



Study of Religion
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

‘Ecology and the Unbuffered Self: Identity, Agency, and Authority in a Time of Pandemic’, in *Pandemic, Ecology and Theology: Perspectives on COVID-19*, ed. Alexander J. B Hampton (London: Routledge, 2020), forthcoming.

Abstract

This consideration characterises the crisis and opportunity of COVID-19 in three parts: First, it sets out the problematic conceptualisation of nature in the modern social imaginary by focusing upon the buffered self in terms of its sense of identity, agency and authority. Second, it sets out how the pandemic fundamentally disrupts these three facets of the self in terms of the fragilization of economic values, the notion of unique human agency, and the limitation of the authority of discursive reason. Finally, it concludes by outlining the opportunity for a renewed relationship with nature by proposing the recovery of the premodern concepts of metaphysical participation, teleology, and rational intuition. In doing so, the pandemic crisis is considered in the wider context of the ecological crisis of the modern age, and as an opportunity for rethinking our collective concept of nature, and the place of our selves within it.

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