

# Transformation of the Sense of Knowledge and the University Subject through the TD Chair

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## Please cite this article as:

Adame, Domingo, „Transformation of the Sense of Knowledge and the University Subject through the TD Chair”, in Popa Tache, Cristina Elena, Hubert Landier, Leonardo da S.G. Martins da Costa & Mariana Thieriot Loisel (eds.), *For an International Transdisciplinary Chair: From Knowledge to the Future*, Volume II, ADJURIS – International Academic Publisher, Bucharest, Paris, Calgary, 2024, p. 14-30, <https://doi.org/10.62768/ADJURIS/2024/4/01>

## Abstract

*In this article I intend to show how the purpose of the modern university, as a guardian institution and transmitter of knowledge, was overwhelmed by the complex reality that humanity began to live from the twentieth century. From a method of critical analysis, I came to the conclusion of the urgency of transforming the sense of knowledge where the Subject who knows is part of knowledge, as proposed by the Transdisciplinary Methodology. In this way, it is possible to think of a future TD Chair.*

**Keywords:** *university, knowledge, subject, transdisciplinarity.*

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.62768/ADJURIS/2024/4/01>

## 1. Introduction

How to define the University today? Is there only one University? The first problem is that there is not a single definition for its current state, its essence or universality has ceased to be operational in a world that lives transformations at an increasingly accelerated speed, with increasingly acute social and political problems and where the concept of ‘human being’ has been stripped of the meaning it once had, to turn it into a fact of the economy and technoscience.

The University, a very classic and traditional institution with more than nine centuries of existence, faces dizzying changes marked by globalization, cultural diversity, and information and communication technologies. This situation occurs within the frame of inequality.

Perhaps the priority task today for the University is to think of herself by elucidating the conditions for the construction of knowledge, the training of professionals and her conception of the human condition for knowing and acting.

The disciplinary organization has a correlate in the genesis of the modern universities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this respect, the disciplines have a historic development that is ingrained in the history of society, but in addition it possesses an epistemological and paradigmatic dimension like the understanding of the ways of organizing disciplinary knowledge and their processes of closing and opening.

The notion of discipline, in this context, can be defined as an organizing category inside the scientific knowledge, instituting division and specialization. The organization of the knowledge into many disciplines has stimulated separate models, increasingly preventing the methodological and epistemological integration.

University knowledge has been predominantly disciplinary ‘whose autonomy imposed a process of relatively decontextualized production in relation to the daily needs of society. Following the logic of this process, the researchers determined the scientific problems to resolve, defining its relevancy and establishing the methodologies and the rhythms of inquiry... The University produces knowledge that society can apply or not, an alternative that, as socially relevant as it, may be indifferent or irrelevant for the produced knowledge’<sup>1</sup>.

Hyper-specialization and disciplinary compartmentalization impede access to broader and related knowledge. Disciplinary teaching is increasingly inadequate and is no longer suitable for cooperation between the different disciplines, between the various centers of production of culture and knowledge, between the different scientific, technical, humanist artistic and spiritual fields. The disciplinary fragmentation and the division of systemic problems maintain a theoretical superficiality, strongly conditioning the social development of countries.

The main objective of current education is to inculcate the desire to have control of reality and accumulate goods, in this lies triumph, success. There are disguises that hide the underlying truth and only rarely does a professor or researcher appear who questions dogmas, however established they may be, to energize the paralyzing and endemic behavior of the human species.

That is why education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as Jacques Delors noted in his report to UNESCO, will have to be based on four pillars if we aspire to transform our present condition: Learn to know, learn to do, learn to live together and learn to be.

Although the model of super-specialization is accepted as a certain dogma of formation ‘appropriate’ to be good citizens, from an open and transdisciplinary perspective we can realize that there is a universe of experiences and

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<sup>1</sup> Boaventura de Souza Santos. *A Universidades no seculo XXI: para uma reforma democrática e emancipatória da Universidades*. Sao Paulo. Cortez editora, 2010, p. 41.

sources of knowledge, but above all of wisdom, which is indispensable to complement, deepen and enrich our daily process of Being and Knowing. Some of these sources of transdisciplinary self-training are, for example every day and family experiences, especially those transmitted by grandparents to their descendants; feminine, intuitive and heartfelt knowledge; stories, myths and legends; experiences and wisdom coming from our body and its relationship with knowledge that also live and are recreated in nature.

