EUROPEAN HUMANITIES UNIVERSITY

# HUMANITIES EDUCATION

## Disrupted and Transformed

## *How to Become Human in the XXI Century?*

Vilnius 2024

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Editor:
Prof. Dr. Povilas Aleksandravičius (EHU)

Reviewers:
Prof. dr. Tatyana Solomonik-Pankrashova (EHU)
Asoc. prof. dr. Andrius Sprindžiūnas (Mykolas Romeris University)

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This monograph offers a deep analysis of the current state of humanities education and its transformations in the 21st century. In an age where technology shapes our every interaction and globalization blurs cultural boundaries, the quest for human identity and purpose has never been more urgent. "Humanities Education Disrupted and Transformed" challenges conventional wisdom, exploring how universities can reclaim their role in fostering not just expertise, but true human flourishing. The authors of this monograph lead an intellectual journey that scrutinizes the intersection of technology and spirit, urging a renaissance of humanities education as our compass in navigating the complexities of a rapidly changing world. This monograph invites readers to ponder: What does it mean to be human in the digital age, and how can education nurture our fullest potential?

info@ehu.lt



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# Introductory Word

The issue of human education must be raised in a new way and solved differently. The concept of human being as a "benefit provider" and its education as "training a specialist" not only did not fulfil the hopes of creating a human society but even became a fundamental factor of its spiritual crisis. Does the Western tradition have the internal resources to solve this issue and this crisis? Shouldn't this tradition itself be reborn and transformed? How?

The authors of this monograph decided to start a complex discussion. Their choice is to analyse a connection between the mission of the university and the question of human nature. How to become Human in the 21st century? In what direction should human civilization develop? How could the university become a space for this becoming? Prof. Anatoli Mikhailov, the main author of the monograph, not only thought about these issues for many decades, but also took an active exemplary role by founding the European Humanities University. Prof. Jeffrey Andrew Barash, another world-renowned philosopher, provides fundamental insights into the role of the university in the modern world, declining the possibility of human universality and the historical conditions of globlization.

According to the authors of the monograph, technology occupies and will occupy the central axis of human development in the future. But this axis is not, must not become the only one. Spiritual capacities have always been hidden in the consciousness of humanity, which today must be realized with a new drive and form the next axis of human development. Relationship, conflict, connection between technology and spirit form the subject of the reflections of the authors of the second part of the monograph, Povilas Aleksandravičius and André Geske. Victor Martinovich's analysis of Pieter Bruegel's work blends harmoniously with them, unfolding the same problem of the intersection of humanity and university. Perhaps it is best to understand the problem of spirit and technology, humanities and the university first in art, and only then move it to the level of philosophical reflections?

The authors of the monograph understand how important it is to analyze the problem in an interdisciplinary perspective. In the third part, the connection between the university and the humanities is analyzed from the point of view of history, law, and economic sciences.

Aliaksei Makhnach, Liudmila Ulyashyna, Dzmitry Kruk decided to do this through studies of the historical development of a particular university, the European Humanities University. Thus, all the ideas developed in the monograph are confronted with a special historical reality — the reality of a university in exile, and through that — with the history of Europe and the crisis of civilization.

The problem takes on a specific aspect when observing the geopolitical changes that have taken place in Europe in recent decades. At the time when the societies of Western Europe fell into a crisis of thinking, the countries of Eastern Europe, characterized by an unwanted Soviet mentality, sought to join them in a common political and cultural space. Today, the societies of Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova are beginning to strive for the same. Young people are at the forefront of these complex processes. The issue of mentality transformation and humanities education becomes the key to the future of Europe.

But today, Europe is once again torn by war. As prof. Anatoli Mikhailov emphasizes, "the history of Europe in the 20th century testifies to how closely education is related to the spiritual state of society and how dangerous this state can develop without finding a proper way to nurture humanity. In 1909, Wilhelm Windelband warned German society that the failure of its educational system to assimilate the sources of the classical European tradition would lead to a social catastrophe". Similar warnings echoed in Germany in 1931. In the introduction of the English version of Ortega y Gasset's book *The Mission of the University* (1946), an argument is being put forward that proper humanities education is capable of neutralizing the danger of the Third World War. Also, Hannah Arendt analysed the dramatic consequences of the crisis in education, referring to Kafka's texts and thus highlighting the aspect of absurdity that plagues our education system more and more intensely, with E. Voegelin describing this situation as "the eclipse of reality". Today's situation of Europe, and of all humanity is such that ignoring reality can no longer be tolerated.

**Prof. Dr. Povilas Aleksandravičius**

# Preface

The present monograph is a continuation of the European Humanities University publications "The Language of Humanities: Between Word and Image" (Mikhailov, 2020) and "Thinking in Crisis" (Aleksandravičius, 2023) which address the issue of the nature of humanities and humanities education in the current era of unprecedented social upheavals and challenges.

We must acknowledge that these challenges are not entirely new. The history of Europe in the 20th century has convincingly demonstrated how closely education is linked to the spiritual state of society, and how dangerous that state can become without a proper way of nurturing human values in society. As early as 1909, for example, the German philosopher Wilhelm Windelband warned German society that the failure of its educational system to assimilate the roots and sources of the classical European tradition could lead to social catastrophe. Of course, Windelband was well aware that, in expressing this concern about Germany, he was talking about a country that could not be accused of ignoring the importance of education. Rather, his point was that the quality of education at the beginning of the twentieth century had lost its power to properly shape the personality. As is well known, Windelband was far from alone in his concerns.

In his famous 1919 article "The Intellectual Crisis", Paul Valery raised the problem that the world, which had given the name of "progress" to its tendency towards fatal precision, was trying to combine the blessings of life with the advantages of death. Valery recognised the danger of the European mind being completely defused. In the introduction to the English translation of José Ortega y Gasset's book The Mission of the University, published shortly after the end of the Second World War in 1946, it is argued that proper education is capable of neutralising the danger of a possible Third World War. We also know that Hannah Arendt, in her reflections on the origins of totalitarianism, was acutely aware of the dramatic consequences of the crisis in education in her various publications, in some cases even referring to texts by Franz Kafka and thus highlighting the aspect of absurdity that is increasingly plaguing our educational system. In many cases, all these warnings were based on a common agreement that education has become ossified in its forms and, although based on a kind

of fixed theory, contributes to the "eclipse of reality" (Eric Voegelin) rather than helping people to orient themselves in it, when we are no longer able to respond to its challenges.

The problem takes on a particular dimension when one considers the dramatic geopolitical changes that have taken place in Europe over the last few decades. Being at the forefront of these complex processes, young people in particular need a proper orientation in order to build a meaningful life. This becomes particularly difficult when the societies of Eastern Europe, heavily burdened by the former totalitarian mentality, are involved in a process of interaction with Western societies, which all too often apply to the situation of very different historical and cultural traditions a way of thinking that does not always function properly in their own reality. This is why the question of the transformation of mentality, which is closely linked to education in the humanities, is currently becoming the key issue for the future not only of Europe, but also of its interaction with the whole world.

Under these circumstances, there is an urgent need to renew our approach to the fundamental issues of human being in the present age, similar to that already raised by Søren Kierkegaard in his publication "The Present Age" in the middle of the nineteenth century, in order to adapt such a way of thinking to our own reality. The question arises: how is this possible when the very way of addressing it is strongly determined by the "internal crisis of thinking", which is "unlike any other that has occurred in the past" and which José Ortega y Gasset has identified as the "crisis of the foundations"? (Ortega y Gasset, 1946: 54).

## The Human Condition

Contemporary education in its stage of disruption means that, based as it is on such a way of thinking that is in a deep crisis, it loses its main purpose of establishing and preserving what is called the human condition, and even "the desire to escape the human condition". Hannah Arendt warns that what we have here is "a rebellion against human existence as it has been given", accompanied by "our present capacity to destroy all organic life on earth" (Arendt, 1998: 2–3).

Although humans do not have millions of years of evolution behind them, providing all living creatures with the genetic code necessary for their survival, they do need carefully crafted efforts to

support them in their existence in the world. The way to do this is far from being fixed in ready-to-use formulae to be applied in each case independently of time and circumstances. Too often, even when well-intentioned, educational systems, in the name of education, impose on a person such an abundance of different kinds of knowledge that not only does not stimulate the vital personal creativity, but very often suppresses it.

It is well known that Arthur Koestler's attempt to develop an elaborate general theory of human creativity, presented in his book "The Act of Creation" (1964), even suggests that what we call Homo sapiens is merely a "biological freak, the result of some remarkable mistake in the evolutionary process". Koestler follows the neurophysiologist Paul MacLean, who stresses the "unseemly haste" with which the specifically human areas of the brain were superimposed on the phylogenetically older structures, resulting in "inadequate coordination" between older (emotional) and newer (intellectual) functions (The New York Times, April 1968).

The temptation to question the validity of such a not universally accepted critique of the nature of human being remained ignored for some time, mainly because of the strong tendency, particularly determined by the spirit of the Enlightenment, to insist on the inevitable social progress based on the gradual advancement of human knowledge, and therefore the problem was not properly addressed, even in spite of the human atrocities committed in Europe in the twentieth century. This situation of unjustified optimism provokes attempts to ease the burden of societal efforts, in the expectation that the educational system will function smoothly while transmitting knowledge, and this can have highly dangerous consequences: "One of the most frightening prospects we have to face is that this earth may be populated by a race of beings who, although biologically belonging to the race of Homo sapiens, will be devoid of those qualities which spiritually distinguish man from the rest of organic creatures. In order to be human, we must know what it means to be human, how to acquire it, how to preserve it." (Heschel, 1965: 29)

For this reason, humanities education as a way of contributing to the efforts to convert the natural animality of human beings into achieving "the humanity of man" can be never taken by the society for granted and self-evident. It means that such efforts are not necessarily reached through providing fixed informational knowledge

of particular disciplines. In this context it is worth to remember that the famous article of Hannah Arendt "The Crisis of Education", published in her book "Between Past and Future", in its German version puts the decisive emphasis on what is called "Erziehung", i.e., the process of human "upbringing", "formation", which is not fully rendered through the English notion of "education".

In her book The Human Condition, Hannah Arendt presents a radical attempt, far from being purely academic, to look at the world and human affairs and to challenge the established truisms of our thinking. In the prologue to the book, she proposes "nothing more than to think what we are doing" and by this she recognizes the need for "a reconsideration of the human condition from the vantage point of our newest experiences and our most recent fears" (Arendt, 1998: 5).

Now, many decades later, we have to acknowledge that humanity has accumulated much more frightening experiences, which are still not matched by our adequate attempts to deal with them. It is therefore dangerous to base education, especially in the humanities, on the sterility of academic knowledge, which too often prefers to ignore the challenges of the reality in which we live.

In order to understand the radical nature of addressing the issue of the human condition, we need to go beyond the traditional perception of Arendt's thinking as reduced to the description of totalitarianism, because this only partially expresses the fundamental questions of humanity in the world. Her numerous references to ancient authors and to the history of the European intellectual tradition have the basic purpose of highlighting the dramatic changes that have taken place on our planet in recent centuries.

Addressing the issue of the specifics of "the modern age", Arendt diagnoses a paradoxical situation in which radical economic progress is accompanied by the threatening development of human "alienation from the world". In this context of easing the burden of the challenges that always accompany human beings in the world, combined with the temptation to rely on the improvement of external circumstances beyond one's control, she observes in the prologue to her book the danger that "thoughtlessness" and "the absence of thinking" are "among the outstanding characteristics of our time" (Arendt, 1998: 5). This means, however, that thinking, as the purest activity of which men are capable, cannot be perceived apart from other factors such as labour, work and action.

