



**(Ir)Rationality and Religiosity during Pandemics:**  
Phenomenological Criticism

**WEBINAR**  
16&17 Sept 2020  
2PM Central  
European Time

**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS**  
Bruce Ellis Benson  
Tripp Fuller  
Sarah Lane Ritchie

**SOCIETY FOR THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

**INSTITUTE OF PHILOSOPHY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF VIENNA**



### **Webinar Abstracts**

*Persecuted Tyrants with Christian Masks: Analyzing the Victimhood of Some Evangelical Authority Figures During a Pandemic*

**Jason W. Alvis**, University of Vienna

In recent weeks we have witnessed prominent Evangelical American Authority figures do and say things that past generations would have found unthinkable and irrational: An old-school pastor claims "there is no pandemic," urges people to break some laws (<https://www.christianpost.com/news/john-macarthur-urges-churches-to-challenge-govt-and-reopen-in-pandemic-andy-stanley-disagrees.html>), and demands that true Christians cannot vote for Democratic party candidates. A University President is released from his duties due to a perplexing sex scandal (<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-53897647>), and is accused of shady financial dealings. A prominent Evangelical leader and Trump advisor (<https://religionnews.com/2020/09/01/eric-metaxas-protester-menaced-punch-video-trump-rnc/>) admitted that he randomly punched a "foul-mouthed" protestor.

Although there are many ways to interpret such recent events, I will address how their specific brand of a political theology of power (which models authority based upon God as a dominatory figure) is motivated by what I call the "dialectic of victimhood", a culture war in which two sides fight for the status of being the most socially oppressed and marginalized. The claim to victimhood indeed is "our most dubious talent" (Grossman):

From virtue signaling in a "victimhood culture" (Campbell & Manning 2018), to "Penal Substitutionary Atonement" and a Manichean "Christian persecution complex" (Moss 2013), I conclude that these authority figures' theology cannot help but lead to their becoming victims of their own domination. What we believe angers God is a central predictor of our theology (Froese & Bader 2015), and Christianity may be the religion that turns our attention the most to a fundamental victimhood. How its practitioners understand that victimhood, and hopefully create a culture or "ferment" of suffering as "long-suffering" (Kreider 2016) surrounding it, is essential to the kinds of rationality they promote.

*The COVID Virus as Imposed Relevance*

**Michael Barber**, St. Louis University

The life-world, as Husserl and Schutz understood, is pragmatically oriented; we engage objects to dominate the world to realize purposes, structured according to systems of relevances, themselves ranked in relation to the fundamental anxiety that I will die and I fear to. For Schutz, this pragmatic dominance depends on the sense of "I can" by which one can repeat typical patterns of action, as one first learns from childhood experiences of locomotion, converting there into here through locomotion. As regards the covid virus, our set of intrinsic relevances encounters a major imposed relevance with which we must come to terms.

One possible response to this imposed relevance is to ignore it, to persist in and even expand one's projects of pragmatic mastery, to continue exercising uninhibitedly one's "I can," refusing to be constrained by others in one's movement, comportment, or face-wear. This pursuit of pragmatic mastery also seeks to subordinate non-pragmatic provinces of meaning (in Schutz's sense) such as religious experience or theoretical contemplation, which then serve only to enable one to ignore this imposed relevance, as this paper will illustrate.

However, the interruption of mastery within the pragmatic province of meaning of everyday life (in which mastery is the rule) by a major imposed relevance places everyday life on a continuum with non-pragmatic provinces of meaning, orienting it toward them insofar as they introduce distance (*epoché*) from pragmatic purposes, reduce the tension of consciousness and induce more passivity (compared to pragmatic everyday life), and reconfigure one's form of spontaneity (bodily action taken toward practical goals). This paper will develop the relationship between the virus-disrupted everyday life and the non-pragmatic provinces of meaning of religious experience and theory. In this context, religious experience and theoretical contemplation become allies, enabling one to face and live with this momentous imposed relevance.

