
Coronavirus Covid-19. Sociologist Mario Pollo: “From uncertainty and fear to a new humanity and authentic strength”

It's an invisible, unpredictable, elusive enemy. This insidious enemy has impacted our lives by imposing an abrupt change in our habits, shattering most of our certainties. We are learning to live by the day, adapting to the progression of contagions. But widespread uncertainty can bring about new self-awareness and the sound recovery of what is essential. Provided it does not turn into anxiety about the future. We discussed the subject with **Mario Pollo**, expert in Educational Anthropology, former professor of sociology and pedagogy at Rome's Lumsa University, according to whom the first "lesson" of the coronavirus emergency is:

“the future will not depend only on the present.”

“The current circumstances - the sociologist remarked - disrupt our beliefs, linked to a form of positivism/determinism whereby certain actions in the present can determine and "control" the future. According to Euripides a god suddenly shuts the known path to usher in the unknown, the unpredictable. Confronting elements of unpredictability in human life leads us to another forgotten notion, namely, the sense of limit. Our life is marked by two natural and unavoidable limits: birth and death. Instead

we consider ourselves to be a-mortal beings



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[For Pollo "we are rediscovering our human frailty, the fact of being vulnerable and that we are all united by a finiteness that we must accept. *We think we are strong because we remove this condition, while it is only by accepting it that we will be able to develop a new humanity and authentic*](#)

strength." The isolation imposed by the measures for virus containment, for the sociologist, "helps us rediscover that forced separation from others - who can constitute a danger for us, as we are for them - shows that our "own self" is always bound to a "you" and an "us", in a relationship of belonging to a whole of which we are a distinct and conscious part but without which we could not exist and which we are all responsible for." *The burden of this "absence" paradoxically "makes our fellow others more present and forces us to think not only of our own well-being but also of theirs."* "We are also rediscovering - continues Pollo - that life is not only made up of exteriority; this can help us reconfigure our existence by rediscovering the profound dimension of interiority and essentiality, ultimately revealing a stronger unity with the whole." "Faced with an unexpected event - notes the sociologist - **we may seek refuge in a form of denial**, underestimating the problem and neglecting safety regulations in order to continue living as before, putting ourselves and others at risk." **There are also those who, by contrast, "are overcome by anxiety and panic**, and in turn spread groundless fears even through the most implausible fake news." The other option is **"to fully rely on scientific rationality**: although to date no specific therapies exist, I know that by following all instructions from the health authorities I will have a high chance of not becoming infected by the coronavirus". This, for Pollo, **is the preferable option, even if it comes at a cost of sacrifice**, accompanied by the recognition and acceptance of our own fragility "as a constitutive part of ourselves". In short, we must not dismiss fear nor be overwhelmed by it. Instead, we must live it in a healthy and constructive way because, as old mountain guides teach us,

"not fearing fear is an important defence mechanism."

Giovanna Pasqualin Traversa