By observing with interest what happens to humanity in our time we perceive that, as a society, we have been weak to propose educational processes that allow us to constitute ourselves as integral beings, where our being, knowing and acting in the world starts from our quality as human beings. This profound lack of the subject who receives and then transmits the ‘education’ is nothing more than the result of a radically fragmented knowledge and then transmits ‘education’ is nothing more than the result of a radically fragmented knowledge that believes to know more about less and less.

The practice of self-knowledge has the purpose of opening the mind to the greatest mysteries that occur at every moment, allowing an affective relationship with the environment that makes them feel time and space as infinite. This experience enriches our participation in the world by making our different activities pleasant. Thus, without needing to take refuge in any doctrine, our actions can be considered spiritual by simple and direct attachment to the most intimate experience with our interior.

A person with broad relationship capacity is one who experiences himself, through a constant and careful transdisciplinary education, as a Subject who transcends the seemingly opposite concepts of objectivity and subjectivity.

To the reinsertion of the human being in the process of knowing and being in the world, Basarab Nicolescu calls it ‘transdisciplinary attitude’. From this attitude we affirm that the education of the Transdisciplinary Subject needs everything that allows him to rigorously attend to his Self-knowledge and cultivation of his Quality of Being, we call this ‘transdisciplinary education’ and it is our proposal to share in the Transdisciplinary Chair of the University.

## **2. The Crises of the University**

The Portuguese academic Boaventura de Souza Santos did an analysis of the situation of the public university in Brazil. The analysis indicates that there are three crises: one of hegemony, due to the contradictions between the traditional functions and those who in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were attributed to it; another of legitimacy, for the fact that it stopped being an institution consensual, opposite to the contradiction of the hierarchical organization of specialized knowledge’s and to the social and political requirements of democratization and equality of opportunities; and an institutional crisis, for the contradiction between recovery of autonomy and the increasing pressure for submitting it to criteria of efficiency and

productivity of managerial character or social responsibility<sup>2</sup>.

The epistemic state of the University and its social function is, today, more than ever, antagonistic. Thus, one comes to recognize the need for transformation in Latin America.

The globalizing and neoliberal perspective that promotes expansion of the educational market sought to impose a managerial paradigm that led to the marketing of the University. This stimulated the creation of the ‘university market’.

Consequently, the problems grew. For instance, we saw the unprecedented acceleration of the fragmentation of knowledge, a rejection of sharing knowledge, a lack of tolerance, and a separation of science and culture (the origin of which goes back at least three centuries ago).

Opposite of this vision, one began to speak from the academic field of changing mentality and institutional structure and of orientating the University toward the sustainability. It is precisely from this approach that we encounter two questions: how can the University respond to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? What reforms does the University need to offer an integral and open formation that links effectivity and affectivity, which connects the university subject with the complexity of the world, which contributes to the genuine social transformation, and which gives a place for culture, art, spirituality, and life in the university?

### 3. The Disciplinary University

The disciplinary fragmentation and the division of systemic problems maintain a theoretical superficiality, strongly conditioning the social development of countries.

The disciplinary organization has a correlate in the genesis of the modern universities in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In this respect, the disciplines have a historic development that is ingrained in the history of society, but in addition it possesses an epistemological and paradigmatic dimension similar to the understanding of the ways of organizing disciplinary knowledge and their processes of closing and opening.

The notion of discipline, in this context, can be defined as an organizing category inside the scientific knowledge, instituting division and specialization. The organization of the knowledge into many disciplines has stimulated separate models, increasingly preventing the methodological and epistemological integration.

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<sup>2</sup> Boaventura, de Souza Santos, *op. cit.*, 2010, p. 42.

#### 4. Alternatives to the Disciplinary Paradigm

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a new way of seeing and understanding the world was generated that instigated the rupture of former shared convictions, concepts, techniques, and values supported and used by scientific communities. A new epistemology emerged for instance with the Complex Thought and Transdisciplinarity that opened the possibility of co-generating a more dynamic conception of the human being and a new way of understanding reality and knowledge itself.

This nascent epistemology started by generating a new way of ‘knowing our knowing’<sup>3</sup>. What in the paradigm of modernity was translated as an anomaly, a contradiction, and a sign of mistaken thought, in this different perspective appears as a crisis, a fork in the road, a possibility of new ways.

For example, the unidirectional reason/effect was confronted with the circularity that proposes a recursive effect. In this way, the knowledge that the University generates must regenerate the knowledge that the University offers. A University that does not recognize the biodegradability of knowledge cannot affirm that it generates knowledge. It is not a question of changing what it is necessary to know, since it is always dynamic, but the way of knowing. The concept of feedback arises as a unit of interaction in a system where the observer is a subjective participant, a co-participator in the process that before it was made separate in an effort to be objective.

