

**RAMÓN P. MUÑOZ SOLER**

**UNIVERSITY TEACHING  
AND  
PEDAGOGY OF SYNTHESIS**

**Towards the University of Synthesis**

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# **UNIVERSITY TEACHING AND PEDAGOGY OF SYNTHESIS**

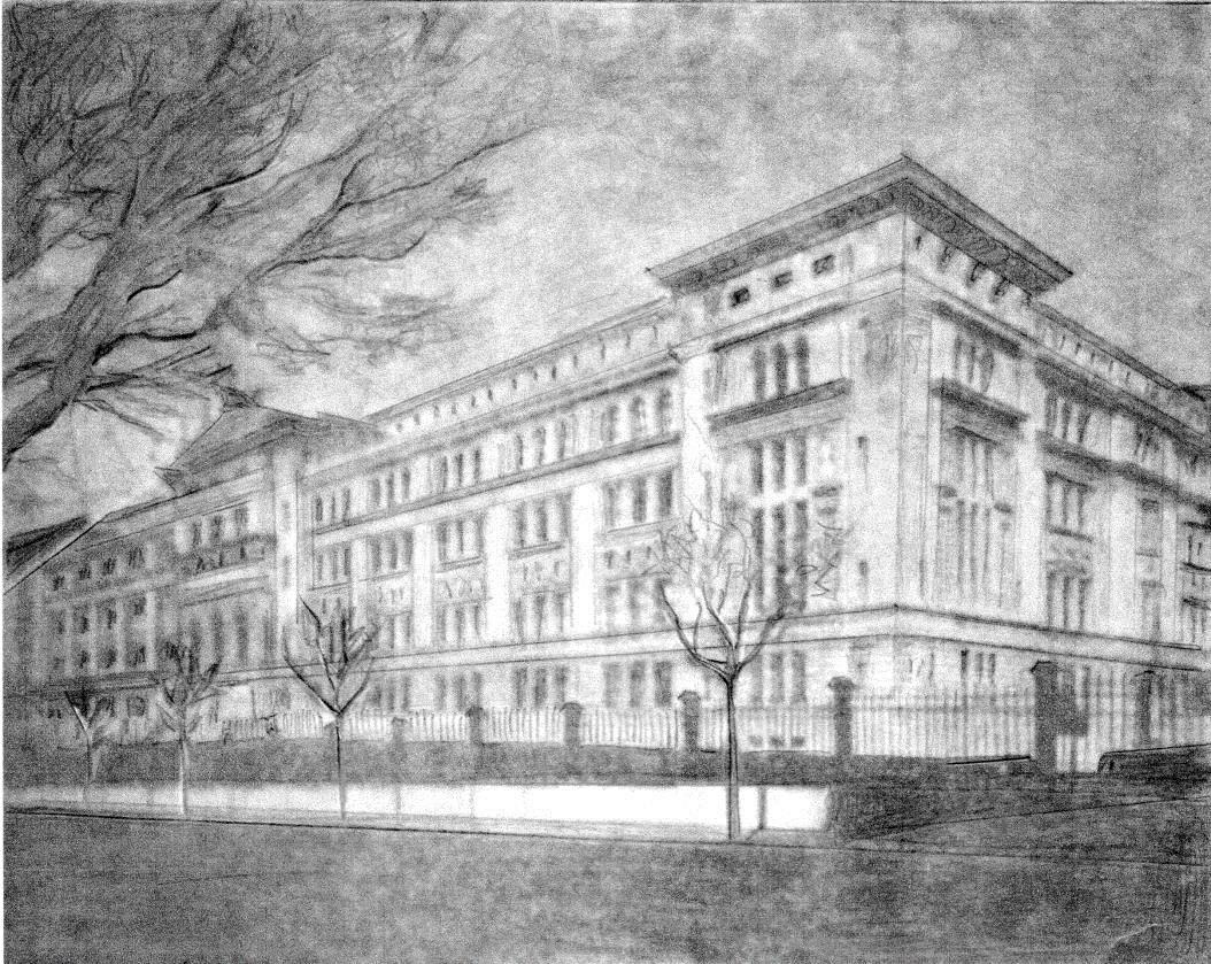
Lecture given

at the Instituto Félix Fernando Bernasconi, on 27 August, 1985,

as a participant in the teacher activity cycle of the Department of Information Technology and  
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# INDEX