*The Bare Life and Faith in Christ. Some Remarks on the Spread of Covid-19.*

**Enrico Cerasi**, San Raffaele University

Opening an extensive and very tense debate, Giorgio Agamben – one of the greatest Europeans philosophers - read the security policies launched following the Coronavirus as the latest expression of the "biopolitics" announced by the French philosopher Micheal Foucault. The object of today politics, according to Agamben, is "bare life" and nothing but it. In the name of pure biological survival (bare life, precisely), not only governments but citizens themselves seem willing to sacrifice their religious and philosophical beliefs (for example the celebration of funerals), as well as their political and social rights.

Assuming that Agamben's diagnosis is correct, I wonder to what extent "bare life" is compatible with the Christian faith. Already in Luigi Pirandello's novels the bare life is presented in the framework of a totally nihilistic vision of reality, in which for God and faith there was no more space. But I believe that in Rudolf Bultmann's existentialist theology it is possible to see the vision of bare life as open to faith. It is man in his bare life, for Bultmann, who must decide for or against the existence of faith.

If it is true that the coronavirus epidemic is putting bare life in the foreground as the real concern of government policies and social behaviour itself, I believe that this political-cultural shift may have different meanings. From the point of view of Agamben (and those who followed Foucault in this direction), the fear is of a real totalitarian turning point in contemporary societies. The nihilism of Pirandello (who joined Italian Fascism in 1924) could be a confirmation in this direction. But perhaps the concern for bare life can also present a vision of existence open to the decision of faith.

*Paneloux: COVID Lessons From Camus*  
**Daniel Conway**, Texas A&M University

The good man, the man who infects hardly anyone, is the man who has the fewest lapses of attention. And it needs tremendous will-power, a never ending tension of the mind, to avoid such lapses. Yes, Rieux, it's a wearying business, being plague-stricken. But it's still more wearying to refuse to be it. (Jean Tarrou, in Albert Camus, *The Plague*)

Long before I was made aware of the COVID-19 virus, I decided to ask my undergraduate students to study *The Plague* [*La peste*] by Albert Camus (1947). I also scheduled this reading assignment for the end of the Spring 2020 semester, which, as it turned out, meant that the students would be reading and thinking about the quarantine of Oran while enduring their very own quarantine in Texas.

Alert to the rhetorical effect *on them* of Father Paneloux's sermons, my students were unusually adventurous in considering the merit of Camus' well-known opposition to hope. Typically, in a class like this one, Camus does not receive a sympathetic hearing. In the past, his opposition to hope and his relentless attention to the meaningfulness (or not) of the present moment have struck my students as extreme, if not downright manic. On this occasion, my students were similarly reluctant to give up their hopes for the future, but they were significantly more sympathetic to the imperative, especially as it is dramatized in the work of the sanitary brigades, to *rebel*, i.e., to create meaning for themselves in the here and now. Even if they were not yet willing to experiment with a hope-less existence, they understood that some expressions of hope, e.g., those encouraged by Father Paneloux, can be as devastating in their own right as the onset of plague.

*The Levels of (Ir)Rationality during Pandemics: the Case of Üfürükçü*  
**Sevgi Demiroglu**, Independent Researcher ([itissevgi@gmail.com](mailto:itissevgi@gmail.com))

On 11 May 2020, the Kayseri Chamber of Medicine in Turkey requests the citizens to stay home and not to go to *üfürükçü*, referring to a person who is thought to protect or heal people directly with his/her breath or own systematic instructions. This

announcement through the Chamber's social media account gets criticized and found saddening as a sign of returning 'back' to dogmatic ways of approaching diseases. As 30 households get quarantined in the neighborhood, the residents deny the news that *üfürükçü* woman spread Coronavirus (DHA, 2020; Evcı, 2020). The newspapers write that there was no case of *üfürükçü* but the case of a woman who visited a house of condolence. Regardless of the news, *üfürükçü* remains a dominant figure in the social discourse competing alongside modern science and political decisions during the pandemic. The rise of *üfürükçü* figure during the time of trial for medicine and modern reasoning is not a new phenomenon as seen in Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar's 1919 novel *We Took Refuge in God* and narratives on healing through religiosity (Hoşrik, 2014; Hoşrik et al., 2017). Providing significant insights for the current case, these examples show how the individual finds his faith to be the closest trustable reasoning source in uncertainty and how the political public sphere (Calhoun, 2008) urges the individual to seek its own medium for reaching the alternative ideal savior especially when the former admits its ambiguities. Mainly focusing on the case of *üfürükçü* in Kayseri and supporting this case with earlier examples of *üfürükçü* figures rising in the individual pursuit of protection and healing, I portray various levels of (ir)rationality with relation to the crisis with secularism and post-secularist discourses (Abraham & Parmaksız, 2015) as well as personal mediation towards the unknown during the uncertain times. With this agenda, I present the repercussions of identifying *üfürükçü* in a political public sphere, and continue my portrayal with the very emergence of *üfürükçü* as a mediator of reasoning for the individual and the impact of this figure on emphasizing religiosity and establishing ir/rationality nourished by the lack of solution and trust in the modern reasoning during the global fight with the 'invisible enemy'.