The situation of a change for the University offers to all its members the possibility of placing themselves within the change itself and invites others to actively involve themselves in this construction of ‘doing while doing’.

Little by little, from this position, the knowledge is traveling between interactions and cognitions that are mutually influenced.

Between a globalization that socially homogenizes and a fragmentation that mutilates education, an intermediate zone emerges, which is only possible to conceive from a complex and transdisciplinary perspective of constructing the University.

Faced with this panorama, it is pertinent to question whether the University is fulfilling the demands of strengthening social coexistence and enhancing the creativity of citizens through the transmission and generation of knowledge. Does humanity live better thanks to the University? asks Mexican scientist Víctor Manuel Toledo and says of the ‘Science’ that is taught in universities: ‘Today the dominant “normal science” is in crisis, not only in Mexico, but throughout the world, because it does not contribute to solving the two supreme emergencies facing humanity: the greatest social inequality in history and the greatest known threat to the planet’s ecological balance’<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Edgar Morin, *El Método 3: El conocimiento del conocimiento*. Madrid: Cátedra, 1994, p. 75.

<sup>4</sup> Víctor Manuel Toledo, « Los “científicos” y la 4 T: oposición ilegítima » en *La Jornada* 13/08/2019, <https://www.jornada.com.mx/2019/08/13/opinion/016a1pol>.

It is difficult to know what part of the benefits obtained by humanity correspond to the action of the universities, as well as what is their responsibility in the great failures, the fact is that they participate in both. It must also be said that the human potential it contains has not been properly exploited. For this reason, it is necessary to transform universities with a transdisciplinary perspective that promotes, among other things, the knowledge of knowledge (Morin), the awareness of autonomy of members of their community, as well as the link with society where solidarity, equity and creativity predominate.

### **5. Transdisciplinary Vision of the University**

New looks to address and to transform the role of the University in the contemporary societies have appeared from different areas for many decades. Many voices speak of the need for a new ‘social pact’ that calls for the social responsibility of the university institution in a space of growing complexity. In a world undergoing transformations at an ever-faster pace, questions about the current state of the University are more than ever of great importance.

As much from the social, political, cultural, and economic point of view as from the perspective of the increasing complexity of the real world, the function of the knowledge is key in terms of transformation and in terms of citizenship and social responsibility. The University, as an institution that produces knowledge and forms opinion and trends, has an unquestionable social responsibility. Its priority task today should be regarding thought itself – elucidating the conditions that construct knowledge, that form professionals that conceive the human condition to know and act. From this perspective, the University has an urgent task: determining the why, how and what to know.

That is the reason why the single disciplinary education is becoming increasingly inadequate and why there must be cooperation between disciplines, among the various center of culture and knowledge, among different knowledges (scientific, artistic, and techniques).

Under compartmentalization, teachers and university researchers are interested only in the skills they need to excel in their field. Research and education in science, literature, philosophy, and human sciences generally respond to criteria of technical efficiency and profitability without offering a critical view of knowledge, a prerequisite for making the necessary distance and to give meaning to the task of knowledge.

The University, as a space where knowledge is generated and processed, cannot fail to look at itself critically to detect its own stagnation. It is necessary to recover its ability to regenerate to avoid higher risk: the mental and emotional stagnation of new generations.

Isolated academic disciplines are less than adequate to deal with wider personal and social problems. The fragmentation of the disciplines leads to passivity and, at its best, answers only one part of what social life demands: that we

were trained by a single discipline.

While knowledge does not provide all the necessary means to contend with the complexity of reality, it does increase the expression of our human potential.

That complex reality is not only that of work and daily subsistence, nor the world mass media or internet present, nor financial markets, nor that of the corrupt dictatorship or pseudo-democratic governments, nor the savage crimes that occur daily as it happens today in Palestine; on the contrary, the complex reality is also that of the tiny acts of courage, solidarity, affectivity, creativity, spirituality, and all that is infinitely small or infinitely large that escape our senses.

The current organization of the University follows the model of the modern university, based on disciplinary specialization that today faces dizzying changes marked by globalization, cultural diversity, information and communication technologies, but above all, as noted in the previous chapter, the devastating pandemic.