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	8
INTRODUCTION	9
FRAGMENTS OF LOST UNITY	10
UNIVERSITY TEACHING	13
SEMANTIC BARRIER	16
WHAT IS THE UNIVERSITY OF SYNTHESIS?	28
ARCHITECTURE, FUNCTION AND MEANING	29
ALL PEDAGOGY OF SYNTHESIS IS A PEDAGOGY OF THE “BEFORE”	30
FROM THE PROFESSIONALIST UNIVERSITY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HUMANITY	31
SO WHAT IS MISSING?	35
WHY ARGENTINA?	37
SUMMARY	39



Instituto Félix Fernando Bernasconi

National Office of Pre-Primary and Primary Education

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND JUSTICE



Rosario Vera Peñaloza in her daily labour.

# **ROSARIO VERA PEÑALOZA**

**1873-1950**

## **THE TEACHER OF THE HOMELAND**

She professed the heroism of modesty.

Her morality was her guide.

Altruism her law.

### **HOMAGE**

to the Argentine teachers

who follow her example.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*To my collaborators in the Synthesis Workshop,  
who worked on the design of the teaching material:*

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Instituto Félix Fernando Bernasconi,  
the teacher Dora Estebanez de Pigni.*

*To the teacher Gioconda Albesi,  
responsible for the Museology Complex.*



## INTRODUCTION

It is especially significant for me that this interdisciplinary encounter should be held precisely here, at the Instituto Félix Bernasconi, the cornerstone of a top-ranking teaching project that lives on as a symbol of Argentine education reaching out to the future. I feel that this place is charged with the creative force of a whole generation of Argentine teachers whose work, as a whole, makes up what can now be called the “Argentine School of Education,” a profoundly human educational model, whose identity is revealed through a subtle “bridge” that these teachers preserved with great commitment, the tie between educational techniques that came from different parts of the world and the soul at the root of our people.

I thank the teachers Elsa de Raccioppi and Eva Sarka for inviting me to be here today with you, giving me the opportunity to submit to you a subject that has a lot to do with the role that could befall the Argentine teacher in the planetary civilization of the third millennium.

The subject is “University teaching and pedagogy of synthesis.”

But it is not only a “subject” that I want to submit to you, i.e., a form of objective knowledge, but rather, and above all, I submit myself as the subject and being of that knowledge. And in this *unity* between knowledge and being, in this *union* between *what* is said and *who* says it, you will have a first approach to the idea of *pedagogy of synthesis*.

