



The conscious practice of resilience in the pandemic context

MSc. Francisco Martínez Báez

Musician, Culturologist and Art Historian

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua, Managua

rankartista@hotmail.com

<https://doi.org/10.5377/torreon.v10i27.10833>

Throughout history, humanity has faced hundreds of pandemics, from the plague of Athens in 430 BC to Covid-19 in the 21st century. All pandemics are lethal when a person is uninformed. The problem of this century is conspiracy theories, as well as the production and consumption of false news. That is why critical thinking is necessary to distinguish true and accurate information from that which is false. In the era of communication, information and knowledge are necessary to learn how to properly select the information sources about the COVID19, otherwise, we can fall into the infodemic, which means, according to the WHO, the search of non-official sources about the origin of the virus, on the one hand, and on the other hand, the contagion and not correct treatment of the disease” (Fernandez, 2020, p. 35).

As we have said before, humanity has managed to survive several extreme situations such as wars, natural disasters, and pandemics. In armed conflicts, the disputing parties know whom they are facing and how to deal with it; natural disasters such as drought often come almost without warning; and diseases?

In ancient times leprosy was one of the most fearsome diseases and even perceived with some social terror, many times those who fell ill were condemned to severe social alienation. That is total exile along with the fierce condemnatory social label, which was attributed to sorcery, divine punishment, evil spirits, et cetera. According to Zulueta: “Since very remote times and in all cultures, this disease has awakened special images of horror, fear, repulsion, disgust, and stigma intimately associated with it” (p.181).

In the Middle Ages the bubonic plague or black plague was called so, not only because of the theocentric dark period and all the culture of death that existed, as “...the relationship of men with death itself and the relationship of the living with the dead marked the medieval society with a multiplicity of attitudes and reactions, often translated through the image” (Jouan & Souz, 2018, p. 239). This collective perception was reinforcing the myth of the underworld, especially in the dying, in whose pathology distilled hemorrhages in the skin of black color, and the imminent fatality. “[This] ... epidemic that devastated the Mediterranean countries in the mid-fourteenth century, and specifically Europe, produced mortality rates that were higher than those of any other plague, since it spread at great speed,” according to Gomez and Moclán. Bubonic plague wreaked havoc of great magnitude, to the point of causing more than twenty-five million deaths; half of the European population. No war had ever caused such a catastrophe. The dimension of this plague was metaphysical, and considered by the thought of the time, as an expression of the punishment of the divine wrath, (Deville, 2012).

Forensic anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians have identified the bubonic plague of the 14th century as the cause of death of bodies buried 3800 years ago. This strain is the oldest and is the same as for some of the deadliest epidemics in our history. Justinian Plague (541-543) was the first pandemic with reports of typical buboes and occurred during the rule of Justinian I. Then came the plague of China from 1890 to 1910.

The torment of the pandemics not only ends in the 19th century but continues in the 20th century with the Spanish Flu of 1918, considered the most devastating in history. It is estimated that it affected a third of the world’s population, and more than 2.5% of the sick died. This pandemic, according to Lüthy, Viviana and Kantor occurred in two main waves: 1918 and 1919, and was caused by an outbreak of the influenza A virus, subtype H1N1. During the four-year conflict of World War I, 10 million people died; paradoxically, according to Carmona and Tribiño, from spring to autumn-winter 1918, when a flu pandemic with such severity and lethality spread around the world, it is estimated that it caused between 25 and 65 million deaths.

Nicaragua in the 19th century suffered from a devastating epidemic. In his 1886 testimony, C. W. Doubleday maintains that, in the Filibuster War of 1854, Asian cholera appeared with a violence that was undoubtedly due to the deficiency in sanitary regulations (...) The dead in the diverse encounters of the surroundings of the city was left to be the food of the vultures, which constantly flew in great bandages that covered the air.

In the book entitled *Managua through History, 1846-1946*, by Gratus Halftermeyer, it is stated that in 1854 morbus cholera appeared in Managua; but it was Walker’s invasion and the National War that spilled a lot of brotherly blood. At that time, the dead were buried without

the mortuary protocols, sometimes for fear of being infected and other times due to the high number of victims. At that time, there was no adequate health system, Managua had just been elevated to city status in 1846, and on February 5, 1852, and as the Capital of the Republic of Nicaragua.

How have Nicaraguans faced the adversities? That resilient capacity is what you build to resist as difficulties have arisen along the way. We can ask: What can we do to not be depressed? How can we ensure that social distancing measures do not impede emotional expression? When we are truly used to hugging each other or shaking hands, we communicate with the other person. “We behave as if our reserve of signs of recognition is limited when, in fact, it is inexhaustible, and we distribute them with special parsimony since they are the most pleasant to receive” (Gisbert & Cuadra, 1996, p. 130). What to do in the next years, if the COVID19 persists?

The welcoming act of the third millennium for the global world, in which we are all immersed, is going through an unusual time, in some ways comparable to the results of the great warlike upheavals of the 20th century. Before the pandemic, a crisis of Western civilization is observed, which has its expression in the planetary, demographic, economic, and coexistence aspects among human beings. We may have lost the sense of life and everything is overshadowed, but human beings can adapt, which we call resilience, which is the capacity to recover, as long as there is in the individual an unbreakable determination.

The pandemic invites us to reflect on our model of development. Likewise, it teaches us that some fundamental components of spiritual well-being, if neglected, will become weak and vulnerable points with social, economic, and coexistence consequences that occur when the system is subjected to a shock. We must promote human development, based on creativity and innovation that helps us find answers to the challenges we face, especially concerning education.