#### References

- Abraham, I., & Parmaksız, U. (2015). Australia and Turkey in Postsecular Perspectives. In *Reconciling Cultural and Political Identities in a Globalized World* (pp. 91-111). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Calhoun, C. (2008). Secularism, citizenship, and the public sphere. *Hedgehog Review*, 10(3), 7-21.
- DHA. (2020, May 14). 'Üfürükçü kadın ev ev gezip Corona bulaştırdı' iddiası ortalığı karıştırdı! Gerçek ortaya çıktı. *Milliyet*. Retrieved from: <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/gundem/ufurukcu-kadin-ev-ev-gezip-corona-bulastirdi-iddiasi-ortaligi-karistirdi-gercek-ortaya-cikti-6212410>
- EVCİ, M. (2020, May 14). Kent bu iddia ile çalkalanıyor: Üfürükçü kadın mahalleye virüs mü bulaştırdı?. *Sözcü*. Retrieved from: <https://www.sozcu.com.tr/2020/gundem/kent-bu-iddia-ile-calkalaniyor-ufurukcu-kadin-mahalleye-virus-mu-bulastirdi-5814702/>
- Gürpınar, H R. (2020). *Hakka Sığındık -İşitilmedik Bir Vaka*. Istanbul: Everest Yayınları.
- Hoşrik, E. M., Cüceloğlu, A. E., & Erpolat, S. (2017). Therapeutic effects of Islamic intercessory prayer on warts. *Journal of religion and health*, 56(6), 2053-2060.
- Hoşrik, M. E. (2014). *Dua - kÜTSAL mı, Bilimsel mi? (Prayer - Sacred, or Scientific?)* Istanbul: Okuyan Us.

*Virally masked transcendence: Once again flying too close to the sun*  
**Todd DuBose**, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology

This discussion explores both viral and nonviral forms of transcendence as inherently embedded in what are apparently irrational responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. |

begin with a contextualization of the pandemic as nested in an event of undecidability as I share my own personal experience of having survived COVID-19. I then reframe what is irrational to be varying expressions of transcendence, which I define as the lived experience and comportment of over, beyond, above and other, some forms of which are viral themselves and can proverbially could lead us too close to the sun. After discerning viral from nonviral transcendence, and differentiating masking for safety and masking to disguise dormant desires to be as the gods, I conclude these reflections by suggesting how the phenomenologist of transcendence is also a chaplain that may be able to offer consolation during such global changing times through walking with us into an experience of transcendence as radical immanence.

*O Reason, Where Art Thou? The Rationality of Conversion and a Pedagogical Response to the Pandemic*

Yu-Ming Stanley Goh, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University

The Covid-19 global pandemic has been at the forefront of our consciousness for the better part of the past months, affecting almost all aspects of our lives in ways that we are only beginning to realise. Beyond the immediate areas of concern, like health and the economy, the reality of and discourse on the pandemic betrays deeper epistemological and phenomenological effects that may linger long after the virus has run its course. This paper will engage with this discourse by examining the unreflective, atomistic approach to reality that has grown alongside the neoliberal push for individual freedom through the market economy. I contend that this has made for uncritical consumption of information which has led to dangerous responses to the pandemic like those who deny its very existence or others who refuse to take measures to contain the spread. While an immediate reaction to this would be to seek to change this approach through a demonstration of alternative ways of knowing, this may end up to be counter-productive as many may dig into their positions and resist such alternatives. I suggest a response that is based on the idea of conversion, which recognises the communities to which individuals belong and which also creates the conditions for the possibility of durable internal transformation that is both critical and relational. To achieve this, I lean on the works of theologian Bernard Lonergan and educator Paulo Freire to demonstrate how a rationality of conversion can bring the religious frame into perspective in our approach to the current situation. The paper will conclude with some pedagogical connections and suggestions on how conversion can be supported and formed.