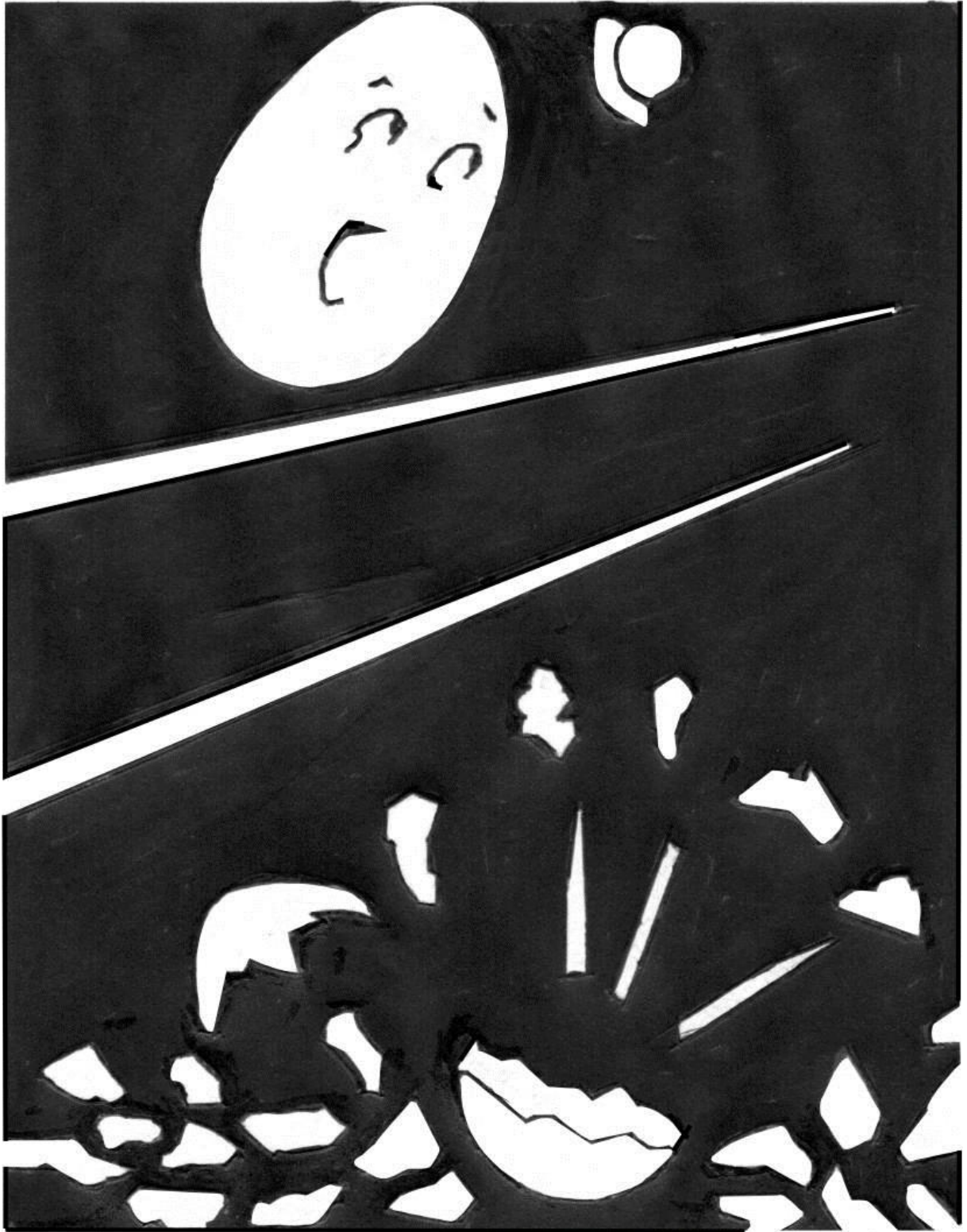
I have developed this subject of “unity of knowledge” in my book *University of Synthesis*.

To better understand this model of “University of synthesis,” do not think about the University that we know, that is, do not imagine the University as the highest rung of a ladder or the vertex of a pyramid, but rather the “centre” of a whole integrated system of permanent education. I refer to this educational whole when I speak of the University of synthesis. This change in the geometry of the model is not only a change of form, but also a change of *function*. Here the “centre of synthesis” is the *heart* of the educational circulatory system. It expands knowledge to the most distant corners of our people, and takes the living experience of the people as the material to achieve higher levels of consciousness.

## **FRAGMENTS OF A LOST UNITY**

It is not easy for me to explain the idea of the University of Synthesis, because the University of Synthesis is something that does not yet exist. The only thing that exists, in University terms, is a “galaxy of particularities,” fragments of a lost unity. The whole education system as we know it is a fragmented field of partial knowledge.

In this image, portraying the fall and fragmentation of Humpty Dumpty, the subject of an old nursery rhyme with deep symbolic content, you have a first point of approach to the idea that we are going to develop.



“All the kings horses,  
and all the kings men  
couldn’t put Humpty together again.”

There is the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, there are departments, major and minor degrees, that is, “Fragments” of a lost unity. But this galaxy of particularities is *not* the University.

**The connection has been lost** between the parts and the whole. We have the knowledge of the parts, but we have lost the vision of the whole.

**The same thing that happened to Humpty Dumpty has happened to the University: a “fall” into fragmentation and the “loss” of the key to put it back together again.**

## UNIVERSITY TEACHING

This does not in any way mean that the University does not play a useful and indispensable role for the formation of technicians and professionals that society requires for practical purposes, but that it is incapable, due to its very structure, of assuming the **universal and planetary teaching** that the new generations of students demand.

This teaching for a planetary culture of synthesis, already budding on the horizon of the future, is not founded on one education philosophy or another, but on an

**energetics of reversible values.**

We shall see, in the course of this lecture, what I mean by these terms. In other words, that sap that nourishes and gives meaning to this teaching of synthesis no longer circulates solely in the tree of knowledge, but also in the tree of life.