By focusing on the socio-historical level, the model of resilience offers us an explanation of the phenomenon, by which a community subject reveals a greater capacity for overcoming traumas than an individual subject, the ...” resilience is born in physics to refer to the capacity of bodies to resist impacts and return to their initial form, and has been adopted by the social sciences” (Pinto, 2014, p. 20) It is not by chance that applied to a community and not to a single individual, the concept of resilience is gaining popularity in the analysis of the social dynamics of groups or communities affected by natural disasters or by events produced by human activities such as crises, diseases, social conflicts or wars. The results of some research highlight how greater or lesser resilience to traumatic events produces different or even opposite effects in less resilient communities, and therefore more fragile, as a result of the trauma constituted by a disaster. These communities stop developing and remain in a situation of permanent instability, or some cases, even collapse. Resilient social groups, on the other hand, survive, or even take

the opportunity of trauma as a chance to regenerate, strengthen themselves, and start a new life cycle.

On the educational level, in this aspect, the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are indeed being felt in the university. This new disease has meant pain and mourning at the departure of friends and family, but also a challenge to adapt to the new circumstances. The Roman jurist and philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 B.C. - 43 B.C.), said that “the life of the dead endures in the memory of the living”. As a result, higher education institutions -especially the state-owned had to react quickly with the implementation of a bio-security protocol, to apply different measures: temperature taking, constant hand washing, physical distancing among others, which are necessary to control the spread of the virus.

This has involved the participation and involvement of all authorities and the university community, who have been willing to care for and protect the lives of all its members.

In these circumstances, the university proposed a solution: how to attend to the students, so that they do not lose their school year? Beyond the changes in teaching practices and evaluations, imagine the many consequences that measures of physical distance can have on the actors of higher education: students, teachers, and administrators. Thus, UNAN-Managua’s effective response has allowed the definition of new teaching strategies, curricular adaptation, and the redefinition of timetables, integrated subjects, and online methodological orientations, all to creatively generate resilience strategies in the same actors.

On the other hand, numerous reports have been published in the media, but, there is little research on the effects of COVID-19 on higher education, which could provide evidence on the best practices adopted: what have been the effects of the pandemic on the teaching and learning assessment strategies implemented, what were the challenges encountered and the opportunities that have arisen in the study process in higher education?

There will always be questions that we cannot answer precisely, so does the coronavirus dictate the rules, does it determine social behavior, and has the epidemic changed our understanding of death? We cannot get caught up in hopelessness, nor can we get caught up in negativism. Resilience helps us find a way to highlight our strengths as members of society, to overcome the challenges that life poses to us. With this spirit of struggle in the face of adversity, we can overcome the pessimism, anguish, and despair that many proclaim these days. Friedrich Hebbel said: “There are people who would be comforted even from the end of the world, provided they had announced it.

REFERENCES

- Arvide Cambra, L. M. (2013). Prescripciones médicas de IBN Jatima para el tratamiento paliativo en la enfermedad de la Peste Bubónica. *European Scientific Journal, edition* vol.9, No.18, 13-19.
- Carmona Barrero, J. D., & Tribiño García, M. (2019). *Almendralejo y Tierra de Barrosen el primer tercio del Siglo XX (1898-1931)*. Actas de las X Jornadas de Historia de Almendralejo y Tierra de Barros. Almendralejo y Tierra de: Impresores de Almendralejo, S. L.
- Deville, P. (2012). *Peste & Cólera*. (T. d. Fajardo, Trad.). Editorial Anagrama.
- Doubleday, W. (1886). La Guerra Filibustera en Nicaragua. *MANUEL GRANIZO*, 1-44.
- Fernández Poncela, A. M. (2020). Infodemia: rumores, fake news, mitos. Sintaxis. *Revista científica del Centro de Investigación para la Comunicación Aplicada*, Año 2, 35-55.
- Gisbert, J., & Cuadra, J. (1996). The caresses in the class-room. *Enseñanza de las Ciencias de la Tierra*, (4.2),, 130-132.
- Gómez Miguelsanz, C., & Moclán Ramos, A. (2 de octubre de 2012). *La Peste Negra*. Madrid.
- Haindl U., A. L. (25 de septiembre de 2013). La Peste Negra. .
- Halftermeyer, G. (1946). *Managua a través de la historia, 1846-1946*. Hospicio.
- Hernández-Mesa, N., Hernández Llanes, J., & Betancourt, L. (2000). Las grandes epidemias de la Historia. De la peste de Atenas a la COVID-19. *Revista Habanera de Ciencias Médicas, Caridad*, 1-13.
- Jouan Dias, C., & Souz, A. d. (2018). Muerte y representación en la Edad Media: consideraciones sobre la imagen, la iconografía de la muerte y la influencia de la Peste Negra en el surgimiento de los temas macabros. *Miscelánea*, 239-258.
- Lüthy, S. A., Viviana, R., & Kantor, I. N. (2018). A Cien Años de la Gripe Española. *MEDICINA* No. 78, 113-118.
- Pinto Cortez, C. (2014). Resiliencia psicológica: una aproximación hacia su conceptualización, enfoques teóricos y relación con el abuso sexual infantil. *SUMMA Psicológica UST*, Vol. 11, N°2, , 19-33.
- Zulueta R, A. M. (1994). Evolución histórica, epidemiología y medidas de control. *Dermatología Venezolana*, vol. 32, n° 4 año , 181-190.