*Pandemics: The Blind Spot of Reason*

Olga Louchakova-Schwartz, University of California at Davis and Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley

After a brief review of the work of the Society for the Phenomenology of Religious Experience, this concise presentation will introduce one of our operating concepts, which is the idea of connection between religious experience, logic, and reasoning. I begin with establishing an empirical distinction between an interpretation of experience as religious experience, and the forms of religious experience which include originary self-giving intuitions. These types of intuitions ground ontological validities, i.e., metaphysical assumptions about the nature of reality (cf. Flood, *The Truth Within*, 2013; Louchakova-Schwartz, "Alienic Spiritualities," 2020 forthcoming). At the same time, it has been

established that many forms of logic are essentially grounded in metaphysics (see e.g. Zalta, *Logic and Metaphysics*, 2005; Rush, *The Metaphysics of Logic*, 2014; cf. Kripke's "semantic worlds"). Husserl (cf. Lotze) believed that intensional contents of acts of consciousness have a close connection with the concept of ontological validity. The first observations of the metaphysical vector in logic and predication go back to Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics* and *Metaphysics* (see e.g., Cobb-Stevens, "Aristotelian Themes", 2002; Lewis, "Predication", 2011; Sokolowski, "Aristotle and Husserl," 2012). In recent studies, many argue that the realistic metaphysics at the roots of logic must not be limited to the metaphysics of observable objects, but include non-observable objects (e.g., in physics), absences, abstract objects, or non-objects and relationships (see e.g., Sellars, "The Lever", 1981; Zalta, *Intensional Logic*, 1988; Merlo, "Logic of grounding", 2020, etc.). Insofar as the structure of thinking corresponds to the structure of the world, the forceful bracketing out of metaphysical intuitions of any kind, and in particular, of a religious kind, ends up in creating ruptures in our picture of the world, and consequently, in reasoning, and even in logic *per se*.

Of course, this rather lengthy set of assumptions is semi-hypothetical; each step in the argument requires detailed proofs. However, we can adopt it as a working hypothesis, and with this in mind, take a look at the situation of pandemics. I will present data showing that even though pandemics are the main factor shaping societies and histories, medicine and science pay them remarkably little attention. No attention has been given to the ways plagues relate to the consciousness of afflicted societies (Huremović, "Pandemics," 2019). In the current COVID19 pandemics, the rate of the death toll per current year (1 mln.) is astoundingly the same as that of the medieval "black death" plague; there is no adequate or full information about the spread of the virus (<https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus>), and the countries with the highest scientific output (US, India, China, from <https://www.natureindex.com/annual-tables/2020/country/>) do not have control over the spread ("bend the curve" criterion). In this situation, it appears correct to suggest that we are facing a crisis of reason which the current pandemics only brings to visibility.

In history, societies deal with rapidly spreading pandemics at first with great interest, horror, and panic, and then, as soon as infection begins to subside, with lack of interest, until the new wave of extinctions is knocking at the door. At present, we are repeating these vicious cycles. In light of Husserl's early genetic analysis of sciences (*Prolegomena*, 1913, Ch. 2), one can see that a) our collective reason has failed to come up with what appears to be a logically necessary maxim, that is, a normative proposition which would assert that **humanity should not be a subject to massive fatality events due to emergent infectious agents**, and b) we discern no ontological region of sciences which would be concerned with the endurance of life *per se*. As a result, our practical sciences are inefficient, and eidetic and regional (scientific) ontologies are insufficient. The situation with pandemics only highlights how unreasonable we are regarding our own life. We deal with pandemics as a synthetic event, a subject of partisan and nuclear responses—and our analytic, fragmented metaphysics is here foundationally flawed. By contrast, reason rooted in the metaphysical unity of life (available in religious experiencing) may give us a clue to dealing with emergent existential threats.