It is no longer a question of providing *more* information (quantitative knowledge variable), but of transmitting certain *human features* (qualitative variable of the self) that are something like enzymatic ingredients essential for beginning a new stage of development, not only development of science and technology, but also of a *life* that can properly be called human.

Although I say human, I must clarify that the teaching of synthesis to which I refer has nothing to do with a return to humanism, or renaissance humanism or modern humanist doctrines, whether social, political or religious.

**Teaching of synthesis is not a new creed;  
it is a new vibration.**

Teaching in the new era is not ideological but *vibratory*. Here the “message” is the “massage,” as Marshall McLuhan might say, the radiating energy of the unknown teacher, the “powerful current of accelerated change” as Alvin Toffler calls it, that not only moves the bases of our social, political and economic systems, but the very structure of our molecular biology. The world has changed, the educational *medium* is different,

**what counts today are not the ideas  
but the space where the ideas  
are revealed.**

This epistemological turn, if you want to call it that, this reversion of thinking, this transit from the world of ideas to the space where ideas are revealed, is what founds the *pedagogy of synthesis*. And when I say pedagogy of synthesis I am not referring to some new teaching system, or to one learning theory or another, but rather to

**a new “form of dance,” a new rhythm  
of human energy-consciousness.**

I will try to explain. We have not yet understood the student unrest of the 1960s and its global chain reaction. We were unable to transform the human energy that had suddenly been released on the planet. The lecture theatres calmed down, but the violence broke out elsewhere and in different ways. In the end the old university, the pedagogical system of fragmentation, triumphed. We still do not know the new teaching.

**We have more information, but less vision;  
we have more technicians and professionals, but fewer  
teachers;  
we have a better knowledge of the particular sciences,  
the remains of Humpty,  
but we don't have Humpty!**

## SEMANTIC BARRIER

And here comes the first question: Is it possible to put Humpty back together again? Is it possible to recover the lost unity?

The nursery rhyme categorically says **no**: “All the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t put Humpty together again.” Referring to the University, Martin Heidegger, one of the contemporary thinkers ahead of the philosophy of his time, says:

The domains of the sciences lie far apart. The manners of treatment of their subject-matters differ fundamentally. Today this dispersed multiplicity of disciplines is held together only through the technological organization of universities and faculties and finds meaning only through the practical goal-setting of specializations. Despite this, the essential rootedness of the sciences in their ground has atrophied.

And if this is the case, Humpty cannot be put back together again (“all the king’s horses and all the king’s men”, and if “the essential rootedness of the sciences in their ground has atrophied,” why do I speak of a “University of synthesis,” as if suggesting—through this word “synthesis”—that it would be possible to put together all those pieces and reconstruct the lost university. As if I would propose a new model to put Humpty together!

Not at all.

The problem is that the first difficulty with language arises here, a difficulty found by all those who, one way or another, seek to cross the barrier imposed by the structure of rational thought.

For us to be able to have suitable communication with each other, and make contact with the spirit of what I want to transmit, I beg you:

**Pay no attention to *what* I say but rather to *how* I say it.**

This is an invitation to listen to the energy load of the word and discover the symbolic meaning of the gesture (something like a choreography of language.)