## Homo Technologicus

Norbert Wiener, traditionally regarded as the father of cybernetics, remarked in the mid-twentieth century: "We have modified our environment so radically that we must now modify ourselves in order to exist in this new environment" (in Barrett, 1972: 353). It was written at a time when it was difficult to imagine that today's technologies would increasingly dominate all aspects of our lives. Since then, the speed with which this ability to change our environment through modern technology has become so dramatic that human nature itself is in danger of failing to meet the demands of this technology, and thus, according to Günther Anders, of becoming "antiquated" (Anders, 1988).

Of course, when we speak of human "nature" we need to admit that it should not be perceived as "a substance" similar to the way it was proclaimed by the Cartesian tradition. Unlike that which exists in a given form as a result of millions of years of evolution and which has not been changed and influenced by human action, humans are always in a form which is never fixed, never finished, never unchangeable. This means that every epoch should raise the question of how to cultivate human values in human beings. The issue is old, but our perspective is one of particular urgency.

Günther Anders speaks in this context even about the destruction of life in the time of the third industrial revolution. These sentiments are shared by Arendt, who in her aforementioned book "The Human Condition" noted that, from the point of view of an extraterrestrial intelligence, "modern motorization would appear like a process of biological mutation in which human bodies gradually begin to be covered by shells of steel." (Arendt 1998: 295) As a consequence, the world, dominated by the never-ending cycle of production and consumption, which turns everything perceived into raw material for fueling the technological system, is heading towards the transformation of man into a working animal and, as a consequence, "may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known" (Arendt 1998: 295).

We also know that proponents of technological development proclaim that it can end centuries of human slavery and promise a possible new era of freedom from the forces of nature. However, unlike the time of the Industrial Revolution, when technological devices served human needs, today's technology is becoming more and more

self-organising and autonomous, to the extent that it can no longer be conceived of as a human "means".

This trend was foretold many decades ago by Jacques Ellul, who argued that technology has become increasingly autonomous; it has created an omnivorous world that obeys its own laws and has abandoned all tradition (Ellul, 1964). This means that in the technological age, no one seems to be in control of technical innovations that seem to have a "logic" and a "purpose" that transcend the intentions of individuals and replace traditional values with largely economic and utilitarian considerations. This brings us all face to face with a new reality of human attempts to change what has hitherto been regarded as "natural".

## Tik-talkativeness

But these are not just the changes in our environment that we are facing here. Our whole way of thinking and expressing ourselves is being determined by an increasingly modified artificial language. The technological revolution has contributed to the transformation of the ancient primordial logos into "logistics". In this case of the increasing technologisation of the world and the domination of the mathematical paradigm in all spheres of human knowledge, we are increasingly called upon to operate by the ready-for-use formulae that exclude the very way of asking questions about the world that has been so natural to man since his departure from the state of animality. This situation threatens to have very dangerous consequences: "it could be that we, who are earth-bound creatures and have began to act as though we were dwellers of the universe, will forever be unable to understand, that is, to think and speak about the things which we are able to do. In this case, it would be as though our brain, which constitutes the physical, material condition of our thoughts, were unable to follow what we do, so that from now on we would need artificial machines to do our thinking and our speaking. If it should turn out to be true that knowledge (in the modern sense of know-how) and thought have parted company for good, then we would indeed become helpless slaves, not so much of our machine as our know-how, thoughtless creatures at the mercy of every gadget which is technically possible, no matter how murderous it is" (Arendt, 1998: 3).

This is why Arendt stresses the danger of replacing "work", which constitutes the formation of a sense of the unity and identity of life and a sense of self as a self-creative activity, with "labour" associated with animal labourers. Of course, it does not ignore the importance of labour as a necessary condition for the provision of the essential means of life. But the more work is left to labour, the more it becomes a Sisyphean task and the less it stimulates human creativity. Unlike in ancient times, when "the life of a slave testified daily to the fact that "life is slavery", this condition is no longer fully manifest and its lack of appearance has made it more difficult to notice and remember... The danger such a society, dazzled by the abundance of its growing fertility and caught in the smooth functioning of a never-ending process, would no longer be able to recognize its own futility — the futility of life."

With the increasing factor of automation, apparently less burdensome and less strenuous work contributes to de-skilling and the loss of creativity. The temptation to rely on fixed knowledge is justified by the principle of reason formulated by Leibniz, which in turn produces confidence in a universal way of dealing with a particular reality. This principle, in turn, gives rise to a way of thinking and a kind of language that reminds us of the phenomenon of "talkativeness" already mentioned by Søren Kierkegaard.

Almost two hundred years have passed since the publication of Kierkegaard's text "The Present Age", in which he expressed his concern about the danger of entering a new sphere of public life in which "talkativeness" as a way of expressing and communicating our thoughts could become a threat. However, what in Kierkegaard's time was only slowly emerging in its initial forms in our age of internet and mass media dominance has become the determining factor in human development from early childhood. There is a growing danger that the language we use will be instrumentalised by the intensive use of concepts and terms that only seem to carry the meaning. Instead, the dominant contemporary language, something that "makes man a political being" (Arendt, 1998: 3), threatens to make our lives also "artificial" through the kind of language that makes man a political being. At present, especially in the sphere of the mass media, it is taking the forms that could be identified as the phenomenon of "tik-talkativeness".

Commenting on the trend of these troubling developments in the public sphere, Heidegger, long before the time of the internet, suggested in section 35 of Being and Time, "Chatter", that chatter is

what allows us to succeed in the public world. "Chatter is the possibility of understanding everything without first having to pay it any mind." Chatter rescues us, adds David Krell, from the hazard that when we try to pay heed to something, when in dedication we turn devotedly to a thing, precisely then we may well fail or suffer shipwreck (bei einer solchen Zueignung zu scheitern). Things elude us even when we most want to heed them. The empty talk helps us not to notice" (Krell, 1992: 173).

All these developments are taking place at a time when modern science has dramatically changed not only the relationship between humans and nature into one of domination and possession, but also the nature of human relationships. Although man's grip on nature has never been more secure, and our technological age seems to have given us control over the fate of nature itself in a way that we have never experienced before, we are facing an unprecedented global crisis of a different kind from anything we have seen before: "We are dealing with the totality of human existence, not only or primarily with some of its aspects. Enormous scientific efforts are devoted to the study of various aspects of human life — for example, anthropology, economics, linguistics, medicine, physiology, political science, psychology, sociology. But each specialised study of man, treating each function and instinct in isolation, tends to look at the whole person from the point of view of a particular function or instinct. This approach has in fact led to an increasing atomisation of the human being, to the fragmentation of the personality, to metonymic misunderstandings, to the mistaking of the part for the whole. Is it possible to understand an impulse separately, ignoring the interdependence of all impulses within the wholeness of the person? (Heschel, 1965: 4).

For too long, these and other warnings of the twentieth century have been ignored by the academic community, which continues to prefer "business as usual" in education, while continuing to teach fragmented and specialised knowledge independent of the human being, who is always in need of being re-addressed according to the challenges of particular circumstances. The question remains: do we have enough courage to respond to these challenges through our practical efforts to transform humanities education into what it has always been throughout history, accompanied by the utmost human effort, before it is too late?

**Prof. Dr. Anatoli Mikhailov**

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— Part 1 —

# Nature of Humanities, Nature of University

**Anatoli Mikhailov**

# Humanities Education as a Challenge

*What is most thought-provoking*
*in our thought-provoking time is*
*that we are not yet thinking.*

**—Martin Heidegger**

The title of this essay may sound rather strange, especially to those engaged in the traditionally routine activities of research and teaching in the humanities and social sciences. The question is: why are these kinds of activities seen as challenging? However, we must recognise that this question is far from abstract. It touches on the very nature of our present existence in a world facing new and unprecedented challenges.

As we approach the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, we must self-critically recognise that our perception of reality is in dramatic contrast to that of not so long ago. It was the time of hopes, accompanied by illusionary expectations, that the world was finally moving towards overcoming the end of the evils of totalitarianism in the twentieth century, with millions of innocent lives sacrificed. It was also a time of hope, expressed with great confidence, that the long-awaited realistic prospect of positive social change throughout the world was at last dawning.

This optimism was based, inter alia, on the impressive advancement of the sciences, which had demonstrated their ability to dramatically change all aspects of our lives, and created the belief that they could also contribute to similar positive changes in the sphere of human life and human relations. Particularly enthusiastic expectations arose in countries that had previously been under the domination of communist ideology, including those in Eastern Europe and

the newly independent states created after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, which were eager to participate in determining their new role and place in the world.

Needless to say, the current reality does not suggest that these expectations have been fulfilled. The world is once again heading towards new crises and confrontations that are increasingly global in nature, involving different continents, nations, religious and ethnic traditions. The painful recognition of the gravity of these crises is not accompanied by our willingness to confront the failure to question the way of thinking we still rely on. Our attitude is characterised by an absence of self-criticism towards ourselves as those who embody this way of thinking and propagate it through liberal arts education.

As a rule, those involved in humanities research and education claim to be promoting the production of specialists in a particular field: "philosophy", "sociology", "economics", "law", "political science", "history", "psychology", etc. Such activity is currently becoming mass production. Every year, millions of these future "specialists" enter and graduate from universities, and hundreds of thousands of them defend their doctorates. They hold conferences and seminars, each time discussing supposedly highly important issues, publish books and articles, teach in schools and universities, and express their professional opinions on the pressing issues of public life in the mass media.

The current contours of academic activity, which takes the form of scientific conferences, were described ironically by Martin Heidegger in 1925, with reference to philosophy: "For everything that has to be done nowadays, we first have a meeting, and this is how it works: people come together, constantly come together, and they all wait for each other to appear so that the others can tell them how it is, and if it isn't said, it doesn't matter, everyone has had his say. It may well be that all those who speak have little understanding of the matter in question, but nevertheless we believe that if we accumulate all this misunderstanding, something like understanding will emerge at the end of the day. And so there are people today who travel from one meeting to the next, sustained by the belief that something is really happening, that they've just ducked out of work and are looking for a place in the chatter to build a nest for their helplessness — a helplessness, it's true, that they will never understand' (quoted from Krell, 1992: 174). Almost a hundred years later, this kind of activity, not only in the field of philosophy, is beyond imagination and has become an activity per

se as a means of self-justification for those who are otherwise afraid of losing their public credibility and their jobs.

Gradually, however, more and more voices have been raised questioning the quality and efficiency of this seemingly self-evident activity, often in a very radical way. In this context, and in the spirit of Hannah Arendt's dramatic articles "The Crisis in Education" and "The Crisis in Culture", published in her book *Between Past and Future*, it is worth recalling, among other things, the intense public debate in the German media, organised in the mid-1960s by Georg Picht under the title "German Educational Catastrophe". In recent years, there has also been an increasing number of publications questioning the traditional status quo of research and teaching in disciplines that deal with human reality (see, for example, Ricci, 1984; Spivak, 2003; Deresiewicz, 2014).

Yet, despite these numerous warnings, the commitment to the teaching of the humanities continues to be "business as usual", measured almost exclusively in quantitative terms. Research in academic institutions and universities is still determined by the principle of "publish or perish", and, ignoring José Ortega y Gasset's warning that every field of human activity can be characterised either by its authenticity or by its inauthenticity, we continue to produce an uncontrollable number of publications, which are proudly called "scientific", and which continue to grow in exponential proportions. As a result, in contrast to the growing prestige of science and technology, with their fantastic achievements dramatically changing our lives, the humanities are less and less taken seriously by the public. *This means that too often our own self-perception does not match the way we are seen by the outside world.*

Commenting on the massive overproduction of such pretentious knowledge in the mid-twentieth century, George Steiner writes in his book *Language and Silence*: "Ninety percent of all the scientists in human history are now living. Scientific publications over the next twenty-five years, if laid next to each other on an imaginary shelf, would reach to the moon." (Steiner, 2013a: 62)

While it is extremely difficult to verify the accuracy of this sarcastic assessment, we must at any rate recognise that the state of confusion within this kind of 'knowledge' is constantly growing. Such "thinking", while pretending to address the challenging issues of human life, in fact contributes to their "eclipse" (Eric Voegelin) rather than to

their clarification. Consequently, we must acknowledge that we live in a time of the exhaustion of all fundamental concepts and words, and thus of the destruction of our genuine relationship with the world.