*Subjectivity in the Age of Pandemics*

James Mensch, Charles University Prague

The current pandemic that originated in a “wet” market in Wuhan has often been compared to the threat we face with climate change. The former originated in the trade in wild animals, which has driven many species to the point of extinction. In fact, we face an unprecedented rate of species loss due to pressures on habitats, pollution, and human predation. The threat of climate change originates with our uncontrolled use of fossil fuels, which, in making large parts of the globe uninhabitable, imperils our own species. The rationality (or lack thereof) that is exhibited here concerns our relation to the earth. We regard it simply as a means for our purposes. Separating ourselves from it, we follow the Biblical injunction to have “dominion” over it. In this, we express a conception of subjectivity that is exemplified by Descartes and Kant. To overcome this, I argue, we need a different sense of what it means to be a subject, one that takes it as a sustaining ground and points to the earth as the ultimate subject.

### *Energating the Divine*

**Andrew Oberg**, University of Kochi, Japan

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended our planet in ways that could not have been foreseen, reshaping populations, lifestyles, economies and movements, reversing trends towards globalization that were previously thought unstoppable. Yet even as the world has shifted, the “worlds” of our conceptual habitations have not, and this is particularly the case with regards to religious beliefs. It is from within this context that the present study seeks clarity.

Beginning at the beginning, the paper sets out from a re-examination of the foundational creation myth of Western societies, and argues that a more careful reading of the actual presentation of that account, along with some situational explanations, results in a view of divinity that is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. The article then transitions to the importance of the notional in grounding and generating social behaviors, employing both phenomenological and psychological research and analytical methods. Intuitions are seen to be central in the personally-based methodology undertaken, and the conceptual-perceptual brace of the notion/event is offered as a theoretical construct. Finally, an attempt at application is made through a return to the earlier explication of a reduced idea of divinity, and subtle gestures at some possibly resulting ethical calls are given. Although the virus has taken charge of our lives, and although even God/“God” might not be in absolute control, the “world” is yet ours to (re)make; we find ourselves having received an invitation we can no longer afford to ignore.

### *How to Wait for the End of the World: Aquinas and Heidegger on the Thessalonians*

**Mirela Oliva**, University of St. Thomas

In his letters to the *Thessalonians*, Saint Paul characterizes the Christian life through the modality in which we wait for that moment. For Paul, how we wait for the end of the world partly depends on the fact that we do not know when Christ will come again. This paper will analyze the authentic Christian life in expectation of the *parousia* focusing on Aquinas' and Heidegger's reading of the *Thessalonians*. The two interpretations share a common ground, which, I argue, is phenomenological. It comes not from Aquinas' brilliant deductive reasoning, but from a different kind of demonstration that he borrows from Saint Paul: the “demonstration of spirit and power”, namely the manifestation of Christian

faith in Paul's relationship with the Thessalonians. The Christian life depicted by Heidegger and Aquinas is neither panic nor apathy. It is a comprehensive and radical transformation of one's life that also transfigures human rationality: The Christian is called to lucidity, sobriety, and work.

In the first part of the paper, I examine Heidegger's phenomenological approach to eschatology, concentrating on enactment. I show that not knowing the moment of the end of the world is essential in the relation between the What and the How of the enactment of Christian *kerygma*. The authentic Christian expectation of the end of the world is marked by the right combination between anguish and joy that conduces to sobriety and good work.

*STABILITAS IN CONGREGATIONE: Navigating the Stay-at-Home Order with Benedictine Stability During the Coronavirus Pandemic*

**Emil Salim**, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Reformed

During the coronavirus pandemic, while many people struggle in navigating the stay-at-home (SHO) order to help contain the infection spread, the Benedictine monks by contrast have always voluntarily chosen to stay put in their monastic enclosure usually for the rest of their lives. Following the monastic manual called "The Rule of St. Benedict," they take the vows of obedience, conversion of life, and stability.

In this paper, I argue that Benedictine stability might provide a rational modulation for some people, both religious and non-religious, to cope with and flourish during the pandemic vis-à-vis SHO. The vow of stability provides a rationality for the monks to stay in their physical monastery despite the challenges they face being confined in the same space for a prolonged period of time. The rationality comes in three movements, correspondent to the movements of people who are becoming monks. First, there is a rationality for moving from the *civitas* to the physical cloister. Second, there is a rationality for moving from the cloister to the congregation or community. Third, there is a rationality for moving from the community to character development.