The prefix 'trans' refers to a constant movement. 'Trans' indicates something that keeps moving; something that is between, through and beyond. This puts us before an ethical challenge; therefore the need arises to fix the notion of transdisciplinarity from ethics and, even more so, the self-ethics suggested by Morin. Engaging with an alternative proposal implies the difficult task of making it work in an incarnate way. Moreover, the emergence of a new paradigm requires the university institution to assume its responsibility for the challenges it poses, in order to foster a critical dialogue among all its members. This requires a methodological practice and a close connection with the environment, where affection and spirituality occupy a fundamental place.

Two tendencies that are in no way exclusive: the fragmentation of the events that concern life, and the placement of this within a narrative that establishes us as subjects and of which we are totally and fully responsible. At one end the chaos that disperses us and at the other the order that provides unity and meaning. In the first case, a factual truth that manifests itself in action and in our talent to respond to circumstances; in the second a constructed true (but not of the second order) that is cooked in thought and in our predisposition to value what has happened and what awaits us. Both moments mark not only the field of learning, but also that, much vaster and more complex of relearning, through which we realize that some things we know can be seen again from different angles.

But what do we mean by relearning? In the first instance, and as we have already observed, this term serves to clarify the very meaning of experience as an inexhaustible process; in the second moment, it helps us to distance ourselves from a world that, has lost sight of the plurality of the dimensions that make up the human being, opting for a single model of existence: that of the closed individual who is so afraid of the diversity that exists outside him, as that which curls in the innermost folds of its soul and, finally, allows us to specify the value

of writing as an exercise of reflection, ordering and clarification of ideas about ourselves and transdisciplinarity.

## 6. Transdisciplinary Subject

By observing with interest what happens to humanity in our time I perceive that, as a society, we have been weak to propose educational processes that allow us to constitute ourselves as integral beings, where our being, knowing and acting in the world starts from our quality as human beings. This profound lack of the subject who receives and then the 'education' it conveys is nothing more than the result of a radically fragmented knowledge of someone who believes he knows more about less and less.

I believe, instead, that the practice of self-knowledge serves the purpose of opening the mind to the greatest mysteries that occur at every moment, allowing an affective relationship with the environment that makes us feel time and space as infinite. This experience enriches our participation in the world by making our different activities at the same time meaningful and pleasant. Thus, without needing to take refuge in any doctrine, our actions can be considered spiritual by simple and direct attachment to the most intimate experience with our interior.

A person with broad relationship capacity is one who experiences himself, through a constant and careful transdisciplinary formation, as a Subject who transcends the seemingly opposite concepts of objectivity and subjectivity.

To reintegration of the human being in the process of knowing and being in the world, Basarab Nicolescu calls it 'transdisciplinary attitude'. From this attitude we affirm that the formation of the Transdisciplinary Subject needs everything that allows him to rigorously attend to his Self-knowledge and cultivation of his Quality of Being, I call this 'transdisciplinary formation' and is the proposal to share in the International Transdisciplinary Chair.

Knowing ourselves as Subjects placed at the center of ourselves can lead to recognizing research as a vehicle for human transformation and sustainability.

It is necessary to feel, in an incarnate way, what poses Nicolescu about the imminence of humanity's self-destruction in case we did not transform the way we behave with ourselves, with others and with the planet, if we only understand it theoretically it is not 'transdisciplinary attitude' but a fraud.

How to be a transdisciplinary researcher? How to become a carrier of hope? How to avoid the manipulation of consciences, spiritual destruction, blindness, and contempt for life?

What are our real questions? If we do not know them, if we do not know who we are, if we do not identify our face, our heart, our soul, if we do not feel our body and do not know what we have it for, nor how it relates to other bodies, if we do not realize how we relate to everything and what keeps us in relation: How to achieve the 'transdisciplinary attitude'?



Then I see the transdisciplinary researcher as one who recognizes the co-existence of complex plurality and the open unity of knowledge, so he uses a methodology that considers a) different levels of reality of the object and the subject, b) the third included and c) the complexity. But, above all, it is based on an ethic that is the product of his conscious and cosmic vertical attitude penetrated by different levels of Reality. For this is necessary to work to achieve self-knowledge, balance between egocentrism and altruism, contact with ancestral knowledge, in short, to transcend disciplinary limits, to have the experience of living in connection with all that exists. Be situated in ‘our own place’, a space that, though full of uncertainties, can be occupied with confidence and joy.