The mechanics of the inflation of this knowledge, comments Steiner in his other book, *The Real Presences*, is particularly "decisively functional in the humanities." He emphasizes the phenomenon of "The paper Leviathan of secondary talk... that of review speaking to the review, of the critical article addressing the critical article, circulates endlessly. It is not, as Ecclesiastes would have it, that "of making many books there is no end". It is that 'of making books on books and books on those books there is no end'... We are witnessing the mushrooming of semantic-critical jargon, the disputations between structuralists, post-structuralists, meta-structuralists and deconstructionists... " (Steiner, 2013b: 39). As a result, the current generation of those entering the humanities tends to rely on reviews and critiques of publications that barely express the authentic meaning of foundational texts that constitute the essence of human culture, which since antiquity has helped humanity emerge from its phase of savagery and barbarism.

In 2015, a survey conducted by Asit Biswas and Julian Kirchherr and published in the German newspaper *Die Zeit*, revealed that every year about 1.5 million articles are published *only in data-based* journals. At the same time, about 82% of those in the humanities are never read or cited. The conclusion of the survey is rather sad: *Prof, no one is reading you*! (*Die Zeit* no. 31, July 30, 2015). However, immersed in this kind of activity, we still ignore the inevitable answer to the question about an intrinsic connection between the recognition of the "crisis" that increasingly dominates our description of the present reality and our ability to address the roots of such thinking that has determined it.

## The Roots of the Current Crisis

We must acknowledge that this situation is not entirely new and has very deep roots in the previous history of the European intellectual tradition. For several centuries we have witnessed how the field of knowledge, whose main principles were established in early Greek antiquity, has tried to address the specific nature of "*human* reality", while clearly understanding the impossibility of bringing human life

under the full control of knowledge. This experience was particularly expressed in Greek tragedy. At the same time, since Plato, a new type of knowledge has become prevalent, determined rather by the trend toward *idealization* of the reality of human being and society rather than addressing their constantly modifying challenging issues. This trend, however, has not gone unnoticed, especially by the Christian tradition, which has tried to focus and maintain attention on the existential dimension of knowledge.

As early as the turn of the fifth century AD, St. Augustine expressed his concern that people were being "hurled into an abyss of their own theories." (Elshtain, 1998: 57). As a result, the course of interaction between Greek theory and the Christian heritage tended increasingly to maintain a separation between existential experience and theorising in abstract reasoning and commentary. Separated from the existential issues of human life, the dominant perception of thought was heading toward establishment of a unified theory which attained the status of force of law vis-a-vis a particular reality. The traditional understanding of this theory unfolds itself on the basis of interpreting the Greek *logos* understood as a statement defining itself according to the principles of logic and rational judgment.

It was already Michel de Montaigne in the sixteenth century (whom Nietzsche praised as one of the greatest spirits who ever lived on our planet) who recognized the danger of denigration of knowledge in which we *confuse* our understanding of human reality rather than clarify it. In the chapter "*Of Experience*" of his famous "*Essays*", Montaigne writes: "the experience makes it manifest, that so many interpretations dissipate the truth, and break it... Who will not say that glosses augment doubts and ignorance, since there is no book to be found, either human or divine, which the world busiest itself about, whereof the difficulties are cleared by interpretation. The hundredth commentator passes it onto the next, still more knotty and perplexed than he found it. When were we ever agreed among ourselves: "this book has enough; there is now no more to be said about it?"... There is more ado to interpret interpretations that to interpret things; and more books upon books than upon any other subject; we do nothing but comment upon one another. Every place swarms with commentaries... Is it not the common and final end of all studies? Our opinions are grafted upon one another; the first serves as a stock to the second, the second to the third, and so forth... " As a result, Montaigne

concludes, in all fields of study "We exchange one word for another, and often for *one* less understood" and in this situation he even raises the question: "Do we find an end to this need of interpreting?" "How could we find an end to this need when interpretation disguises itself in so many ways, when interpretation masks itself and its desire for absolute knowledge in the drive toward society?" (Montaigne, 1892: 563–564, 565–566).

I believe that Montaigne was fortunate not to have lived to see the current state of affairs in what we traditionally identify as the "humanities" and "social sciences". No wonder, then, that at present we are too often in a state of *confusion* about how to understand the reality in which we live according to this kind of knowledge, and that as a consequence we inevitably lose our ability to respond to the ever-growing challenges that our civilisation faced in the twentieth century, and that it is facing again in its new forms in the twenty-first century.

The issue is far from being of an abstract academic nature. It is intrinsically connected with the danger of the loss of human's ability to address the vital issues of the very existence of our being in the world, with painful acknowledgment of the failure to compensate through education in the field of humanities the "genetic deficiency of human nature" (Herder) and constant presence of its "innate evil" (Kant). The concern about the danger of the emergence of such a kind of "knowledge", which exists in the vague form of an abstract "talkativeness", was expressed, among others, by Soren Kierkegaard in the middle of the nineteenth century in his famous essay *The Present Age*. Describing the picture of the dubious scholarship of his century, which failed to address the existential questions of the reality of human life, Kierkegaard sarcastically remarked that it consisted "in the invocation of a multitude of names of little relevance, the desiccated prose that in its deathly parlor leans on pointless footnotes, and the striking fact that the perversion is accomplished without passion. Life and death are utterly out of the picture as in any question of a mission: we breathe classroom air or, yet more often, the dust of the journal shelves" (Kaufmann, 1962: 14). Ultimately, the individual becomes subordinated to an abstract power which dominates over all his activities. Kierkegaard emphasizes that this situation is a clear opposition to the ancient times: "Whereas in antiquity the host of individuals existed, so to speak, in order to determine how much the excellent individual

was worth, today the coinage standard has been changed so that about so and so many human beings *uniformly* make one individual; thus it is merely a matter of getting the proper number and then one gets significance"[1] (Kierkegaard, 1978: 84–85).

Such warnings, dramatically expressed, in particular by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche in the nineteenth century, were multiplied in the twentieth century by various prominent personalities. However, they were met with strong resistance from the majority who preferred the *status quo* in enlargement of this alleged knowledge and ignored the danger of remaining "increasingly stupid for all their theoretical intellectualism" (Hesse, 1974: 2). Here Hermann Hesse takes the case of the novel *Idiot* and other books by Dostoevsky to illustrate how difficult, if not almost impossible, it is to convey to others such an unusual vision that confronts this established canon of thought in order to awaken them from their slumber, adding that although these books were written in Russia in the 1850s and 60s, they have not lost their value for the reality of the twentieth century. Writing his articles on Dostoevsky immediately after the end of the First World War in 1919, Hesse comes to the conclusion: "The important thing is that these books for three decades have become increasingly important and prophetic works to the young people of Europe." (Hesse, 1974: 4) It means that if we are addressing the painful issues of the present reality, we must dig deeper and look for the roots that have determined this situation and go beyond the boundaries of the fixed scheme of theoretical reasoning which was not able to prevent Europe from its catastrophes. In this case, echoing Dostoevsky's insights, Hesse demonstrates his preferences not to the academic reasoning but to somebody who was identified as an "idiot" and some others "insane" person: "What is actually impresses us is its prophetic import, its foreshadowing of a disintegration and of a chaos into which we have during these last years seen Europe obviously descending" (Hesse, 1974: 4).

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[1] This sentiment of Kierkegaard was shared by the German author Karl Immermann who in 1836 has expressed in his novel "Epigones" the feeling of loss by the European culture of its authnticity and creative nature and the dangerous appearance of "epigonism" on the scene which causes reliance on second-rate commentaries which are steadily losing their authenticity (Immermann, 1981: 118–119).

Behind these efforts determining the spiritual atmosphere of the twentieth century, there is a well-known attempt by Friedrich Nietzsche to undertake the genealogical critique of the process of the establishment of such thinking in order to understand how the European spirit has always managed to prove what in its innermost heart it simply wanted to prove: "That for a thousand years European thinkers thought only in order to prove something — inversely, today every thinker who wants to prove is suspect — that whatever was supposed to be the result of their strictest reflection was already held fast —... this tyranny, this arbitrariness, this rigorous and grandiose stupidity has *educated* the European mind". (Krell, 1996: 5) Thus, the question raised by Hannah Arendt — whether there is "a way of thinking which is not tyrannical?" (Arendt, 2003: II. 20.45) — becomes crucial for those who are able not only to resist the intellectual "swimming" within the commonly accepted framework of thought but are able to find the courage to question its basic guiding principles, including the principle of the correspondence of knowledge and facts — *adaequatio rei et intellectus*.

It is noteworthy that this criticism of thinking that dominated in the twentieth century did not usually come from those who, by virtue of their profession, were engaged in research and teaching in the humanities, whom Arendt called "thinkers by profession", and who preferred to contribute to the formation of the new homunculus of modernity "named *Ego cogito*" (Peperzak, 2006: 2). Their activity consisted in the disengagement and objectification of knowledge, which helped to create an image of the human being in its most extreme forms of materialism, from which the last vestiges of subjectivity seem to have been expelled. It is an image of man from a completely neutral third-person perspective. The anonymous character of such knowledge, fixed in form and presented as a theory, prevents us from the painful realisation that, despite a strong faith in the power of such knowledge and its dissemination through the educational system, Europe was not able to avoid the catastrophes of the twentieth century: "The ultimate of political barbarism grew from the core of Europe... Not only did the general dissemination of literary, cultural values prove no barrier to totalitarianism; but in notable instances the high places of humanistic learning and art actually welcomed and aided the new terror. Barbarism prevailed on the very ground of Christian humanism, of Renaissance culture and classic rationalism. We know that some of men who devised

and administered Auschwitz had been taught to read Shakespeare or Goethe, and continued to do so." (Steiner, 2013b: 3).

Unfortunately, too little has been done to reconsider the sedimented ways of teaching, very often also under the name "liberal arts education", which are continued on the assumption of their inevitable success. Nor are there any visible attempts to reach a common understanding between representatives of different disciplines: William Barrett comments on this confused situation in twentieth-century academia in his book *Time of Need*: "A typical meeting of a university today can sound like the clash of foreign tongues, each speaking from its own specialization with its particular assumptions, viewpoint, and very different body of information. Not only do scientists and humanities stand on different ground, but the scientists quarrel among themselves; sociologists may be at loggerheads with the economists, and psychologists with both; the school of philosophers do not even condescend to try to understand each other... Our culture has brought down the tower of Babel from heaven to earth." (Barrett, 1973: 285)

The dramatic nature of the understanding of knowledge as vital for the survival of European civilisation was raised at the beginning of the twentieth century by the founder of the phenomenological movement, Edmund Husserl, who, within the framework of phenomenology, took radical steps to renew the basic principles of the European intellectual tradition. At the later stage of the development of his thought, his voice became a kind of Edvard Munch's cry in the hope of saving European civilisation itself. Husserl, who with his symbolic programmatic statement publicly proclaimed the necessity of transforming philosophy into a rigorous science, came to the painful conclusion that it was the *theoretical attitude* that emerged in ancient Greece that subordinated our lives to the authority of theory. In other words, Husserl concludes, "man becomes a non-participating spectator, surveyor of the world; he becomes a philosopher." (Husserl, 1970: I) It means that the consequence of spreading this kind of "knowledge" is something that can be identified as "the retreat from the world" (G. Steiner). The problem is that for many of those who claim to identify with the humanities, it becomes a quite comfortable way of life to remain in such a sphere of sterile knowledge, detached from reality. I can self-critically confess that I also feel quite comfortable surrounded by wonderful books from my private library.

