

## WILL WE RESPECT KNOWLEDGE?

The term “knowledge society” is employed with great ballyhoo to characterize contemporary society. The approach of many authors regarding the importance that education, scientific research and technological development have in the progress of mankind is based on this concept. However, we can notice how, in parallel, during the current Covid-19 pandemic there are innumerable amounts of people who prefer to ignore knowledge and pay attention to conspiracy theories, tall tales, distorted statistics or totally baseless beliefs. All of this causes that defeating the virus becomes an ever more difficult goal to attain.

Even more dramatic turns to be, due to the unimaginable consequences it brings about, the situation ensuing from the lack of consideration and respect to that which has been learned about global warming, its origins, and its possible derivations. Recently, reports were released of the three working groups that will constitute the basis for the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which is periodically elaborated by hundreds of experts summoned under the umbrellas of the United Nations Environment Program and the World Meteorological Organization. The experts review and evaluate thousands of papers published about the subject in order to generate the reports. From them it follows that the measures agreed upon in Paris by 197 countries in 2015 are not being observed but to a very limited extent and that the goal established, of a temperature increase above preindustrial times of 1.5°C will be unattainable.

To seriously consider the destruction of life on our planet, which has been so generous and has allowed so many marvels as we know and enjoy, is something definitively pre-emptory. As a sample of the dangers that lie in wait, suffice it to observe phenomena of an obvious anthropic origin such as the worsening of summers with its terrible consequences, the growing draught and floods, the polar thawing... changes that most likely will become irreversible.

There is no magic formula whatsoever. Numerous concrete measures have been proposed to alleviate the future situation of the climate. Some will fail, other will succeed. But the rules of the economy, the lack of respect towards the fellow man and knowledge, as well as easy profiteering, make the road steeply uphill and harder all the time.

As the up to now unmanageable goal of limiting global warming, other objectives equally vital to humanity are limited or turned impossible due to the lack of respect for knowledge. Such is the case of the intention of the sustainable development goal to reach hunger zero by the end of the next decade. Due to the indifference, to the indolence, to the lack of interest, to the pandemic or to selfishness, poverty and hunger have increased in the world instead of diminishing.

The effects of the coming famine will be restricted initially to the more deprived, but its reach is unpredictable. On their side, the effects of warming, as those of the pandemic, reach everybody. Although man has accumulated, thanks to science and technology, enough knowledge to fight the evils that menace him, he does not seem to be part of a society that deserves to be called “of knowledge”. On the contrary, it suffers of a mixture of obscurantism on the one hand, and on the other, of a lack of respect towards the values that this very society has been capable of generating thru science.

If the question posed in the title of this editorial cannot be answered affirmatively, there will be very small hope for the coming generations, within a much narrower timeframe that may realize, to be able to avoid the havoc, and even the hecatomb, that the lack of consideration of knowledge foretell.

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