

SAVIOLA TALKS :

The need for a new paradigm



We live in an era of profound change characterised by the emergence of global challenges: poverty, inequality, food and water scarcity, exploitation of natural resources, global warming. Climate change is an icon par excellence in this game, and if we do not win it, we will suffer the consequences and mortgage the future of our children and grandchildren.

According to Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen, the relationship between human beings and the rest of nature has changed profoundly over the last three centuries, with an impact demonstrated by the growing demand of the population for energy, food, goods and services, information and communications, together with the growing production of waste. Economic growth - which has multiplied the value of world production by 6 in the last 60 years - and demographic pressure - which has risen from 3 to 7 billion people in the same period - are increasingly affecting the environment. Estimates of our total impact on Nature show that in order to maintain our current living standards we should have the resources of a planet 1.6 times larger than Earth. It is what is called "impact inequality".

What constitutes sustainable development and economic growth is to take full account of the impact of our interactions with Nature and to balance our demand with Nature's capacity to do so. We need an equally profound change in our concept of sustainability.

A first important aspect is to change the measure of economic success to move towards a more sustainable path. The introduction of natural

capital into state accounting systems would be a crucial step forward so that wealth, including natural parameters, can become our yardstick of progress. It is necessary to add the value of non-market activities by subtracting the environmental and social costs of productive activities, developing the virtuous system of the circular economy able to consider the relationships between the productive and environmental system.

But perhaps the most radical and decisive change is cultural: an anthropological paradigm shift is needed. With the principle of Integral Ecology, the encyclical *Laudato Si* by Pope Francis proposes a universal paradigm that allows us to reason and speak in a harmonious and positive way of the path that humanity is called to take inside this house that we all inhabit and that is our Planet.

There is, in fact, no true ecology without a vision of the human being, of his/her identity, responsibility and freedom. Each of us is responsible for safeguarding the coexistence and good of humanity in a proper relationship with the environment. Adopting an integral ecology, therefore, means working on both sides: the human being and the environment. In other words, it means integrating humanity into the environment, in a harmonious and appropriate system of connections, where man can only fully exercise his responsibility on the basis of his own dignity and respect for the world in which he lives.

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