According to Charles Taylor, "the origin of one of the greatest paradoxes of modern philosophy", which decisively influenced the way of development of the European intellectual tradition, lies in the "disengagement and objectification" that has helped to create an image of man in its most extreme forms of materialism, from which the last vestiges of subjectivity seem to have been expunged. It is an image of man from a completely third-person perspective. He concludes that "The turn to oneself is now also and inescapably a turn to oneself in the first-person perspective — a turn to the self as a self" (Taylor, 1989: 175–176). Without this dramatic shift in thinking, we are doomed to continue making the same mistakes that threaten once again to unleash painful social consequences that were unforeseen and overshadowed for too long by our confidence in achieving the right results from previous praxis of education.

Still, *there is a harsh reality outside*. We need to confess that the temptation to believe that our way of thinking remains powerful vis-a-vis surrounding reality has long gone. It was a painful acknowledgement of the last twentieth century by many prominent persons, among others also by Hannah Arendt, who has experienced it in regard to her own country and who has formulated it in a very clear way: *Thought and reality have parted company*." "Reality became opaque for the light of the thought." (Arendt, 1961: 6).

We must acknowledge that contemporary research is but a form of theoretical downsizing. Kant's famous appeal to *Selbstdenken* — thinking on one's own — with all its seemingly persuasive appeal, becomes nothing more than the stubborn pursuit of the autonomy of thought, deprived of its most valuable, not always recognised presuppositions (*Vorurteile*) as noted by Hans-Georg Gadamer, which express the very core elements of thinking as constituting our *factual* being in the world — language, customs, religious and political.

It is extremely difficult and even painful to acknowledge that what we still rely on and apply to the reality of our lives is suddenly shaky and questionable because "five centuries of thorough thought seem rather to have resulted in general discouragement and despair with regard to the original purpose" (Peperzak, 2006: 6).

The crucial question remains: can we rely on such sort of thinking in our teaching activities?

In too many cases, unable to respond adequately to the growing challenges of today's world, we seek refuge in finding those who

are responsible for what is happening, which puts us in difficult situations. It is very difficult not to be tempted to find an external cause for our suffering. "Seeking after a ground, after something *responsible* for one's present situation, and therefore *guilty* of it, corresponds to what Nietzsche calls the instinct of revenge" (Krell, 1996: 68). As a result, we are immersed in an abstract knowledge that creates a condition in which we all become almost like people who have grown up in such a sterilised environment that we have lost our natural immunisation and become defenceless against attacking bodies.

Let us realise once again: if we have not been able to learn from the various warnings of prominent intellectuals of the twentieth century, if the tragic experience of events on the European continent has not helped to shake our confidence in outdated knowledge, should we continue with business as usual and promise a young generation that they will be properly equipped for their future lives?

Can we try to radically modify such objectified knowledge of the outside world, into that one which *serves to build and to cultivate the self*?

To this end, we must first recognise that, in the case of the humanities, we are dealing with a special kind of "subject" that does not exist as such like natural entities: "We are dealing — and let the disquieting strangeness of the case be well noted — with an entity whose being consists not in what it is already, but in what it is not yet, a being that consists in not-yet-being." (Ortega y Gasset, 1941: 112) "The stone is given its existence; it need not fight for being what it is — a stone in the field. Man has to be himself in spite of unfavorable circumstances; that means he has to make his own existence at every single moment. He is given the abstract possibility of existing, but not the reality. This he has to conquer hour after hour. Man must earn his life, not only economically but metaphysically." (Ortega y Gasset, 1941: 111).

This means that humanistic education, instead of being, in too many cases, a kind of indoctrination of the mind through the transmission of fossilized knowledge expressed in torn out, fixed terminology, must now be transformed into a means of awakening the human being to an intensive participation in life. The crucial question is: how to break the fixed habit of thought developed over two and a half thousand years? Even when we try to do so, we inevitably find ourselves embedded in the very tradition we are trying to overcome, with its

basic principles, habits and language, which are beyond our control. According to Martin Heidegger, we live in the time "of the exhaustion of all fundamental words and the destruction of the genuine relation to the world". (Heidegger, 1989: 510) That is why responding to this challenge "is not a 'formal' trick in mere words, whereby their meaning is turned around; on the contrary, it is the transformation of humankind itself" (Heidegger, 1989: 84).

## Enigmatic Text: The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism

In the time of intensifying globalization of the world and of new challenges for the European intellectual tradition in its interaction with often very different mental and intellectual horizons, it is highly naive to expect that what is becoming effective within this tradition itself can be applied to the state of mind that has been shaped over the course of millennia by the reality of different historical situations.

To prevent us from the temptation of participating in the deepening of this crisis of thinking, as was already the case in the nineteenth and especially in the twentieth century. It is important to remember that these attempts went beyond the limits and principles of the already established and dominant thinking that still dominates science and contemporary politics. This thinking, with its system of concepts and categories, estranged from reality, has become "worldlessness" (H. Arendt and H. Blumenberg) and has lost its immediacy attributed to ancient times. Preferring to remain in the sphere of the *vita contemplativa,* as opposed to the *vita activa,* it tends to avoid the responsibility for what is going on in the world. No wonder that it is not only in the case of Hugo von Hofmannstahl, Franz Kafka, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Martin Heidegger, Eugène Ionesco and many others in the twentieth century who have raised their voices against the spread of a worn-out parlance of such "thinking" and have even reinforced the growing temptation of silence (for more, see Brogan, 2013: 32–45).

It becomes clear that any attempt to express the nature of the experience that constitutes the essence of the humanities using commonly accepted conceptual means deprives this experience of its immediacy and existential meaning. Such an attempt was already made at the end of the eighteenth century in the tradition of German Idealism.

In the seventies of the last century, a short fragment of about two pages was recovered in the Jagiellonian Library in Krakow which was previously mentioned by Franz Rosenzweig already in 1917. In the mid-1980s, thanks to the efforts of Otto Pöggeler and Christoph Jamme, the text was edited and subjected to a thorough analysis at the Hegel Archive in Bochum, Germany. It was in Hegel's handwriting and in many cases is attributed to his authorship. Since then, however, there have been various attempts to prove that the content of the text can also be attributed to the authorship of Schelling and Hölderlin, who were in close contact with Hegel at the time. David Krell argues convincinglyin his remarkable book *The Tragic Absolute. German Idealism and the Languishing of God* (2005) that the very spirit of this text more convincingly demonstrates its belonging rather to the ideas of Schelling and Hölderlin (see also Sturma, 2000: 224–232).

This document proclaims the need to return to mythology. It may sound strange for the enlightened age to speak of myth again. We are so accustomed to believe that rationality has completely disqualified myth as the previous primitive state of human mind. But the study of ancient tragedy is far from being of purely academic interest. Contrary to the optimism of the Enlightenment, with its belief in inevitable societal progress, it is "the way to true understanding of the eternal tragedy that is human coexistence, when such a reality is simply called "society". This means, according to Ortega y Gasset, that although the sociability of human existence is obviously unthinkable, we "must at least make all haste to state with equal emphasis, and *to accord equal weight to*, the fact that man is also unsociable and bristling with antisocial impulses." (Ortega y Gasset, 1946: 24)

This means that our primary relationship to reality has traditionally been portrayed as one of knowledge, which should be purified and updated as much as possible in order to be based on an absolute ground. This image, however, inevitably creates insurmountable aporias, and in the end it seems that "thought necessarily rests upon non-rational and ultimately unjustifiable factors like our socialization and our particular susceptibility to socialization." (Braver, 2012: 11). It ignores the fact that the idea of a "Pure Reason" detached from our being in the world, is itself nothing but a myth, based as it is on a fantasised notion of total objectivity and abstraction from all human concerns.

The idea of the productivity of myth was revived by Giambattista Vico in his Scienze nuova, with its critique of Cartesianism, and

was closely followed by thinkers such as J. Hamann, J. Herder and W. Goethe. Isaiah Berlin summarised its main principle as follows: "Myths are not, as enlightened thinkers believe, false statements about reality corrected by latter rational criticism, nor is poetry mere embellishment of what could be equally well be stated in ordinary prose. The myths and poetry of antiquity embody a vision of the world as authentic as of Greek philosophy, or Roman law, or the poetry and culture of our own enlightened age — earlier, cruder, remote from us but with its own voice, as we hear it in the Iliad or the Twelve Tables, belonging uniquely to its own culture, and with a sublimity which cannot be reproduced by a more later, more sophisticated culture" (Berlin, 1998: 247).

This means that the purpose of this new mythology is to express a desire to counteract the fragmentation of social life and to seek a radical cultural transformation of society in which individuals and humanity as a whole will be reunited. It is also an attempt to remind us all of the *insecuritas humana*, the infinite uncertainty of human existence.

Aristotle's famous statement that "poetry is something more philosophical and of graver import than history, since its statements are of nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars" (Aristotle, 1997: 1451 b2–4) means something deeper than we usually understand it, as the word *historia* has a wider scope than our notion of "history" including all factual research into human behavior. William Barret proposes to recast its meaning in the following way: "Poetry — or as we should prefer to say here, art — presents us a deeper truth about human life than all the researchers of the behavioral sciences." (Barrett, 1973: 10)

The proper reflection of deep insights of this text deserves special attention. There are two remarkable publications that address the insights of this enigmatic text with its enormous importance for our possibility for our awakening from the dominating slumber of tyranny of abstractions — D. J. Schmidt. *On Germans and other Greeks. Tragedy and Ethical Life* and D. F. Krell. *The Tragic Absolute. German Idealism and the Languishing of God*. Both authors, having a solid background in philosophy, have acknowledged that we have to do with "the end of philosophy," conceived of the situation that philosophy's reached "the limits of its possibilities". In this situation, having become "exposed" to the limits of our own destiny, "Tragedy reveals itself to be not merely one compelling model for our thinking, but a realm that

is "privileged, even mandated, by history itself". (Krell, 2005: 2) Here we are dealing with a tragedy as not a subject of the literary genre, but as a way of life we are not able to escape from, as Miguel de Unamuno has presented it in his famous book *The Tragic Sense of Life*. It means that "facticity" of our life would point to a more primordial and original articulation of experience as *lived* in the world prior to doctrines, systems and theories. To indicate this rootedness of thinking in "here" and "now' Arendt, following the Heidegger's notion of *Dasein*, repeatedly alludes to Kafka's parable of "He" who dreams of overcoming this inescapable battleground as the location of thought "to be promoted to the position of umpire, spectator and judge outside the game of life." (Arendt, 1978: 207)

Commenting on the ideas of the text *The Earliest System-Program of German Idealism* and pointing out that poetic work is "about the possibilities that inhabit the very nature of human *praxis*", Dennis Schmidt recalls, with the reference to the notion of the tragic art in Aristotle's *Poetics*, that it describes the human condition as connected with "a *praxis* of a destructive nature, such as the presentation of death, torture, woundings and the like" (1452b12) (Schmidt, 2001: 58) The text makes clear that the task of thinking — to promote and preserve human freedom, which is ultimately an ethical task — will find its answer in the work of art, not in conceptual reason. For an understanding of the role assigned to the work of art at this point, this is a crucial text; all that is missing is a clear indication that the true destination of the work of art, the final signature of beauty, is to be found in tragic art. But such an indication is almost self-evident at this point, since for Hegel, Schelling and Hölderlin this step is the most natural, the most direct, the next step in this programme. The text concludes with a statement that symbolizes the possibility of a new way of thinking: "The highest act of reason, the one through which it encompasses all ideas, is an aesthetic act, and... truth and goodness only become sisters in beauty. The philosopher must possess as much aesthetic power as the poet." Conclusion: "there is no philosophy, no history left; the poetic art alone will survive." (Schmidt, 2001: 81)

The main message of the text, while proclaiming a return to mythology, at the same time asserts that the immersion in life with its challenges, so characteristic of the period identified as mythological and primitive, has been replaced by a new mythology — the mythology of an abstract reason that imposes on man the chimera of an allegedly

powerful knowledge that becomes questionable in the present age. This is why David Krell asks the following question: "Does not the urgent need for a new mythology mean that the current fables and superstitions have run their course and are in crisis and decline? Among those fables of power are all appeals to the absolute — the absolute right of kings, the absolute authority of churches, the absolute fraud of dogma. The tragic absolute will thus unsettle all the others." (Krell, 2005: 3)

In our time, no one has evoked the narrative quality of myth with greater poetic force than Robert Calasso. In *The Marriage of Cadmus and Harmony*, Calasso says the following about mythic repetition and variation: "The repetition of a mythical event, with its play of variations, tells us that something remote is beckoning to us. There is no such thing as the isolated mythical event, just as there is no such thing as the isolated word. Myth, like language, gives all of itself in each of its fragments". (Krell, 2005: 145)

We see here that this vision of the human condition is clearly opposed to the optimism of the spirit of the Enlightenment with its expectations of progressing rational regulations of society and human behavior. That is why tragedy in Greece becomes a means of teaching the essential strangeness, a great sense of the power of life, nature and destiny, and an overwhelming awareness of what is beyond human control.