I see the transdisciplinary researcher as a trans-cultural and trans-religious Subject, not a new man, but a being that has been born again by the evolution of his consciousness (the best laboratory of the inclusion of the Third and the coexistence of different levels of Reality). That is why Nicolescu says that evolution today can only be a ‘revolution of intelligence that transforms our individual and social life into an act both aesthetic and ethical, the act of the revelation of the poetic dimension of existence’<sup>5</sup>. He also states that ‘An extraordinary, unexpected and surprising Eros crosses the levels of reality of the object and the levels of perception of the subject. Artists, poets, scientists, and mystics of all times have testified to their presence in the world’<sup>6</sup>.

I therefore perceive in Nicolescu’s proposal the confidence of a man who still believes in the possibility of a future and who shows us the way to reach it: through ‘cosmic and conscious verticality’. In this lies the genuine ‘transdisciplinary attitude’, beyond all reductionisms.

I have tried to know other transdisciplinary perspectives and not to make Nicolescu’s proposal a doctrine. However, in face of others (Zurich, i.e.) I perceive that the spiritual dimension, that in the case of Nicolescu is the axis, that sustains verticality is absent. And it is this dimension, where knowledge emerges, that modern science does not recognize and that has a transdisciplinary character: the geometry of the cosmos among the Aztecs, the vertical structure of the Maya universe in ancient Mexico and in Hindu vertical cosmology, for example.

With a new look that is situated between, through and beyond science, art and spirituality will all be strengthened; there will be a connection with all knowledge, with the ‘pure forms’, with the spontaneous, with the inner being and with the technique. For all the above, I affirm that the University requires a profound transformation towards transdisciplinaryization that implies the ecologization and contextualization of knowledge.

Faced with the contemporary vision of the search for the systematic integration of knowledge, Nicolescu proposes a new way of conceiving thought and education based on four pillars (Learning to do, learning to live together, learning

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<sup>5</sup> Basarab Nicolescu, *La Transdisciplinariedad, Manifiesto*, Hermosillo: Multiversidad Mundo Real Edgar Morin, A. C., 2009, p. 68.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

to learn, learning to be) where the quality of what is taught is important, and not the enormous mass of assimilated ‘scientific knowledge’<sup>7</sup>. Faced with the idea of promoting new theoretical paradigms, Nicolescu suggests valuing the body; in the face of ‘transcendent interdisciplinary research’ that seeks new structures and methodologies to define and analyze social, economic and political facets, proposes a strategy based on three axioms: ontological, logical and epistemological; and against the vision of sustainability, which in the definition of Zurich proposes the integration of academic experts and social actors, of scientific knowledge and nonscientists, the perspective of the author of *The Manifesto*...

Now that thanks to transdisciplinarity I am facing a learning field always open I feel that I can walk free and unified.

It is urgent to establish an adequate relationship between science, art and spirituality within the university. None of them is exclusive to gifted people. We must bear in mind, as Gardner<sup>8</sup> indicates (1983) that we all possess ‘multiple intelligences’. The university should encourage them not in separate spaces and with emphasis on abstraction, because Luis Porter is right when he says: While the civilized academic ‘thinks’ and consciously systematizes his ideas by Medium of abstract signs (symbols), primitives [sic] ‘dance’ and ‘sing’ their ideas. (...) these differences can help us in our attempt to relate to education with life and love, in the search for a more suitable pedagogy for these young people and students we would like to see dancing and singing their song around the hall, instead of sitting down to study it at the static desk. We seek an education that privileges the heart over reason<sup>9</sup>.

How to reform the institution if mentalities are not reformed first? And how to reform mentalities if the institution is not reformed? There is no logical answer to this contradiction says Morin, but life, he adds, ‘is capable of providing solutions to logically insoluble problems’<sup>10</sup>.

A university where effectiveness and affection walk together will allow human beings and the entire planet the opportunity to manifest themselves in all their splendor.

## 7. Trans Subject

What are my real questions? If I do not know them, if I do not know who I am being, if I do not identify my face, my heart, my soul, if I do not feel my body and do not know what I have it for, nor how it relates to other bodies, if I do not realize how I relate to everything and what keeps me in relation: I wonder

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid, p. 93-98.

<sup>8</sup> Gardner, Howard. *Inteligencias múltiples*. Barcelona: Paidós, 1983, p. 58.

<sup>9</sup> Luis Porter. ‘Eros y la educación: complejidad y ritmo justo’ in Guillaumin, Arturo y Octavio Ochoa (eds.) *Hacia otra educación. Miradas desde la complejidad*. Xalapa: Arana editores-Complexus, 2009, p. 321–322.

