

**SCIENCE AND TRADITION:
TRANSDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES:
OPENING TOWARDS THE 21st CENTURY**

Paris, UNESCO, 2-6 December 1991

The participants in the congress "Science and tradition: transdisciplinary perspectives, openings towards the 21st century" (Paris, UNESCO, December 2-6, 1991), at a preparatory stage for future transdisciplinary work, have agreed in particular on the following points:

1.

We are currently witnessing a decline in culture. In different ways, it affects rich and poor countries alike.

2.

One of these factors is the belief in the existence of a unique way of accessing truth and reality. In our century, this belief has given rise to the omnipotence of technoscience: "everything that can be done will be done". The germ of a planetary totalitarianism is thus present.

3.

One of the conceptual revolutions of this century came, paradoxically, from science. In particular, quantum physics has shattered the old vision of Reality, with its classical concepts of continuity, locality and determinism which nevertheless still largely predominate in political and economic thought. It brought to light a new logic, isomorphic in many respects to older and now forgotten logics. A crucial dialogue between science and tradition can therefore be engaged, increasingly rigorous and in-depth, to build a new scientific and cultural approach; transdisciplinarity.

4.

Transdisciplinarity does not seek to build any syncretism between science and tradition: the methodology of modern science is radically different from the practices of tradition. Transdisciplinarity seeks points of view that can be made interactive, and spaces of thought which bring out unity while respecting differences, in particular thanks to a renewed conception of Nature.

5.

An increasingly advanced specialization has tended to separate science from culture, a separation which is the very mark of what has been called "modernity", and which has only made concrete the subject-object split which lies at the origin of modern science. While recognizing the value of specialization, transdisciplinarity



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seeks to go beyond it by recomposing the unity of culture and rediscovering meaning inherent in life.

6.

By definition, there cannot be transdisciplinary experts, but only researchers driven by an attitude of transdisciplinarity. Transdisciplinary research carried out can only be based on the different activities of art, poetry, philosophy, symbolic thought, science and tradition, themselves understood in their own multiplicity and diversity. They can lead to new freedoms of the mind, thanks to transhistorical or transreligious studies, for example, or new concepts such as transnationality or new transpolitical practices, inaugurating a transdisciplinary education and ecology.

7.

The challenge of transdisciplinarity is to generate a civilization on the scale of the planet, which, strengthened by intercultural dialogue, opens up to the uniqueness of each person and to the entirety of being.

Drafting committee:

René Berger, Michel Cazenave, Roberto Juarroz, Lima de Freitas and Basarab Nicolescu