It means that tragedy reappears as a theme of thought in the moment of crisis, a moment that understands itself as marking an epochal end and a new, as yet unknown beginning. Contrary to the attempts to idealise human life, which is presented as controllable and expressible through the corresponding language of concepts, we are confronted with the concrete and existential process of the individual who is unable to overcome suffering. Not content with accepting suffering as his condition and situation, he devotes his life to the search for its cause, for a place to lay the blame. As a rule, this cause is traditionally perceived as external and pre-given by others, hence the temptation to escape personal responsibility for the failure of responding to the challenges of life.

Therefore, the attempts to return to myth should not be misinterpreted as the restoration of an old-fashioned and obsolete state of mind from ancient times, nor should the new mythology seek a return to obsolete social conditions. It is rather an attempt to address the question of Being, which is not so amenable to human thought as

to improvise itself into a clear and logical definition. It is merely a reaction to the radical consequences of the Enlightenment project, which revealed its limitations when applied to human reality. Famously, its basic principle is the recognition that European civilisation has entered a new epoch — the "Age of Reason". The Enlightenment had made reason its supreme authority, providing the criterion for judging all beliefs, sacred texts, laws and human products in general, while pretending that it could not itself be judged by any higher criterion. Critical reason functions as a tribunal where the legality of reason itself is decided. Reason therefore has an explanatory power, the ability to understand events by seeing them as instances of general laws. The nature of this explanation was derived from the new physics of Galileo, Descartes and Newton and led to a mathematical conception of reality in which all laws could be formulated in precise mathematical terms. In this case, the question of human beings in the world is deprived of something which, according to Plato's allegory of the cave, is called illusion, determined by their passions. They are unable to face reality because they are under the pressure of the power of the senses. This human condition, in which the senses deceive people, is the subject of renunciation, and the task of a learning process is to overcome this immersion in the cave. This is why Plato sets up an opposition between the universe of appearances and a more authentic world, which he calls the *intelligible*.

For Nietzsche, who saw his main goal in the opposition to Platonism, it is art that must be pursued as a counter-movement to this loss of the creative power of man's historical existence, which fell victim to nihilism: "Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decadence forms of man. The countermovement: art" (Sallis, 2007: 161). This means that the task of thinking to promote and preserve human freedom, which is ultimately an ethical task, will find its answer in the work of art, not in conceptual reason.

## P.S.

To conclude our reflections on the troubled state of research and teaching in the humanities, let us turn to some insightful thoughts expressed by one of the greatest minds of the twentieth century — Hans–Georg Gadamer (1900–2001) — in one of his last interviews, given in

1999–2000, shortly before his death in 2001. Summing up the dramatic developments of the twentieth century and looking ahead to the challenges of the twenty-first, he says: "In essence, we are headed directly toward a global crisis. And, after seeing to it that we ourselves — by the way of science — have threatened to destroy life on this planet, we must ask ourselves whether there's anything to prevent us from allowing something like that to occur. It's not very likely...
I think that humanity is more likely to go down this semi-catastrophic road. It might even become an epidemic that one cannot predict. Anything at all could make it so that our angst brings humanity to a halt. If angst, as it were, threatens everyone, then perhaps there is a hope that people will come to an understanding of some sensible conception of transcendence — perhaps people will begin asking themselves why we are born without being asked, why we die without being asked, and so on." (Dottori, 2004: 141–142)

This great thinker expressed hope for a radical questioning of our thinking in the course of the twentieth century, and while he did not share the prevailing illusions about overcoming the previous shortcomings of thinking, he could provide guiding principles for all those who are able to take responsibility for what is currently taught under the title of "humanities".

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**Jeffrey Andrew Barash**

# University, Universality, Globalization: Reflections on the Purpose of the University in the Contemporary Era

The past decades have witnessed important transformations in the systems of higher education throughout Europe which continue to change at a rapid pace. These changes are by no means isolated occurrences, for they are called forth by sweeping transformations of the world in which the universities fulfill their vocation. Our world is marked by the growing integration of economic markets in an increasingly globalized context, a generalized tendency toward concentration of large multi-national industries, the widescale migration of populations and of industrial and financial sectors, and ever sharper competition between regions and nations that are exposed to the contingencies of globalized markets. Since this rapid evolution promises to continue for the foreseeable future, it is important to reflect on the exact ways in which the traditional orientation of the contemporary university systems has been modified and on further reforms that are envisioned. The ongoing reorientation of the universities over the past decades raises with increasing urgency the question of their purpose. What is the meaning, indeed, not only of the relentless changes in the academic programs among different European universities, but of what increasingly appears to be a transformation of the *vocation* of the university itself? And, in light of this apparent shift in the vocation of the universities and in their future orientation, what might be the role of philosophies that have sought to guide them in the past? If we take into account the unprecedented situation we face of globalization, of the mobility of populations, of the integration of markets and information, of the discontinuity in our modes of co-existence that these transformations have brought in their wake, might it not be preferable to adapt higher education to the needs of the contemporary world, rather

than to seek guidance through ideas that that originated in a world of the past that we have seemingly evolved beyond?

In light of our contemporary situation of rapid change, it is understandable that today's political and economic leaders often turn to the most up-to-date conceptions of the purpose of higher learning, while discounting the possible contribution that philosophies of the past might offer to understanding their purpose in view orienting them in the future. In the wake of the large-scale expansion of the universities in the 1960s and 1970s, they were often criticized for proposing programs of general education to students, conceived on the model of a classical liberal arts tradition bequeathed by Greek and Roman antiquity and re-appropriated during the European Renaissance and in later periods, which was essentially concerned with the transmission of understanding related to fundamental issues of human existence and co-existence. Where this tradition served to orient a liberal arts education, the practical matter of assuring students' integration in future professional activity was not the primary concern. We are all familiar with the complaints often voiced in recent decades accusing the universities, above all in fields of the humanities and social sciences, of preparing students for a life of unemployment. Nonetheless, these objections and the radical change in the nature of higher learning they invite, lead me to raise the question I will pursue in what follows: can indeed university reforms tending toward the opposite extreme, seeking to tailor the role of higher education to technical or professional training, in fields conducive to marketable occupations promising economic success, adequately fulfill the purpose of the universities which liberal arts education traditionally defined?

To respond to this question, I will briefly recall the ideal that inspired learning in the humanities and social sciences of the past. Its original source lies in Greek and Roman antiquity, in the ideal of *paideia* of Plato and Aristotle, of the *studia liberalia* of the Stoics. Aristotle provided a classic formulation of this ideal in Book III of the *Politics* (Aristotle, 1981: 1337b), where he drew the distinction between learning that has as its purpose utilitarian preoccupations arising from the need to earn a living, and a kind of learning that is *intrinsically* meaningful, not because of skills it imparts or goods it helps obtain, but *in its own right*. This latter kind of learning aims to provide insight into fundamental problems of ethics and politics that cannot be limited to utilitarian considerations of efficacity, professional success, or economic profit.

In what sense might one affirm that in a world of unrelenting transformation, of discontinuity and dislocation, studies in the human and social sciences might continue to guide the universities and our European societies more generally? Since any attempt to provide a detailed answer to this question would reach beyond the brief time that has been allotted to me, I will limit my response to what I take to be one essential consideration.

As I interpret it, an understanding of the legitimate purpose of studies in the humanities and social sciences must first and foremost identify the role of these studies in a contemporary world marked by relentless change and discontinuity. In recent decades, this world has been faced with major problems, including drastic changes in the climate, devastation of the environment, the unleashing of unprecedented forms of contagious diseases, the exponential rise in the world population, bringing with it famine and wide dislocation of populations, war and the threat of nuclear catastrophe. All of these problems indicate that the changes on a global scale which have taken place over the past half century are not simple signs of progress and economic, industrial, and technical dynamism: they are a constant source of incertitude, unpredictability, and contingency. The mutations in technical capacity, industrial output, and economic infrastructures which propel this global movement introduce an element of instability at the very heart of our ways of life, which has become a permanent feature of our global co-existence. The primary sectors that propel this movement, such as computer technology, telecommunications, mass media reporting, transmitting the latest information on a global scale, are each characterized by a permanent quest for innovation. Tied to the constant fluctuations of global financial markets, the know-how that permits the advancement of these sectors essentially depends on the ability to produce up-to-date results in conformity with present-day needs. Nonetheless, do up-to-date results that respond to present-day needs provide us with an adequate basis for attaining a *comprehensive* understanding of the present in view of its future orientation? Does technical or economic know-how geared toward the fluctuating needs of the present provide an adequate basis, not only for resolving short-term issues, but for interpreting fundamental questions of socio-political existence? To my mind, an attempt to provide an adequate response to fundamental socio-political questions — What is political justice? What is the best form of political organization? How do we

understand political concepts like "democracy", "liberty", "equity", and "equality"? — requires a basis for reflection that cannot be limited to the fluctuating perspective of the present day. Such a response aims, rather, to contribute to the elaboration of a socio-political framework endowed with the stability and continuity without which a viable form of co-existence in a shared world would not be possible. If the attempt is nevertheless made to accomplish this task on the basis of fluctuating considerations of technical results, short-term economic profit, and up-to-date efficacity, we risk exposing our socio-political existence to a situation of constant instability. The uprootedness and social disorientation created by the wide-scale adoption of such short-term criteria poses to my mind a real political socio-problem that has not ceased to deepen over the past decades.

If the ideal inherited from classical antiquity and the European Renaissance has traditionally been termed "studia liberalia," it is because these studies are not fixed to the needs of present efficacy and profit, but require the adoption of a method of enquiry and analysis "liberated" from an immediate dependence on these needs. It is an ideal inspired by the conviction that only a certain *distance* from the immediacy of present preoccupations can provide a vantage point necessary to attain a comprehensive grasp of the deeper contours of the present. Only in the perspective of this *distance* from the pressing demands of daily life is it possible elaborate critical understanding of the point of view that predominates in it. The development of the capacity for critical thinking in this sense permits us to penetrate behind current political and socio-economic assumptions and to envision, on the basis of a plurality of points of view, possibilities these assumptions exclude. For this reason, the possibility not only for a small elite, but for broad sectors of the population to pursue university studies in the humanities and social sciences, even as a complement to other forms of study, constitutes to my mind an essential element for the creation of that true form of plural co-existence we call democracy. Indeed, studies in these areas are often also indispensable for the development of intellectual capacities that contribute to more utilitarian forms of competence.

