For most people, the question of the meaning of life is relegated to the depths of the being so that it does not disturb the conscience. This questioning has no immediate interest for most of us. In reality, life is a real gift: breathing, moving, drinking, eating, sharing, thinking, hoping, are things that we do every day mechanically. These daily acts take on a whole new meaning and value if they are part of a broader perspective than that which is limited to our mere mortal condition.

For those who have faith in the existence of a higher entity that guides the course of this world and that of the cosmos, everything has a meaning and a reason to exist. Having faith allows one to perceive things beyond oneself, to step back, to let go and to stay the course when the storm rises and rages. So how do we find peace within ourselves, find refuge and strength beyond what we can offer ourselves? When others falter and are overcome by uncertainty, a sense of helplessness and resignation, the experience of spirituality allows us to stand firm, to connect to something that transcends our human condition of mere creation. Is there a force that governs this world? The spiritual being draws his energy beyond his own person, which allows him to overcome the obstacles of life. His faith produces fruits that have a real flavor, which brings comfort and well-being.

What we consider irrational is an integral part of our lives: believing, hoping, imagining, glimpsing the future. It is in fact a capacity that is unique to human beings. Each human being represents a universe in its own right that contains its secrets, its particularities, its visible and invisible

dimensions. Few people are aware of the complexity that characterizes us and of the things we are capable of achieving. Everyone has unsuspected abilities. We use only a tiny part of the potential we have. The perceptible is constantly interacting with the imperceptible. Our sensitive world is constantly interacting with a universe that can only be perceived by the hearing of the heart. Unfortunately, we often try to protect our consciousness from what is beyond our understanding, which exceeds our understanding.

The confinement imposed on everyone by the very particular situation we live in represents a real opportunity to learn to enjoy the present moment. The opportunity today is to simply take the time to do things. We can take advantage of the present moment to question ourselves, to improve ourselves humanly, to become aware of what we already have and to value it: the simple fact of existing, of being able to breathe, to feel, to see, to listen, to smile, to marvel. It is an opportunity to take a close look at my way of life, at the rhythm of life that I have become accustomed to imposing on my body and my mind.

Will there be a before and after confinement? It will depend on us and what we want. If I can put my thoughts in order, get to know my inner self better, and become aware of the role I have to play in society, then I will have taken a big step forward and this episode of my life will not have been in vain, it will have allowed me to grow. This pandemic will not mark the end of the world, there will be an aftermath.

But, at a time when our planet has become an open-air "garbage can", plundered and denatured, such events force us to reconsider our priorities: to return to a form of sobriety, of measure, which characterized less advanced societies. In such circumstances, we are forced to learn to value what we already have and to take care of it. Sometimes, man needs to be pushed to the wall in order to discover what is truly good for him and to reveal the best in him.

The world-system based on having is today shaken by this pandemic, it is not stopped but almost. What is happening today reminds us of the fragile balance on which it rests.

For a cause that goes beyond geographical, cultural, ideological and economic borders, humanity still knows how to come together to make a front. Is this not its *raison d'être* and the only way to salvation? The human and material means implemented to face the pandemic are the proof. We must seize this opportunity by drawing from the depths of our being those values that can still bring humanity together and that will allow us to reinvent our world today undermined by individualism, inequality, appearances, a harmful spirit of competition, and all sorts of drifts that our modern societies have generated. It is by going beyond a perspective limited to our ego that we will be able to rise to the challenges that our society must face. Man is on earth to achieve great things, to make history, according to his predisposition and the strength of his aspirations. Facing a health crisis of such magnitude is both a major challenge to be taken up individually and collectively and a way of gauging the degree of solidarity that is expressed in a society. We must return to the universal values that each individual instinctively recognizes in the depths of his

deepest part of his or her primal nature and humanity. Some of these values that we have inherited from our ancestors are crumbling before our eyes, annihilated by an immorality that has become the norm.

The education and the attention that we will give to the young generations will be the basis of a change that can only be conceived in the long term. The destiny of our world is conditioned to the highest degree by the actions of the men and women who inhabit it. The state of our planet, bruised by the overexploitation of its natural resources, inherent to a conception of happiness generating all kinds of pollution and quasi-irreversible mutilations, no one is indifferent anymore.

This pandemic, no matter how big a footprint it leaves, is only a passing one. After the epidemic, life will resume its course. If it doesn't raise the question of the meaning of my existence in the depths of my being, the only question that will allow us to collectively initiate a reform of our way of life, it will have been useless. Only one thing really matters: to find my inner way, even in the chaos, to take the path that leads to serenity. For this we must rethink our economy which institutes overconsumption, waste and disposability. Other values and other ways of consuming are to be honored and experimented with. The satisfaction of our most immediate desires cannot lead to a lasting well-being, which can only be found in the depths of our being.

How can we free ourselves from a destructive routine that prevents us from taking the time to simply enjoy things? We are slaves to our hectic pace of life and our occupations. Are we capable of rethinking our way of being and living in order to refocus on priorities that are truly worthwhile?

Is humanity on the verge of a major upheaval? Are we living the end of a cycle? Whatever the case, it is obvious that the alternative to the system in place, which fights at all costs for its survival, will not come down by itself from the sky, it will not appear from nowhere. We must start from what exists, from the initiatives in the fields of ecology or solidarity economy that let us see a glimmer of hope in the jungle that our world has become.

The world as we know it today is facing a crisis of values. Change will depend on our ability to act together. The good wills that carry the same values will certainly end up meeting and converging. How can I become the architect of change at my level, by contributing, according to my abilities, my stone to the building? The change will take place on different scales, by investing together in different fields of action.

The harmony of the cosmos, in perpetual movement and evolution, is allowed by laws that have always governed it. The balance of our world, a speck of dust in the immensity of our universe, depends on these laws. Men, by their actions, have not ceased to undermine this harmony which is conducive to life on earth.

We are dependent on the nature that surrounds us. There is a continuity between humans and their natural environment. Man, infinitely small in this limitless universe, is dependent on biodiversity, on the ecosystems that make up the richness of our common habitat, this beautiful planet that we do not take sufficient care of. This pandemic is also there to remind us of our powerlessness, our limits in the face of what is beyond us, and the fragility of our planet.

The rational mind of man seeks to bring exclusively material and technical answers to the evils of the world. The reactions to the pandemic are proof of this. It is precisely a divinization of material progress that has led our world to the crisis we are experiencing. Man has become ultra-dependent on everything material. We have the opportunity today to get rid for a moment of the superfluous, of what is ephemeral, to return to a sobriety and simplicity that were once a source of well-being.

We have every reason to remain optimistic about the future, beautiful days are ahead of us and of humanity, provided that individual and collective resolutions are taken. All we have to do is believe and act. We have two choices: not to change our habits or, on the contrary, to take the path of change.

To love is to be at peace with oneself and with others. Each man, each woman, is a breath of life, a miracle in itself, which deserves all our esteem, all our attention. Our quest for meaning, for truth, will only have meaning if it is shared with all those who aspire, like us, to a better world, a world of love, compassion, peace and equity.