<sup>10</sup> Morin, Edgar. *La Voie. Pour l’avenir de l’humanité*. Paris: Fayard, 2011, p. 151.

then who am I? Am I always the same? Am I complete once and for all, or like the universe, am I in permanent expansion? What distinguishes me from others? What makes me like the other? How do I relate to reality? How do I perceive? Is there a place for me? What is that place? Do I think, or do things think about me? What does it mean to think? What do I do to realize what I do? How human am I? How do I live my humanity? Do I know myself? How do I know? What is the use of knowing? What do I do to know myself? Do I need to be recognized? What recognition do I expect? How do I show myself to others? How many faces or personalities do I have? Can I be one and multiple at once? How do I live my individuality? How do I live my duality? How do I live my feminine and masculine part? How do I realize what I accept and what I reject? How do I understand wisdom? What do I do to attain wisdom? What does it mean to educate myself? How have I been educated? How do I educate? What education do I need? How do I live spirituality? Am I in touch with myself? Do I live with humility? What is humility? What does it mean to be authentic? Do I connect with the sacred? Am I religious? How do I flow through my actions? How do I commit to society? What do I do to care for mother earth? Why do I want to be Trans-Subject or Transdisciplinary Subject? What are the qualities of a transdisciplinary Subject? What does it mean to live? How do you learn the art of living? Do I live in awe? How can I keep my capacity for wonder alive? How do I use my creative potentialities? How do I limit myself? How to live in the face of the impossibility of living? What is beyond living?

Once I have asked my questions I can walk with them, not to find answers, but always to be in motion as in this instant that, with words that I try to be alive, I share how I visualize The Chair in which all my wanderings are combined: with myself, with the theatre, with the community, with knowledge and with the university.

Since then I have lived moments of great intensity, but one of those that remains stronger in me is that of the night in which, gathered in the Center of Indigenous Arts of the Totonaca region, next to the sacred area of El Tajín, with most of its members sitting in a circle and all with a candle in hand, Basarab said that everyone could have a different culture and a different religion, but that the light was the same for everyone and that made us all equal. At that moment I could fully feel my humanity connected with everyone: the present and the absent. I felt that I was entering the zone of absolute transparency, that I was in touch with the sacred.

From the very moment, I was moved by Nicolescu's statement about the imminence of humanity's self-destruction in case we did not transform the way we behave with ourselves, with others and with the planet, I wanted not only to know transdisciplinarity, but to be and live transdisciplinarily.

It wasn't religion, it wasn't social revolution, it wasn't positive science areas with which I've been involved in one way or another at some point in my

life because I grew up attached to the Catholic religion, I was a follower of Marxist ideas in the time of a university student and my early research work followed the paradigm of classical science which did not allow me to find answers. Instead, I did find them in self-knowledge, in the balance between my egocentrism and altruism, in contact with ancestral knowledge, in the search to transcend disciplinary limits, in the experience of living in connection with all that exists. Situated in these spaces I feel 'in my place', on a path that, although full of uncertainties, I can walk with joy.

The transdisciplinary researcher is a trans-cultural and trans-religious Subject, not a new man, but a being that has been born again by the evolution of his consciousness (the best laboratory of the inclusion of the third and the coexistence of different levels of Reality).

### **8. Walking with the Transdisciplinarity**

When I realized that I was living mechanically both in my work and in my inter and intrapersonal relationships I felt the need for a change in the way I relate to reality. It was then that I had the opportunity to read *The Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*, then something extraordinary happened: I met its author, Basarab Nicolescu and began a bond with him that has become an affectionate and stimulating friendship.

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poetic dimension of existence'<sup>11</sup>. He also states that 'An extraordinary, unexpected and surprising Eros crosses the levels of reality of the object and the levels of perception of the subject. Artists, poets, scientists and mystics of all times have testified to their presence in the world'<sup>12</sup>.

### 9. International Transdisciplinary Chair at the University

At the Veracruzana University, since 2010, there are precedents around the transdisciplinary paradigm and where we have counted on the presence of Basarab Nicolescu: seminars, academic bodies, and even a master's degree program and a doctorate program that unfortunately stopped within a year of starting because of what I consider the lack of genuine 'transdisciplinary attitude'.

However, the projects in which I have participated in the Universidad Veracruzana confirm to me the feasibility of implementing University with colleagues from different disciplines with the aim of founding a university dialogue between different knowledges, considering the interior life.