In the 1870s the young classical scholar and professor of ancient Greek philology, Friedrich Nietzsche, clearly perceived the danger faced by the modern universities, which he described in a remarkable series of lectures, entitled "On the Future of our Educational

Institutions" ("Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten"). The young Nietzsche perceptively diagnosed the danger that genuine education faces when it is too rigidly subordinated to the requirements of a given present. In such a situation, as he wrote, we lose a sense of those fundamental truths that are out of fashion, the "unzeitgemässe Wahrheiten." These are the truths capable of giving us insight into the blindness inculcated in us by unquestioned present assumptions. They are the fruit of genuine education — 'Bildung' in Nietzsche's sense — that is capable of setting in relief the short-sightedness of what may appear in a given present to be self-evident. Where such education degenerates into a form of mere technical ability, true knowledge is equated with present-day know-how, analogous to the constantly shifting information that is hardly a reliable guide in situations of radical contingency and unpredictability (Nietzsche, 1979: 194).

In view of the often repeated calls for reform of the European universities that challenge their long-standing purpose, I conclude that the vocation of the university, whatever may be its value as an investment in view of professional success, also essentially involves the teaching of methods of reflection on fundamental existential and socio-political questions. These methods permit us to distance our perspective from short-term considerations dictated by the needs, the assumptions, and the fashions of the moment. It is only in aiming toward this goal that the institutions of higher learning may prove capable of fulfilling their true purpose.

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## — Part 2 —

# Humanities at University: Technologies, Spirit, Art

**Povilas Aleksandravičius**

# Thinking as a Spiritual Practice: a Way of Humanities Education in the Age of Technology

In recent decades, we have been talking more and more intensively about the impact of technology on human consciousness. We embrace technological progress. We fear technology, especially in recent times, as artificial intelligence shows such progress that the technological transhumanism program seems less and less utopian: the singularity could happen and artificial intelligence could take over human's place on our planet... Heidegger accustomed us to perceive technology as an ontological danger to existence itself, to *Dasein*. But the same Heidegger also spread a certain hope throughout the world, contained in Hölderlin's words: "But where the danger is, also grows the saving power" (Heidegger, 1954). My reflexion is an attempt to think about certain elements of these lines. Nevertheless, I find Bergson's perspective even closer to me, that technology and the human spirit are intimately connected, that technology can be integrated into spiritual life, thereby expanding its capacities (Bergson, 2008: 283–338). This requires both technological progress and the activation of new capabilities of human consciousness. It is this activation that I would like to discuss. I would like universities to engage in this process of renewal of consciousness.

Is it possible to give a new life impetus to the deep sense and understanding of humanity in the technologized world? What should humanities education be like in our universities to respond to this task? This is a difficult question. And I think about it as if I were in darkness. Nevertheless, I will make a proposition. It will not be a detailed suggestion or detailed answer about which methods must be used in teaching humanities in our universities. I will consider this question on the level of directions that we should take. I suggest the following: humanities education in the age of technology should be grounded in the conception of thinking as a spiritual practice.

## *Logos* and *Nous*, *Intellectus* and *Ratio*

My suggestion arises out of my conviction that there is a potential hidden in human nature that has been very little used so far — this is certain capacities to which we have been paying very little attention, especially in our universities, and which should be activated in the age of technology. This conviction is evidenced by one fundamental distinction which has been discussed by many philosophers, but which — and this is interesting indeed — has been continuously pushed to the margins of the philosophical thinking, depreciated, and forgotten. By this, I mean the distinction, made by Plato and Aristotle, between *logos* and *nous*. *Logos* is a conceptual and logical, theoretical and abstract discourse, a system. *Nous* is intuition of principles, a grasp of the depth of reality, an embryo of the "divine" life in a human being, according to Aristotle. But Plato and Aristotle developed the distinction between *logos* and *nous* rather sporadically. It was much better revealed by the thinkers of the Middle Ages, for instance, by Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart. In their thinking, this distinction acquired the shape of distinction between *ratio* and *intellectus*. *Ratio* is the commonly known rationality, theory, conceptuality, systematicity. And the concept of *intellectus* is explained by Thomas Aquinas as *intus legere*, "reading reality from inside" (Thomae de Aquino, 1871: II–II, 8, 1). (N. B.: the concept of *intellectus* of Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart has nothing in common with Kant's concept of intellect). *Intellectus* is a grasp of the singular existence, an existential act, a contact with that moment in which the act of existence of a thing is inspired by the divine act. *Intellectus* is an existential judgement, a connection between human life and the flow of reality. It is our correspondence to what really exists. *Ratio* only follows *intellectus*, concepts and systems only reflect life, but they are not life itself. The great human tragedy is the gap between *ratio* and *intellectus*, it is a gap between reflection of life and life itself. In our times, this division was probably most strongly thought by Bergson whose philosophy was overshadowed by other thinkers after the II World War, but today, after 2000, it is entering the centre of philosophical reflection again (this, of course, is not accidental). Bergson differentiated between reason and intuition (intuition of duration). The reason contemplates reality in spatial categories; therefore, it divides it into parts that are located each after other, parts that homogenize it, that stop

its dynamic process, make it logical, but lifeless abstraction and concepts. Intuition grasps reality in the development of process, i. e. its duration, time. Intuition never destroys mind and science, but rather turns the concepts created by the mind into "flexible" concepts (*des concepts souples*), i. e. into dynamic concepts that correspond to reality's concreteness (Bergson, 2013).

## *Sophia* and *Phronesis*

*Logos*, *ratio*, reason are abstract thinking about the world that is incorrectly called "theoretical" reasoning. *Nous*, *intellectus*, intuition is the connection of thinking to the concrete process of reality when this process is both understood and experienced; it is a paradigm of thinking as spiritual practice. We can better understand this paradigm by reading some of Heidegger´s texts about Aristotle and about the historical development of history of philosophy that have been explicated in his lectures delivered in 1925 and titled *The Sophistes of Plato* (1992). In these lectures, Heidegger makes a distinction between *sophia* and *phronesis* that is intertwined with the distinction between *logos* and *nous*. He subtly shows how *logos* in the Aristotelian thinking is linked with *sophia* and how *nous* is linked with *phronesis*. Thus, *sofia* becomes a theoretical reflection of the world and *phronesis* — practical *nous*. Namely this concept — *phronesis* as practical *nous* — is what interests me the most. Namely here we encounter the substantiation for thinking as a spiritual practice that I want to propose as the principle of humanities education in the age of technology. However, one question that is raised by Heidegger in these lectures is no less important: which — *sophia* or *phronesis* — were placed higher in the Aristotelian philosophy and, consequently, in the whole Western philosophy? The answer is clear: it is *sophia* whose concept is related to the act of *logos*. According to Heidegger, this decision of Aristotle determined the fact that logical conceptual abstractness, an abstract theory, has become the ideal of European thinking and this has restrained the other possible direction of thinking — the direction of thinking as a spiritual practice that is done by *phronesis* in connection with *nous*. Such development of European thinking finally gave impetus to the emergence of modern science and technologies, but these technologies are characterised by one feature — there is a gap between their practice and a spiritual, or

ethical, human practice and thus there is a gap between the human reflexion and reality as it is. Contemporary people consider the technologized world as real reality because they think abstractly, they have replaced the life by abstract concepts. They fail to see that another reality, a concrete reality, exists inside themselves because they have not activated sufficiently *phronesis* or intuition.

Traditionally, the teaching in our universities is oriented towards *logos*, *ratio* and abstract theoretical thinking, towards the *sophia* that is disengaged from concrete human and ontological reality. The essence of my suggestion is to orient the teaching towards *nous*, towards *intellectus*, towards intuition, towards *phronesis* which links our thinking and concepts with concrete process of reality. Why is it necessary and, most importantly, why is it possible in the age of technologies?

## Technology and Reason

I will not discuss here in details the essence of technology and its place in human existence. I will present my idea in four statements. I think all of us will agree with the statement that contemporary technologies whose highest expression is artificial intelligence is a radical result of the historical development of our abstract rationality. Most likely, all of us will agree with this statement: the principle of the technological functioning and the principle of the intuitive acting are different principles. Technological functioning can occur only by reducing reality into certain abstraction that depends on the principle of calculation. And intuition is a direct grasp of reality that touches not only concreteness but also its unpredictability. Maybe we will also agree with the third statement: if a human being, if humanity will remain on the level of abstract rationality and will not activate the level of intuition, it will have to admit the superiority of artificial intelligence. On the level of *ratio*, which is disengaged from intuition, artificial intelligence is stronger than a human being. A human being cannot win a chess match against artificial intelligence. If our thinking remains on the level of the calculation paradigm, it should rather be replaced by machines because machines are better at calculation. In such case, the process of technologization of reality will go on till the end: our humanity will be pushed away from the life, life in this earth will be lived by machines and not by a human being. This statement was

dramatized by a French philosopher Jacques Ellul who did not see any possibility for human nature to resist against technologies, to resist against humanity's becoming a victim of the absolute technological control. Despite of this, I will risk the fourth statement: intuition, in its Bergsonian sense, is the inborn human capacity which, by activation, not only makes it possible to stop the destruction of humanity in the presence of technologies but also makes it possible to turn technologies into an instrument of human spirit, to control technologies. In other words, I suggest the following: to avoid our rationality's subordination to technologies, it is necessary to subordinate our rationality to the intuitiveness which, during the development of Western thought, was referred to as *nous*, *intellectus* or intuition.

## Tasks for University

Now it only remains to ask the most difficult question: how can it be done? How to activate that practical *nous*, that *phronesis* which would be primary in regard of the theoretical *sophia*? How can we inspire in our students the thinking as a spiritual practice? We should consider in detail our teaching content and methods, the nature of communication with students, and, finally, maybe the key question of us as teachers, of our own thinking and life. Not being able to provide a detailed opinion regarding these questions, I will only formulate the aims that should be sought to enliven thinking as a spiritual practice.

1. Following P. Hadot's research (2012), I would formulate the first aim in this way: we should awaken such thinking which would seek inner transformation of a man, a perception and an experiencing of inner me; which would shake value-based priorities; which would allow answering questions regarding what is good or bad, true or untrue in a very personal (but not "subjective") way. Thinking should touch, even coincide with, an entire existence, with life itself, and not with theoretical abstract knowledge about it. Epictetus defined the philosophy in this way: "It is the art of life whose material is everyone's life" (Epiktetas, 1986: 53 (I, 15, 2)). This definition is closely related to what the young Heidegger called the "facticity of life" (Heidegger, 1991). Thinking as knowing oneself that coincides with a care for oneself, or, as the famous Czech phenomenologist Jan Patočka called it, "the care for the soul" (Patočka, 2021). Namely the thinking that

coincides with life itself is *phronesis*. *Phronesis* is the reflection of life that enables "living good" or "living with pleasure", where the concept of pleasure is understood in the sense of an in-depth experience, in-depth joy. Undoubtedly, here we are in the understanding of thinking as a source of *eudaimonia*. And maybe I am not wrong in giving a reference to the conception of the "therapy of soul" in the philosophy of Marta Nussbaum (1994). Going back to Aristotle, he wrote in his *Protreptique*: "Those who live indeed, are not satisfied with pleasure experienced only from time to time; they derive pleasure from the simplest fact of living" (2006: 89d). I believe that today students must be taught humanities, especially philosophy, by directing thinking towards the spiritually practical conception of "good life".