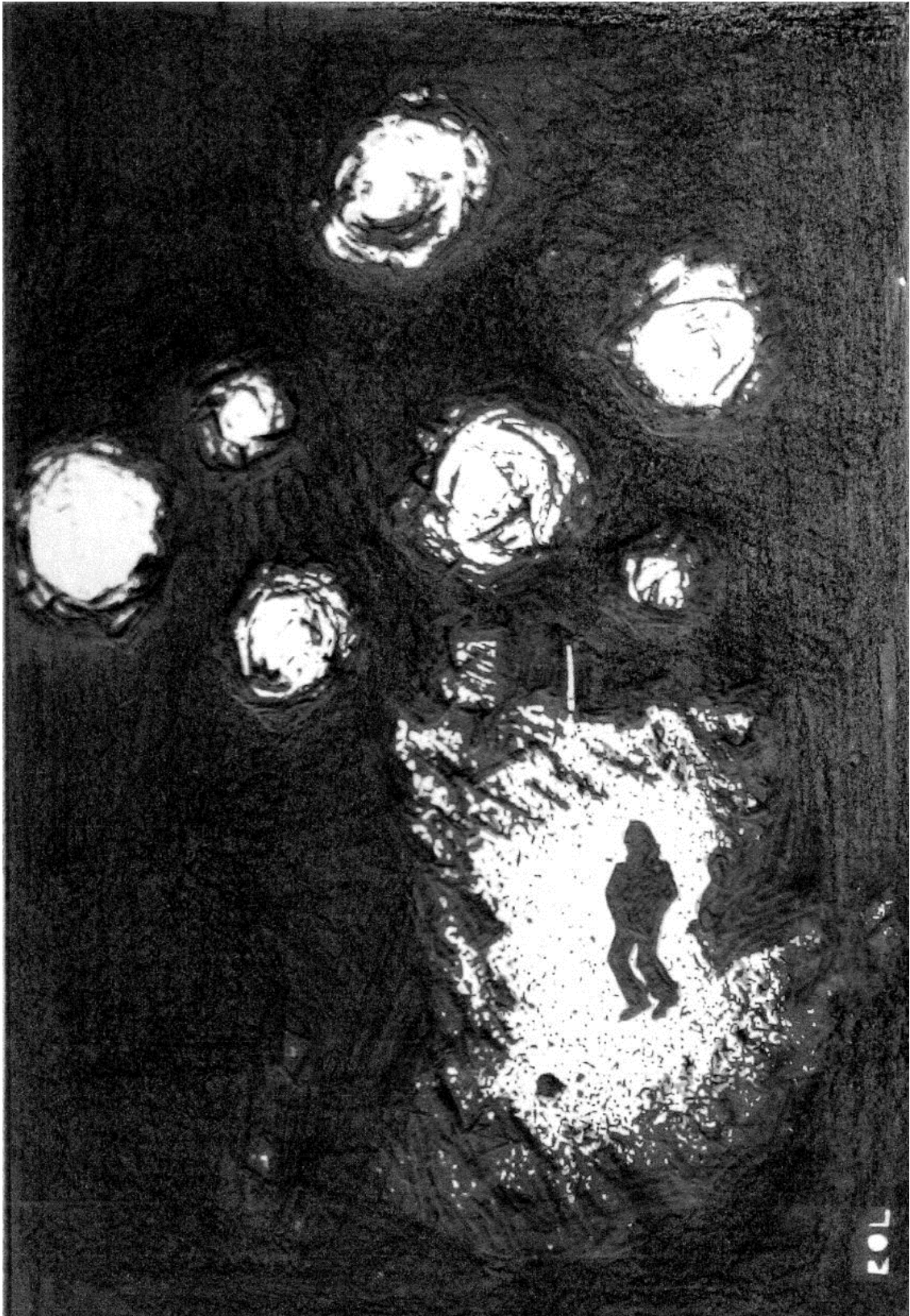


Aside from conceptual language, a vibratory language is required today, an energetic-symbolic language, to pass from a pedagogy of fragmentation to one of synthesis.

**The word synthesis** is ambiguous as a concept, but fertile as a symbol. As a concept it is a moment of dialect, and presupposes the composition of a whole through the sum of the parts. But, as a symbol, all synthesis is an operation that is effectuated in a single blow, accessing everything immediately, without passing through the sum or composition of the parts. It is in this regard all-encompassing and symbolic that

**I take the word *synthesis* to name an education model that operates as “means of union” between the path of knowledge and the path of life.**

Perhaps with this image we can better understand what I mean:



“The ancient alliance has been broken.”

Jacques Monod

These two paths, the path of knowledge and the path of life, have been separated in contemporary culture. Furthermore, the unilateral development of knowledge turns against life today. The other face of scientific-technical development shows us how: water contamination, soil erosion, air pollution, acid rain, radioactive waste... “The science that we possess cannot control its own results,” says George Picht.

Technical civilization finds itself up against two major dangers:

**the break of the balance of nature and the existential imbalance of humanity.**

The very science that paves the way to the stars closes humans’ existential space. Or, in existential terms, the power that we have used to conquer the world does not allow us to leave it.

Henri Lefèbvre, a French philosopher and culture critic, says:

“Current culture finds itself before a wall that is hard to breach;  
the key is to open a new space”.

Those who have seen the film *The Wall* will understand that it is not easy to go through the wall.

