



**Fondazione  
Umberto Veronesi**  
– per il progresso  
delle scienze

[fondazioneveronesi.it](http://fondazioneveronesi.it)

# 11<sup>th</sup> World Conference “Science for Peace” 15 - 16 November 2019 **An appeal to those who do know they don't know**

**Ignorance is fascinating and dangerous at the same time: it gives people the freedom not to strive to find answers to complicated questions, not to confront different opinions, not to question their beliefs and, sometimes, their well-established views.** Ignorance is therefore a vice to fight against because if it is not matched by awareness and curiosity, it does not develop a longing for self-fulfillment but, rather, it lazily rests on its deficiencies. This unconscious ignorance is a source of problems and dangers for its being sterile: it does not generate anything but its continuous, discrediting enduring in time.

Nevertheless, ignorance may even show a noble side: when it is grounded on the sound foundations of knowledge, when it goes side by side with that restlessness that is born out of awareness and curiosity, then can ignorance generate further knowledge. Actually, scientific knowledge is aware that it does not know and it therefore feeds on curiosity. This awareness stimulates scientists and researchers to study more and more in depth, and to question the theories and the knowledge that are taken for granted. Such conscious ignorance acts as the driver of science, generating new forms of knowledge.

Although we live in the information age and in a time when mass schooling has reached levels we would not imagine until a few decades ago, we are witnessing a worrying discrediting trend against scientific culture. Scientific knowledge is now threatened by the arrogance of those who believe they can understand and master any flow of information, on any topic of any subject, hence their refusal to acknowledge the authority and role of experts. We are therefore witnessing a paradox



whereby the high availability of knowledge and information may lead to the assumption that one may master unknown topics under the illusion that experts (who have produced much of that information and knowledge, it goes without saying) are now useless and, perhaps, even harmful.

Since the risks caused by a return to cultural Middle Ages are therefore very topical, scientists have a civil duty to bring their knowledge to bear to the benefit of society as a whole. Experts are called upon to commit themselves for their knowledge to be shared by as many people as possible. Only an educated and well-informed community can take truly informed and responsible decisions that are grounded on sound foundations.

## On the occasion of the 11<sup>th</sup> World Conference “Science for Peace”, the Fondazione Umberto Veronesi makes an appeal

### » **To scientists, experts, universities and research centers for them to**

- Increase their commitment to continuous dialogue with policy makers on issues that concern citizens' lives;
- Promote critical thinking, scientific culture and the dissemination of their knowledge within society and in any setting, starting from the schools;
- Promote workshops, open labs, scientific cafes, one-to-one meetings with professors and researchers to understand how far scientific research and science in general have gone;
- Use a language that is understandable yet rigorous, even in popular settings.

### » **To institutions for them to**

- Invest more in the school system;
- Keep alive a fruitful and constant dialogue with scientists and experts in the various disciplines, and welcome the proposals from the initiatives launched by the scientific community such as the appeal “Scienza in Parlamento” (Science in Parliament), signed by the Umberto Veronesi Foundation among others;
- Involve citizens in cultural initiatives, thus promoting a true “scientific citizenship”;
- Undertake to assign tasks and positions on the basis of proven competencies only.



## » To mass media for them to

- Take on the responsibility for screening news and opinions sources and to report only the declarations of the best experts in each field;
- Stimulate the curiosity of the audience with far-reaching cultural and scientific programs using a popular and yet precise language.

## » To individual citizens for them to

- Daily commit themselves to enlarging their knowledge with a critical approach;
- Ask institutions and mass media for better guarantees regarding the exactness and impartiality of information;
- Undertake to convey only those pieces of information, the source and reliability of which they are sure of.

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Milano, 16<sup>th</sup> November 2019

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