2. The second aim of thinking as spiritual practice is the enablement of the in-depth dialogue. Intuition is never only intuition of ones own me. Intuition is always a grasp of unity with everything that exists. It always coincides with understanding of the depth of other beings, especially other human beings. On the grounds of this in-depth understanding of the Other, an in-depth and real dialogue (conversation) with the Other can emerge. Today the concept of empathy is used rather often. The essayist Jeremy Rifikin is even sure that a globalized humanity is going in the direction of an "emphatic civilisation" (Rifkin, 2009). I am not sure how much this kind of optimism is substantiated. We should clarify the concept of empathy. But it is clear that an inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue has to occur on the grounds of mutual empathy, and not on the grounds of changes in abstract ideas and systems.

3. The third aim is the formation of an open society. I use the concept of an open society not in Popper's sense, but in Bergson's and Voegelin's sense (Aleksandravičius, 2023: 55–62). These thinkers showed how the processes that occur in the human consciousness determine the political state and structure of a society. Thinking as spiritual practice is a real opening of a man to the source and the principle of life (according Bergson) or a leap in being (according Voegelin). How a new political society is born out of these processes is already a separate theme. But there is no doubt that university should be at the core of this process.

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**André Geske**

# The Crisis of Our Age: How New Technologies Impact the Intellectual Development of Western Societies

*L'un des maux les plus profonds de l'humanité actuelle réside dans la conviction très répandue que tout ce qui n'est ni quantifiable ni définissable dans la langue des sciences prétendument "exactes" n'a pas d'existence réelle.*

**—Konrad Lorenz**

New technologies and societal transformations impose new intellectual endeavors on our society. It includes new challenges to face in the public scene. For some years now, we have been talking about a crisis. Expressions such as the crisis of modernity, the economic crisis, the political crisis, the cultural crisis have become commonplace in our daily lives. Today, with the war in Ukraine, we are facing an international crisis. In 1946, Albert Camus wrote an article entitled "The Crisis of Man", in which he identified the kind of crisis our Western society was going through. We can mention Edmond Husserl in his famous book on the problems of science in his time — The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology. In a book written in 1961, Hannah Arendt talked about the crisis of our culture. Today the situation is no better. If we continue to ask different questions about our future, we remain in the same condition. We are unable to see what lies ahead.

The aim of my contribution today is manifold. First, this situation invites us to reflect on the intellectual forces on our horizon that are pushing us into a critical position. Moreover, the presence of

technology in our daily lives leads us to a new kind of condition, perhaps a crisis of technology. Indeed, these dilemmas we have identified have deeper roots in our identity as human beings. However, we assume that they may be a way of thinking about the deeper human condition that society is facing. Perhaps a spiritual crisis condition? Secondly, an ethical imperative is required to live in a world of social, technological and geopolitical changes. How can we live in this world today? An ethics of responsibility following Hans Jonas might help us to see a path through the new technological challenges. Maybe we should consider a more practical ethics following Paul Ricœur proposition in his book "Oneself as Another". Finally, if we consider the "just institutions" as Ricœur mentions in his ethics and the educational transformations brought by technology, we would like to propose a study of the role of universities in our society.

## The Intellectual Forces

Firstly, we should acknowledge that our perspective is not a pessimistic one of the end of the world in apocalyptic terms We are not living in a real crisis. If we look at the etymological meaning of the word crisis, which comes from the Greek word — *krinein* — It means to judge; to criticize; to decide; and to choose. But, it does not define our present moment, not yet. The French philosopher Jean-Luc Marion affirms we are living in a state of prolonged indecision, of no choice. We are driving a car on an icy road. And the free market of ideas offers us an incredible variety of concepts and trends to guide our thinking.

In his book *a Secular Age*, Charles Taylor asserts that since the *Renaissance*, European societies have presented an autonomous impulse against the constitutive order. The revolutions we have seen in the modern era can be traced back to autonomy. Since their time, this autonomy has become the foundation of the modern concept of freedom and emancipation.

Technology has played a central role in this process of emancipation, which culminates in individualism. From our computers and smartphones, we can now organise and carry out events in a matter of minutes that would take years. The impersonal interface has taken over the boundaries of our interpersonal interactions. We have more relationships through screens than in person.

Unfortunately, we have lost the sense of community in Western societies, the sense of caring for each other. This spiritual condition is driving us to a new religious impulse, where pragmatism, individualism, scientism, hedonism and cynicism find their place. Our societies have become more productive, but we have less time.

Through a neurological point of view, we can see the dopaminergic effects of the increasing use of screens, and the amount of information for brain processing every day reducing the intellectual capacity of thinking. Moreover, the fast information presented through audio-visual contributes to decrease the ability of concentration; when we configure our brain to follow this disposition, we tend to stress more about the result to achieve than the process. This is a kind of bad pragmatism and a less disciplined way of thinking. Intelligence comes from the process and not from the result of something. For instance, the act of reading becomes a difficult task and reflection on a topic or time spent with ourselves reflecting disappears from our daily time. Ancient civilizations without technology have developed a strong capacity for memorization and transmission of knowledge to compensate the lack of technology. With the appearance of new technology like the book, memorization became less prominent. However, the reading process and the imagination have found their place to induce thinking. But, with our new technologies, it seems that there is no replacement and only results are aimed. It is kind of impoverishment of our thinking.

It is important to note that technology is not the problem but the way we are using it. European culture has been developed based on reflection through the synthesis of philosophical thinking and Christian contemplation as pleasure (Saint Augustin). Today we have replaced this synthesis with a dopaminergic one in which technology has become the source of satisfaction. This observation leads us to think about a new approach to technology.

## The Ethical Imperative: Hans Jonas and Paul Ricœur

Hans Jonas has proposed that humans need a set of ethical parameters to anticipate future conditions due to the new situations created by new technologies. Traditional ethics is no longer sufficient for the present and future situation because it is limited to the past and present.

Responsibility presupposes the state of the past. We are responsible because we have done something. However, Jonas draws our attention to the fact that responsibility is the limiting element of the future dimension, even if it is asymmetrical. For example, could AI replace humans in the development of new technologies? Jonas affirms that in such a case it is not enough to have rules to follow to achieve what is fair, good and/or honest, but humans should develop an ethical responsibility. As I suggested, it is not tied to a principle or other positive attitudes. But it goes beyond anticipating the consequences of our actions.

> *"Act in such a way that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of an authentically human life on earth" or "Act in such a way that the effects of your action are not destructive for the future possibility of such a life", or even "Do not compromise the conditions for the indefinite survival of humanity on earth" and then "Include in your current choice the future integrity of man as a secondary object of your will."* (Jonas, 1990: 30–31)

Thus the ethic of responsibility is not limited to "the fate of man, but also the image of man, not only physical survival but also the integrity of his essence. The ethics which must keep one and the other must be not only an ethic of wisdom, but also an ethic of respect. The triple goal established by Jonas' ethics aims at assuring a world fit to live, assuring human existence and preserving the condition of man. This triple goal is achieved by fear as a principle of knowledge." (Jonas, 1990: 25). According to Jonas, fear means the power to mobilise the possibilities of action, the thoughts to ask the good and the real questions. Indeed, he has been heavily criticised on this point of his theory, since fear does not have the virtue of creating conditions for good reflection. However, this approach leads us to understand the implications of technology today.

Man has been using technology to master nature. At the same, it can also destroy the natural basis of the source of human life. Technology in itself is neither good nor bad, but its use can be ethically qualified. At this point, we will ask questions about the intention of the use of technology. Because even the most advanced AI needs to be programmed by an algorithm. Then technology will always presuppose a human presence and intelligence. This encourages us to reflect critically on an ethical approach capable of responding not to the problems of today, but to those of future generations. Teleological

or deontological approaches are no longer adequate. Technological applications require a new ethical system that takes into account not only present but also future conditions. If an action is good, can its consequences be justified? In our current stage, even actions that are considered good with justified consequences may destroy ecosystems in the future. According to Jonas, these actions can no longer be justified. In summary, awareness of the impact on the next generation is becoming paramount in reflection. A strong imagination and a strong notion of alterity are key to anticipating likely future scenarios. They should also promote a well-founded concept of otherness.

To go further, the ethics of responsibility can be thought of as an ethics of questioning. Questioning more in order to be clearer. This is the reason to look at the ethical formulation in Paul Ricœur's book 'Oneself as Another', which gives us the following: we have a call to live well with and for others in just institutions. The Ricœurian ethical extension covers the institutional aspect of life which is responsible for providing a new actor in our relationships. Jonas has disposed of fear as a political tool to engage people to live responsibly. However, the Ricoeurian formulation can provide a more realistic and feasible response to limit the abuse of new technologies and promote their development. It would therefore require a relationship committed to the good of each member and also of the community. Jean-Luc Nancy sums up:

> *"What endlessly precedes in the other, or else, and it is the same, what in the other precedes itself endlessly in me, and so step by step in all the others without anything holding back and fixing this propagation, is the meaning: the meaning which has neither direction nor signification, or else it takes all the paths of exchange, and which plays with all the references of signs. What makes sense is always beyond meaning, in truth: a future, an encounter, a work, an event, and when the future has become present, when the encounter has taken place, the work carried out, the event reached, then the meaning — their very meaning — still passes beyond and elsewhere"* (Nancy, 2007: 45).

Responsibility is less about each person's relationship with himself, in which he refrains from harming others, than it is about an open relationship with others, in which one feels essentially affected by them. Acting responsibly is not a matter of individualism, but of altruism. This altruism leads us to think of future generations, not just those

who live with us today. That is why we should consider a kind of pact, a covenant, to cover the technological implications. Moreover, since responsibility goes hand in hand with solidarity, institutions come to the fore, because they are responsible for promoting the personal flourishing that makes society cohesive to fulfil its mission.

## The Role of Institutions

From our point of view, the university, as one of those institutions that can play a central role in the composition of our society, has the mission of being a centre of intellectual and virtual power of investigation. One implication of this mission is its capacity to question everything, including itself, in order to refine its way of being in society. Intellectual analysis provides an environment in which conflicting positions can enter into dialogue. The university is embedded with a unique ethical force capable of ensuring this ethical environment where opposing positions can be in respectful conflict in search of truth. It then embraces the opposing points of view in order to prove them and allow for due progress. The responsibility it demands is part of its mission to perceive the real forces at work within itself.

In political theology we are accustomed to say that institutions have a sphere of sovereignty, that is, in their sphere of action an institution has its own rules and methods that demand respect for its good functioning. No other institution can control it through political or ideological influence. On the contrary, it must not be interfered with or pressured to achieve its objectives. The University, as a just institution, is responsible for recovering the treasures of the past in order to shape the future through critical thinking at the intersection of science. It should be able to restore itself and shape itself to meet the new challenges of the present.

Following this line of reasoning, I would like to think of the university as a covenantal community in which new technologies can find a place to be explored. This research should reveal their limits, their effects and their abuses. Through an ethic of responsibility, the role of an institution such as the university brings about innovative advances not only in the technical domain, but also in the human domain. Therefore, we believe that philosophical reflection will never become irrelevant, despite all technological growth. New technologies will

require more philosophical thinking about ourselves and the world we live in, because technology has its meaning in relation to human beings. Its development and realisation require human flourishing.

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Will AI take my job? I do not think so. However, its emergence requires more philosophical thinking, as I have said. First of all, AI cannot do what only humans can do: the specific essence of the human being is neither the body, which the machine tool can replace, nor the mind alone, which the AI can imitate. Our essence lies in the soul: love, wisdom, inwardness, will and reflection. AI will remain dominant if its functions remain subject to an inner vision deeply animated by values and respect. For those who have only a hammer, all problems are nails. Those who want to use it among the panoply of tools that serve society, humanity, and fraternity.