Analogously, when faced with the beast that blocks his way, Dante hears the voice of Virgil: “Thee it behoves to take another road” (“*a te convien un altro viaggio.*”)

What is that other road?

The path of knowledge in a straight line leads “nowhere.” It is easier to shout “ahead” than “to where,” says Edward Matchet. The search for that “where” (the question about the direction) can no longer be made externally (there is no path outside), but rather within, “against the current of the water,” as Leopoldo Marechal would say. It is the “path of return,” the “return journey,” the “pilgrimage to the sources.” It is the other path, the path of the self.

**Pedagogy of synthesis *re-unites* these two paths that had been separated: the outward path on the outside and the return path within; outside, learning to know; within, learning to be.**

This raises the question: how do we make the transition from one path to the other? By making the hands of the clock go backwards (reversal of time)? Or by rewinding the film of life? No, not by reversion of time, nor by reversal of life, but by

**reversibility of values.**

I return to language. I have uttered a new symbol word, “reversibility.” It is a word of power, a “key” to pass from one world to another, perhaps a “trans-sistor” in the physiology of the cosmic human who is born, a new “anthropological function” to transfer *oneself* from one level of energy-consciousness to another. I said part of this in my book *Anthropology of Synthesis*; and those who have read the stories of Castañeda will understand that I refer to the “alternating body.” Through the reversibility of values it is possible to pass from the horizontal dimension of time to the vertical direction of meanings.

It is not easy for me to speak about these things. The difficulty in explaining the nature of these “invisible bridges” is the same difficulty that I have in “translating myself,” in transferring the unitive, direct experience that I live within to the fragmented field of rational thought.

The poets, mystics, astronauts and scientists at the forefront have a similar problem today (they always have) when they want to explain the transitional states between different worlds. When Einstein *sees* that the light behaves alternatively as a wave and particle, and years later De Broglie and Schrödinger formulate the mathematical equations of equivalence between these two forms of behaviour, what they do is translate the original vision of the subject into the mathematical symbol. These masters, more than scientists, are “men of vision”; they not only introduce a technical instrument of synthesis, but they themselves *are* the synthesis, the

greatest difficulty they have is in translating the original vision into the language of the people of their time.

**This is the semantic barrier that today separates the people of vision from the people of thought. It is the same barrier that long ago separated the prophets from the doctors.**



Having reached this point, it is a good idea to pause a moment to underline the main ideas that have come up so far.

- I have pointed out the “fragmentation of knowledge” and the loss of the *connection* of the parts with the whole.
- I then talked about the “teaching of synthesis,” and I said that it was not based on a new ideology but on a new *vibration*.
- And, lastly, I highlighted the need, aside from conceptual language, for a new “energetic-symbolic” language of resonance by similarity.

Having made this last digression with regards to language and the instruments of language, I think it is time to ask ourselves:

## WHAT IS THE UNIVERSITY OF SYNTHESIS?

Because although we could not say that it “consists of” one department, degree or faculty or another, I will have to say something about it.

First, following a little the Chinese philosophers, I will say what it is **not**.

It **is not** a new system, project or syllabus, but something deeper. It is not a construction of thought but *embodiment* of the spirit.

That is on the one hand.

On the other I must add that

It **is not** something that can come into being anywhere. But I think that it is possible in Argentina. We shall see why below.

## ARCHITECTURE, FUNCTION AND MEANING

If the University of Synthesis cannot be reduced to a concept, it is not a plan or a project, and it cannot come into being everywhere, what is the frame of reference to somehow sketch the architecture, function and meaning of that *something* that does not yet exist but which is on the minds of the founders?

I have said that, above all, it is a “means of union” between the path of knowledge and the path of life. But this “union” must first be understood within before it is understood from without, which is the same as saying that

**the unity of humans is *prior to* the unity of science.**

This is the theoretical basis of a pedagogy of synthesis.

## **ALL PEDAGOGY OF SYNTHESIS IS A PEDAGOGY OF THE “BEFORE”**

**before** the fall into fragmentation occurred;

**before** the professionalist deformation through the specialization of functions;

**before** the existential crystallization of the person.

This is the mission of future educators: **before** depositing information, open the path of vision.

We can do nothing once the fall and fragmentation have occurred, other than repair therapy. And you will all have realized that today there is a greater preoccupation for therapy than for education. But education comes **before** therapy.