I will not argue that those who follow SHO are more rational than those who don't or *vice versa*. Instead, I will argue that those who end up following SHO, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, can rationalize SHO by learning from the Benedictine vow of stability. First, stability in a physical space reimagined as a kind of retreat from the society might be beneficial for rejuvenation and in pursuing what one values. Second, stability negatively discourage people from escaping a difficult reality and positively encourages them to overcome challenges in the institutions where they belong. Third, stability can be seen as a necessary context for the betterment of character.

*Christian Bioethics and Resilience of Soviet heritage in Russia during COVID-19: Does "Science-And-Religion" Concept Exist In Medicine?*

**Nataliya Shok**, Privolzhsky Research Medical University



Pandemic placed mass restrictions on human behavior during the outbreak of COVID-19, and poses many ethical concerns. World media showed Russian religious leaders as arrogant people ignoring medical experts' considerations on pandemic and continued their customary practices. Fundamentalist public assumptions began to grow. Was that true? Religion and instrumental rationality relationships in Russia have significantly different epistemological and ideological roots grounded in history and culture in contrast with the United States. It requires a thorough historical analysis in triad "state - medicine – religion", framed with the Soviet secularization specifics and "socialized medicine" practice.

Ethical questions in medicine emerge from serious contradictions: costs and profit, private liabilities and universal morality, science and religion. Many moral questions in medicine remain unresolved during pandemic. Modern science achievements have strong impact; still we face secular morality, law and scientific rationality weakness providing comprehensive moral guidelines in case of pandemic. Thus, the global public health disaster again raises two questions: (1) the social role of religion, and (2) science and/or religion relationships. The author proposes to consider the philosophical concept "Christian bioethics" (T. Engelhardt) investigating the shape of Russian religiosity and medicine. Russian pandemic experience in "religion-science-society" triangle connected with bioethical issues (no institutionalized secular bioethics, and undeveloped concept of Christian bioethics) may inform global agenda in "science and religion" relations.

*W.E.B. Du Bois and Ecclesial Rationality in "Of the Faith of the Fathers"*

**Walter Scott Stepanenko**, John Carroll University

The COVID-19 global pandemic has spotlighted several instances of churches violating state-issued and scientifically recommended stay at home orders designed to keep populations healthy and to prevent further spread. While these instances are uncommon responses to these orders, they nonetheless raise questions about the rationality of ecclesial belonging in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this paper, I draw on the work of W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, specifically in the chapter "Of the Faith of the Fathers," to articulate a conception of ecclesial belonging and rationality capable of adjudicating the difference between rational ecclesial responses and irrational ecclesial responses to the COVID-19 pandemic. I argue that the view Du Bois expresses in "Of the Faith" renders ecclesial belonging a social epistemological process engaging a complex, fluid multiplicity of knowers of various scales. I argue that in this view ecclesial rationality involves the construction of a concatenation of internal and external practices individual believers and groups can traverse so long as they consistently satisfy the demands of the respective practices. I suggest that what is irrational about religious-based defiance of COVID-19 stay at home orders is the church sanctioned severance of internal from external practices. I suggest that this behavior is supported by a failure to grasp the demands of ecclesial rationality rather than embrace them, and that this conception of rationality may have been eroded by the value-neutral skepticism of secular rationality rather than the value-laden trust-based rationality of religious belonging.

*Essentiality and Proximity in Times of Crises: Anthropodicy beyond the Limits of Reason Alone*

**Simeon Theojaya**, Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Reformed, Indonesia

COVID-19 pandemic exposes (1) global dependency on the so-called 'essential workers' and (2) the susceptibility of social dynamics. (1) Primordial issue of essentiality keeps haunting us today because essentiality is still determined by socio-economic functions rather than by people's worth as human beings. Since religious (Christian) answer to this arduous pursuit has been reversed by Feuerbach and challenged by Marx, I propose to see religion as an ideology and to examine the authority of reason over ideology. (2) The outbreak reveals that our lives are vulnerable and deeply intertwined. As religion has played immense roles in the pandemic's upsurge and its control, I envision anthropodicy as an impetus to accommodate solidarity and elaborate on Lévinas's idea of proximity to promote social responsibility.