Some questions that must be taking a count for the Chair will be: a transdisciplinary researcher and teacher? How can science and scientific research, the arts and their practices, scientific and traditional knowledge, be made available and in favor of the human being? How to establish an active, permanent, systemic, and meaningful relationship with everything living, a relationship that makes us deploy all the mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual potential that we possess? How to face contemporary mutations? And, accord with Delor's and Nicolescu's proposal: What does it mean to learn to know? How to establish bridges between different knowledge? What place do ancestral philosophies have in university formation? What does it mean to learn to do? And last, but not least: How to detonate creativity? What does it mean to learn to live together? What does it mean to learn to be? How to overcome the tension between the material and the spiritual? How to achieve a comprehensive formation of the human being? How to reach human understanding? How to reconcile effectiveness and affectivity in our actions?

The Chair will have to take on the challenge of creating a process of critical and reflective dialogue around knowledge according to the principles of rigor, openness, and tolerance referents of the transdisciplinary posture. The aim will be that the experiences and knowledge of each of the participants allows them to deepen their professional work and, why not, in their life dynamics. We will try to face the challenge of an always unfinished and open knowledge before a multidimensional reality and feedback on our ways of approaching it through collective, open, and reflective discussion. Each relearning process involves,

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<sup>11</sup> Basarab Nicolescu, *op. cit.*, 2009, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p. 65.

when faced with different ways of seeing and thinking about the world, an encounter and disagreement with one's own and the 'foreign'. We learn in difference and from our feeling-thinking-acting.

The Chair will focus on the relationship between ethics and transdisciplinarity, creativity and transdisciplinarity, and tangentially touched on other relevant topics such as ancestral philosophies, spirituality in university education and sustainability. Throughout the session's work will be done to build the 'transdisciplinary attitude' consisting of an open and committed position of participants with the reality of the world, with their own person, but also with the present and future of the knowledge.

A specific recognition derived from Nicolescu is that the purpose of transdisciplinarity is not to eliminate disciplinary knowledge, but to seek to complement and enrich it by building bridges not only between academic knowledge, but with other knowledge not necessarily linked to formal education institutions.

We university students have the task of working with our egos to allow the 'living moment' to emerge, the enrichment of dialogue in a vertical-deep sense, not horizontal superficial. This is a challenge inspired by the spirit of rigor, openness, and tolerance as a guide to the International Transdisciplinary Chair.

Here then is the meaning of The Chair: to recover, through a fortunate concatenation of words, the result of our learning and, through that, to turn to the ethical call of transdisciplinarity: the constant and full monitoring of our actions in the context of a diverse and unpredictable world.

The International Transdisciplinary Chair will include scientists, technologists, humanists, musicians, poets and artists, working on different media and using new technologies, with the aim of founding university dialogue between different cultural visions, including interior experience. It would be about living a wider practice of relating to the world with nature and with all humans. The International Transdisciplinary Chair must have as an urgent task to question the modes of production of knowledge with the emphasis placed on what, how and for what to know.

The International Transdisciplinary Chair will help foster the interest of university professors and researchers in the knowledge needed to go beyond their speciality. Research and teaching in the sciences and humanities currently meets criteria of technical efficiency and economic profitability, without offering a critical look at knowledge, indispensable condition for a necessary distance and to grant meaning to the task of knowledge.

That complex reality is not only that of work and daily subsistence, nor only that the world mass media or internet, nor that of financial markets, nor that of the corrupts dictatorship or pseudo-democratic governments, nor that of the savage crimes that occur daily, as it happens today in Palestine; on the contrary, the complex reality is also that of the tiny acts of courage, solidarity, affectivity, creativity, spirituality, and all that is infinitely small or infinitely large that escape our senses.

How can science and scientific research, arts and its practices, technical and traditional knowledge – all of them products of intelligence and imagination of humankind – be available and beneficial for society?

If the purpose of university knowledge is the elevation of spirit, achieving this requires linking all the knowledge and recognizing that only from the human dimension will the University serve humankind. For a better understanding of the world, the University must overcome the radical disjunction of knowledge across disciplines and establish a bridge between them. The University in the 21<sup>st</sup> century should prepare persons that can be placed between, across, and beyond their discipline, their culture, their nation, their politics, and their religion.

How can this be possible? The establishment of the International Transdisciplinary Chair is a step in this direction.

Transdisciplinarity, we know it is an epistemological proposal that sees the advent of a human being capable of contending with all that is between, across, and beyond what has been considered Reality.

For this, I assert that for the University to become a multidimensional community requires a profound transformation toward transdisciplinarity, involving the ecologization and contextualization of knowledge.

But it is necessary to recognize that it is not enough to know it theoretically, it is necessary to live it, to make it an incarnate knowledge.