At present therapists have replaced educators. It is a sign of the time. The thing is that we are more ill. We have come down another step, we have passed from the fragmentation of knowledge to the fracture of humans.

## **FROM THE PROFESSIONALIST UNIVERSITY TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HUMANITY**

In the humans of our time there has occurred a

**dangerous break between the will to power and the consciousness of the self.**

The great challenge that the nascent synthesis culture raises for us is not the question of the unity of science, but the response for the unity of humanity. The divided human is incapable of synthesis.

What makes us proud today and seduces us is not knowledge but the “power of knowledge”; it is not the consciousness of knowing but the will of control. We want to *possess* knowledge in order to dominate nature and manipulate humans (pacifying our conscience with the ideology that, ultimately, the conquests of science will benefit humanity, although the facts show the sword of Damocles hanging over our heads in the form of remote-controlled rockets, star wars and acid rain.)

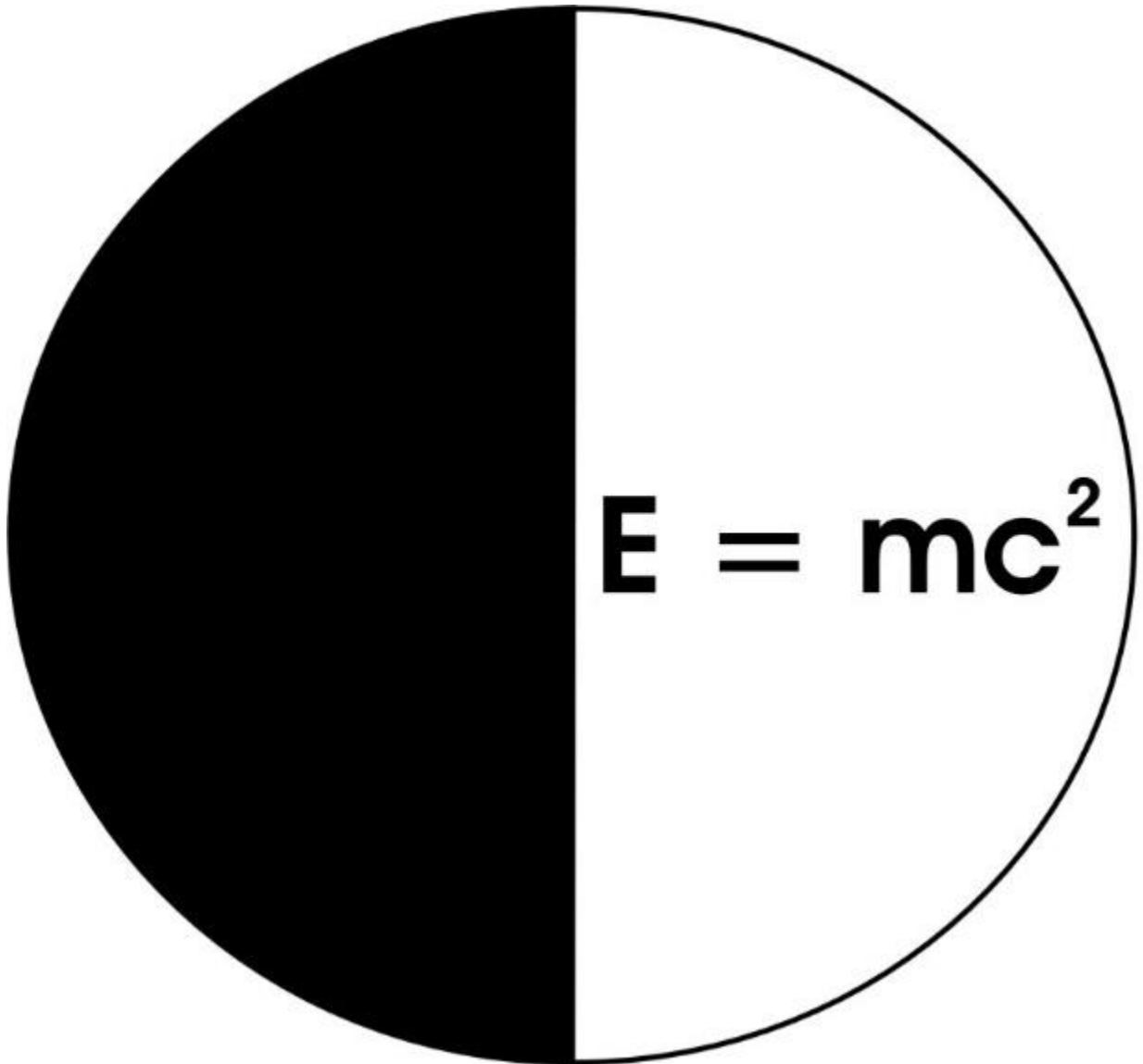
It is certainly true that the power of knowledge has brought us vaccines, antibiotics, electrical appliances, computers and space voyages, but it is also true that we have lost the gift of understanding the language of the birds and of understanding each other; we manufacture practical objects, but we have lost the creative power; outwardly we go in conquest of faraway stars, but inside we run into the existential void and the loss of meaning. This is the root of the existential balance of contemporary humans.

