
The meaning of the virus and the lockdown

Mondo with Patrick Pargnien – Bordeaux, March 2020

Question: *All this (the virus and the lockdown), has it only the meaning we give it? Or does it have a meaning of its own?*

Patrick Pargnien: What we are experiencing today is a period all the more unprecedented because our generation has known no war, no hardship and because we were nurtured with the belief that technology and progress would provide for all eventualities. So, for most of us, we are like children who think they are all-powerful. And so, this virus and the situation strongly "shake" and crack this mental construction, this belief.

This is one of the reasons why what we are currently experiencing will, depending on our inner resources, either be a springboard towards an opening of consciousness (which was already in process) and towards an acceptance of future changes, or will paralyse, freeze our consciousness, our "fearing-self" ... and therefore this self will turn towards the hope that everything will become "as before" again.

Fear is a virus that we contracted very early in our existence and that is lurking in the smallest folds of the fabric of the existential being, of the psychic fabric. There is a popular saying that "fear is a bad counsellor" and we can verify this in certain choices in our lives, whether on an individual or collective scale. It is the "root" emotion that underlies many of our actions and life choices and which projects us towards the hope of a better life or towards the fear of a difficult future. It thus cuts us off from our inner resources, from the creative force and the vital impulse that "reaches" its fullness in the here and now. And at the present time, nothing is more important than to tune in to this "now" which is the "refuge" where the "fearing-self" cannot absorb the field of consciousness.

It is certain that, among the most fragile among us, there will be psychological decompensations, depressions and expressions of violence. This has already begun. But of course, it is also a situation that will reveal qualities of solidarity, compassion, creativity, all necessary so that we can continue to live in "the intelligence of the heart" with nature and others.

And the major challenge is that this should manifest itself, not only now in this unprecedented situation, but also when all this will be finished. That is to say, to integrate, to understand the difference of each person, of the different forms of life, and rather than being afraid of it, to see all its richness.

It is difficult to separate "the meaning we give" (or will give) and "the proper meaning" (although I don't think we can speak here of proper meaning) to what is happening at the moment, because it affects all humanity, with its choices based, alas, more often on ignorance and greed than on the conscious heart, with all the imbalances that result from this.

Imbalances, as much on the relationship level as on the living level (living level of which we are a part, which the human being we are tends to forget, always positioning himself as a being

separated). We must never forget that "before" being thinking beings, we are living beings and therefore that we are an integral part of the living. This is why our actions, whatever they may be, constructive or destructive, have a direct influence on the world...

But imbalances also exist at the level of inter-human relations, where we are increasingly developing a sense of individuality and - above all - identification with that personality which makes us lock ourselves up in egocentricity, in search of our own profit. This makes us forget that we are not "only a separate one", but that we are also part of the humanity, and of course of the living... This is the sacred challenge for every spiritual seeker engaged in a Way, the challenge that must be met: to emerge from the dream of separation to awaken to Totality.

So, what we are living at this moment will be influenced by the meaning that each one of us, alone and collectively, will give to it. We can only hope that it will allow us to open our eyes to the change we need to make in the way we see our presence in the world.

But we cannot really say that this situation and this virus have a "proper meaning". This virus is rather, in a certain way, the fruit of these imbalances, the fruit of our actions which were not (and still are not) in harmony with the great Law of interdependence and therefore with the respect for life.

This virus, with all its consequences, leads us to question the choices we made, collectively and individually. It also raises the question of the profound meaning of the existence and our relationship to life and death.

Going on retreat, in recollection in the sense of interiority, is one of the most appropriate answers to give to let these questions "infuse", "mature" in the deepest lands of Being, so that they can fertilize the inevitable changes to come ...

The meaning that we will give to this situation will depend on the strength and courage each one of us will put to be touched by these questions, and on the answers that will emerge from the intimacy of the Being, from the intimacy of the "inner temple" of each one of us. And to our capacity to be fully present to what is such as it is, and to agree with, to abandon ourselves to the mystery of the song of the conscious, intuitive heart...

In these unprecedented times that lead us along the paths of the unpredictable and the unknown, it is also important not to remain focused on a single point, that is to say the confinement, the virus and the fear of contracting it. But to cultivate the intention to entrust oneself to the breath, to deposit oneself in it and to see, to hear, to feel, to perceive in our heart the movement of life that continues in all its structure and its incredible silent beauty: in a sunrise or a sunset, in the mysterious clarity of the full moon, the imperturbable song of a bird, the ephemeral beauty of a flower, the laughter of a child, a simple glance (even from a distance) and still be able to marvel at it.

I hope that this answer about the meaning we can give to this situation and the meaning it has, will nourish and inspire you to go ahead and deepen your questioning.

You will find below, in "addition" to this answer, a poem that I wrote during a walk in the desert ...

From my heart to your heart, Patrick.

*This is, and always has been
Mystery of the present moment
I am the dawn and the dusk of the day
I follow the imperturbable dunes
I am the wind of the desert
Unattached
Who clarifies the illusions of the heart
I am the bird that flies without dreaming of becoming
I am the tears of despair of the human being
Ignoring its true nature
I am the laughter, the unfathomable song of Life...
In the abandonment of the flower to the radiation of the sun
I am man and woman
I am grain of sand and immensity
I am the eternal and the ephemeral...
I am One and All
I am the contemplation of Totality
And yet, I am not...*