Without making a fatalistic diagnosis, I can say that most of the transdisciplinary projects that did not continue or were deformed in my university was due to the lack of this important aspect: to assume transdisciplinarity as embodied knowledge.

In this way, I propose that the International Transdisciplinary Chair in the University should have as its starting point the conception of a Subject.

Transdisciplinary culture is a prerequisite for a transformation of mentalities. The true spirit of transdisciplinarity goes beyond what is being done now. It not only seeks the unification of knowledge but self-transformation and a new lifestyle.

Shift from the consideration of a problem as if it depended on a single level of Reality and place in the field simultaneously different levels of Reality.

Renounce finding a solution to a problem in terms of ‘true’ and ‘false’ of the binary logic. Also, the solution to a problem cannot be more than temporary reconciliation of opposites, re-likened at another level of Reality where contradictions are manifest.

Recognize the inherent complexity of the problem, namely the impossibility of decomposing the problem into simple, fundamental parts. Replacing the notion of ‘foundation’ for consistency, in this multidimensional and multireferential world.

It will be necessary to work on methods for awakening and recognizing the vertical levels of all kinds: perception, reality, complexity, nature and sense

of language, silence, energy, and others. The spirit of inquiry cannot flourish otherwise. The University must reintroduce in all the domains of education dimensions of life and, as far as possible, of love. The University must meet the fundamental desires of the students: to enjoy the physical and mental passion for the knowledge and pursue self-transformation.

We must aspire through International Transdisciplinary Chair to reach knowledge where effectivity and affectivity walk together, enabling us, as human beings to manifest ourselves in all our magnificence.

The University should be a space for discussion of the new university ethics. It requires rethinking ethics for universities from Latin America, an ethic that will not put the utilitarian or pragmatic principles ahead of social needs and human sentiments.

How can the University surmount the two large living pressures today, the hyper-privatized by merchandising of knowledge and the hyper-public that demands a much larger public space?

According to Boaventura, it depends on the country project. Neo-liberalism in Mexico devastated the idea of a national project that today is being rebuilt therefore the same must do public university.

It will be necessary to work on methods for awakening and recognizing the vertical levels of all kinds: perception, reality, complexity, nature and sense of language, silence, strength, and others. The spirit of inquiry cannot flourish otherwise. The University must reintroduce in all the domains of education dimensions of life and, as far as possible, of love. The University must meet the fundamental desires of the students: to enjoy the physical and mental passion for research and pursue self-transformation.

The University should stand for, not against, what society demands. The University offerings should not be oriented to serve just a group of society, usually a minority, to the harm of a majority; hence the self-ethics and the communitarian ethic should be the basis of university education based in sustainable principles. This will achieve a genuine social transformation.

We must aspire to a University where effectivity and affectivity walk together, enabling human beings to manifest themselves in all their magnificence.

## **10. Transdisciplinary Chair at the University**

The University TD Chair must have as an urgent task to question the modes of production of knowledge with the emphasis placed on what, how and for what to know.

Hyper-specialization and disciplinary compartmentalization prevent access to broader and related knowledge. Disciplinary teaching is becoming increasingly inadequate, making it essential for cooperation between the different disciplines, between the various centres of production of culture and knowledge, between the different scientific, technical and humanistic knowledge, artistic and spiritual.

As long as the means to contend with complex reality are circumvented, we



will continue to be reduced to a minimum expression of our human potential.

The University will have to respond creatively both to the demands of the labour market and to social needs, to those of its own knowledge and to new forms of relationship.

It will be desirable for universities to have a permanent teacher training program aimed at achieving the transdisciplinary attitude, that is, to live the cosmic and conscious verticality driven by the transdisciplinary methodology.

It would be desirable to create in each university Transdisciplinary Research Workshops that integrate researchers from different disciplines. Efforts would be made, on specific projects, to progressively introduce researchers or creators outside the University, including scientists, technologists, humanists, musicians, poets and artists of high level, working on different media and using new technologies, with the aim of founding university dialogue between different cultural visions, including interior experience. It would be about living a wider practice of relating to the world with nature and with all humans.

Transit, in short, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos proposes from university knowledge to university. That is to say: contextual, transdisciplinary, dialogical and that establishes bridges between science and society when applied in non-commercial and solidary areas (2010).

Knowing ourselves as Subjects placed at the center of ourselves can lead to recognizing research as a vehicle for human transformation and sustainability.

### **Acknowledgment and conflicts of interest**

The author declare that he has no conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Any errors or omissions are his own.

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