**The University, our educational system, has the answers for knowledge, but it does not have the answers for humanity.**



It could be argued that modern scientific thought advances towards a holistic, cybernetic, ecological conception, through information technology, the general theory of systems and the formulas of a unified field of the physical world. All this is true, but it is no less true that “robots” and “mathematical beings” do not include humans in their integrated circuits: they are formulas of power; with them we can transform stones into bread, but they do not show us the meaning of existence. They only represent

*“half of the formula.”*



They are something like “the king’s horses” and “the king’s men,” but they are *not* the king.

## SO WHAT IS MISSING?

What is missing is the inner point of reversion of the force.

Give me a place to stand and I shall move the world, said Archimedes: he had discovered the lever of the Promethean will. Things are different now, the sign of the time has changed, the world is no longer the same. The place to stand that we need is no longer external but internal. There is no external place to stand. All the places to stand that we had in yesterday's world have been destabilized by that "powerful current of rapid change" that I spoke of at the beginning. Now we need to discover a new "level," activate a new "function" within ourselves, perhaps interiorize that "transistor" I referred to a moment ago to

**reverse the will to power into expansion of consciousness;  
and the expansion of consciousness into will of participation.**

A new pedagogy is needed for that,

**a pedagogy of participation.**

through the master-disciple bond. Information technology is not enough.

The “master-disciple” bond on the inside corresponds to the “human-machine” cybernetic relationship on the outside.

Fifth-generation Japanese computers today represent the “last word” in our technical civilization, but to enter the new era the last word is not enough, the “first” is needed, and that “first word” isn’t something the computers have; the masters have it.

It is not a question of negating technology, but nor is it a question of mythologizing cybernetics, information technology and the general theory of systems.

## WHY ARGENTINA?

We have already entered the planetary civilization of the third millennium.

Every one of the peoples of the Earth makes their contribution: science, technology, organization.

Here in Argentina, we have to give what is ours.

Argentina is no longer a mix of races, a melting pot, the breadbasket of the world, but a planetary point of gestation of a new human synthesis, a balance of forces through the harmony of material and spiritual values.

As values at stake for this new synthesis, there not only arises an “Argentina as thought” or an “Argentina as feeling” (to acknowledge with these terms the works of Argentine authors who have expressed it thus), but also there arises an “Argentina as sacrifice”: Argentina’s sacrifice as a people, an offering of human matter for a new embodiment of the spirit in the soul of the people.

A visionary Argentine, Solari Parravicini, back in the years 1938-39, offered these words:

**“Argentina will suffer on a small scale what the world will suffer afterwards.  
Argentina will be light.”**

It is the masters who are called to participate in this delicate educational mission, no longer of information technology (we have computers for that), but rather one of *embodiment*. How? By projecting their own vocational force on the souls of the new generations, as the Argentine teachers did from the very first hour!

## **SUMMARY**

Today, the existing patterns of the University are mere fragments of a lost unity, making up a “galaxy of particularities.”

The term “synthesis” as a concept is misleading, but as a symbol it is thought-provoking.

The University of Synthesis re-joins the path of knowledge and the path of life. Which way? Through human reversibility, turning “power of knowledge” into “expansive consciousness”; perhaps a new physiology.

A new epistemology and a new methodology: unity of humanity before unity of science.

A new approach to teaching: the pedagogy of participation. The external cybernetic-human relationship combines with an internal master-disciple human bond.

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