AI is a software programme that draws on data storage to locate information, summarise options, and present the results in a human-comprehensible form. It finds the information by pattern matching, by pulling ideas from data stores, and by building text. More powerful than a program on our device, but still; it is just a program.

However, more significantly, it reflects us if we reduce human nature to a machine. If we perceive ourselves as just a computing machine, we will think that the machine can be made to work like us. If our brains are just computers, then a computer can be a brain. But humans are not reducible to that. We are embedded to make decisions that involve more than data, more than logic, and technological advances will lead us to understand that we are more complex than we think. The growth of technology will inspire humanity to search for more meaning in life and in love. More technology will require more humanity.

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**Victor Martinovich**

# Pieter Bruegel as My Co-Lecturer in Humanities

Three short sentences that are the most puzzling in Walter Benjamin's famous and acknowledged untranslatable essay "Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers": *"Was "sagt" denn eine Dichtung? Was teilt sie mit? Sehr wenig dem, der sie versteht"* (Benjamin, 1972: 9). In Paul de Man's (de Man, 2000: 10–35) little-criticised but widely quoted English translation of Harry Zohn's (1968) essay, it is put like this: *"For what does a literary work "say"? What does it communicate? It "tells" very little to those who understand it"*. In Steven Rendal's most recent translation (1997) "eine Dichtung" is called "a poem", but precise meaning of these three sentences is still not clear: *"What does a poem "say," then? What does it communicate? Very little, to a person who understands it"* (Benjamin, 1997: 151). The paradox arises from the structure of these three sentences, where 'saying' or 'communicating' follow understanding, not precede it. Benjamin doesn't ask "how one understands what is said in poetry", but "what poetry says to the one who understands". And he does not understand something in general, but "understands it", poetry, "which it is" — which has not yet begun to "say". The act of understanding is separate from the act of getting the meaning. First understanding, then getting the meaning encoded in "saying".

A simplified way of reading Benjamin's paradox is that poetry is much more than the story it tells. The choice of words, the music of sounds, the alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables called "rhythm" is more important than "saying". But isn't that what "teilt" describes in Benjamin's original text and "saying" or "communication" in translations? For language is the part of 'saying', and it is too naive to suppose that Benjamin, who wrote an essay on the nature of the transmission of the senses in translations, didn't realise that the medium of the linguistic *is* the message?

Here is the second possible reading of this paradox: understanding precedes "saying", and we understand or do not understand the work of art before we understand the story it tells us. Thus

the "saying" of the verse, the communication of the senses, meets the reader who has either already understood it or not. Thus, any analysis of poetry, any detailed and logical look at it, says "very little". Thus, as Osip Mandelshtam put it in his "Talk on Dante": *"... poetry — even the most select — is not a part of Nature, and even less a reflection of it, which would make a mockery of the law of identity, but, with amazing independence, it resides in a new extra-spatial field of action, not so much speaking Nature but enacting Nature, aided by those tools colloquially referred to as images. Poetic speech can only be referred to as producing 'sound' conditionally, because we hear it in the merging of these two modes, of which the one, considered by itself, is wholly mute, while the other, if regarded as free of instrumental metamorphosis, is devoid of any significance and interest, and lends itself to 'retelling', which in my opinion is the surest sign of the absence of poetry: for where a thing is commensurable with its retelling, there the sheets are unwrinkled, so to speak, there poetry did not pass the night"* (Mandelshtam, 2022).

If poetry works before producing any sound, if the "wholly muted" part of a poem is far more important than "saying" because a thing should not be commensurable with its retelling, what does this mean for the teaching of the humanities? Must we banish poetry, prose, sculpture and painting in any form from the classroom? Because what Benjamin says about the nature of perception of the poetic text and what Mandelshtam says about the ineffability of the "thing" in writing is very compatible with other variations of the arts. If we understand poetry before we can read it, then we understand or do not understand the picture before it "tells" us its story. The dance, the form, the colour — they also have their "silent mode", which cannot be told. Meanwhile, when we come to the work of art in the classroom, all we are doing is a kind of retelling.

## "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus": A Shadow in Plato's Cave

There are many ways of teaching art in the humanities at the moment, and all of them are a reduction of poetry to its retelling. Let me show you how it works with the hero of this publication, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and the "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" that has

probably been attributed to him ever since the first canvas appeared on the art market in 1912. Later, I will show you why Bruegel is ideal for illustrating the mistreatment of art in the classroom and for proposing some changes in the use of paintings by old masters in the classroom.

We can approach this canvas, "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus", from one side of art history. And tell the story of an artist about whom we know so little. Despite huge volumes have been written about Bruegel since the beginning of the 17th century, the main body of knowledge about him comes from his works. In other words, things that are accessible to anyone who can afford a ticket to a museum. Let me show you exactly how this "art historian's approach" works with "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus".

The shape of the seashore in the panel full of sailing ships called "View of the Bay of Naples", presumably created in 1563, leads art historians to conclude that "probably" Pieter Bruegel was in Naples: *"The Bay of Naples is shown here with a wide-angle view from the end of the bay to the west of Naples to the notorious volcano of Vesuvius at the far right"*, so *"it was **probably** in the summer of 1552 that Bruegel during his two-year stay in Italy went down from Rome to the extreme south"* (Oberthaler and Rénot, 2018: 54).

The angle of an armed three-masted ship in the left foreground of View of the Bay of Naples is the same as that in the right foreground of Landscape with the Fall of Icarus. So presumably the Landscape with the Fall of Icarus was painted after Bruegel's possible voyage to Naples, so we can agree that the date of 1558 (?) looks acceptable.

Peter Bruegel's example is ideal for illustrating the questionable nature of an art historian's way of retelling art in the humanities. Because the number of verified artefacts related to his life is small, the number of oil paintings attributed to him is also small (around forty, according to Oberthaler and Rénot, 2018: 331). Some conclusions about his life are still based on such secondary evidence as a guild badge found near his house or fantasies from Karel van Mander's book on artists, written in 1604 and recognised as the first biography of Bruegel the Elder. The documentary qualities of this semi-fictional text allow Geert Bourgeois, in his foreword to the latest research on Bruegel's life published by the KHM in Vienna, to call Mander's creation a *"sketch"* of a *"rather colorful picture of Bruegel's life"* (Oberthaler and Rénot, 2018: 5).

So here they are: the paintings of someone we know so little about that his paintings might as well have been created by him. All the discoveries that art history can find in his biography must be rooted in the material of his paintings. And unlike other ways of telling the story of art, in the last 100 years art history has been given new tools to make these discoveries — all these tools have come from outside the humanities, from the world of the exact sciences, chemistry and physics. Thanks to radiography and carbon-14 dating, the canvases of the two surviving copies of 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus' have been examined more closely. Canvases that caused a lot of caution because other works by Bruegel are oil on wood panels and not oil on canvas. A study carried out by Dominique Allart and Christina Currie in 2013 showed the dry black and white drawings on the lower level of the canvases, invisible under the layer of oil paint. The drypoint drawings on two variations of Landscape with the Fall of Icarus (from the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and the Musée Van Buuren) were different in style and visually belonged to different people. Bruegel himself never used charcoal to draw his panels, most of them being freehand; occasionally we see white silhouettes drawn by his hand before he applied an oil colour, but there are never any black lines left by his hand.

The way in which the figures of the dog and the shepherd are drawn, and the way in which the sketch of the ploughman is executed, led Dominique Allart and Christina Currie to believe that both pictures were copies of lost originals, and that dry-brush drawings were made to help the copyists reproduce the Bruegel panel they had in front of them. These copies were not made by Peter Bruegel the Elder himself, or even by his sons: "Tous ces traits plaident en faveur de la reproduction consciencieuse d'un modèle préexistant. Des pointillés repérables dans la silhouette du chien, au pied du berger, pourraient trahir l'usage d'un poncif, à moins qu'ils ne soient dus à la trame de la toile, qui aurait empêché un tracé parfaitement continu. En revanche, les motifs situés dans les lointains, et notamment les bateaux, sont manifestement exécutés à main levée. On ne peut qu'être surpris de la gaucherie qu'ils trahissent. De toute évidence, notre copiste n'était pas un dessinateur de grand talent. Il est évident qu'il ne peut s'agir de Pierre Bruegel l'Ancien. Sur la base de la documentation que nous avons récoltée, nous pouvons aussi écarter l'hypothèse d'une attribution à Pierre Brueghel le Jeune ou à son atelier" (Allart and Currie, 2013).

Thus, for dozens of years, academics debated (and students were taught) about a subject that wasn't original, but had been taken from Bruegel's panel and repainted by two different artists. The authorship of the missing original is indirectly confirmed by the engraving 'Armed Three Masters with Daedalus and Icarus', kept in the Albertina in Vienna, which has an undoubted provenance and the same shape of ship and the same heroes as we see first in the 'View of the Bay of Naples' and then in the oil on canvas copies of 'Icarus'.

Bruegel made the picture, someone made a bad shadow of that picture, and the spectators discussed that Bruegel was not looking at the reality of Bruegel himself, but at the play of reflections created by his real pictures on other people's canvases. Plato would admire this situation, but isn't it just another dimension of the retelling of art? Every time we start talking about a painting or a sculpture in a classroom, we have become the same copyists as those who made copies of the missing wooden original of the 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus'. We are all the more like Bruegel's copyists in that, like them, we remain completely anonymous, bringing nothing new to our way of seeing and telling.

To win authorship, you have to create something new. The two copies of 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus' have very little that differs them. The famous one, found earlier and kept in the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, has a sun on a line of a horizon; the second, kept in the Musée Van Buuren, has a sun close to the zenith, but you can see the figure of Daedalus floating in the sky: the shepherd, with his head raised in the background, is therefore looking straight at it. All the other details, including the geometrically well-cut earth left by a plough (6 similar layers), are exactly the same. The copyists didn't pretend to be artists, they simply copied what they saw with the best talent they could muster. Just like the professors at the university, who copy the same thoughts from the same art books, losing the right to be called authors of the thoughts they proclaim. Anonymity is a hallmark of modern knowledge — just as with a canvas copy of Bruegel, few modern professors have the right and the place to put their signature on other people's images brought into their classroom.

Thanks to the epitaph made by his son, Jan Bruegel, we know that Peter Bruegel the Elder died in 1569. For 454 years, his paintings have remained unchanged except for the passage of time. Karel van Mander in 1604 saw him as a copyist of Hieronymus Bosch, an author

who "painted a lot of pictures of demons and various funny scenes" (Van Mander, 2007: 129) — today few people would agree with this approach to Bruegel, but many would like to propose their own explanations of what is important and essential in Bruegel.

At the same time, it seems that just as Bruegel himself is a challenge to the art historical approach of retelling art through the biography of its creator, so the painting 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus' is a challenge to the humanities.

## "Tower of Babel" of Misunderstandings

Fortunately, we are now moving away from postmodernism and the methods of interpreting art that postmodernism has brought into vogue. If "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus" were treated by a professor of semiotics, the main figure on the canvas would be the grey partridge perched on the thorn branch right next to the legs of the poor sinking Icarus. The semiotician would skip all the obvious details of the painting and focus on the symbols and signs, pretending to be the only one to read them correctly. The grey partridge — a professor of semiotics would say — represents the memory of Τάλως, the student of Daedalus before Icarus. Ovid tells us in Metamorphoses that Τάλως was so talented that he had the chance to surpass his tutor. And when Daedalus realised this, he threw his pupil off the Athenian hill. Athena took pity on the boy and turned him into a bird. And since Sophocles, in telling this story, calls the boy Πέρδιξ, which in Greek means the grey partridge, Bruegel, by depicting a grey partridge on a thorn branch, meant that there is a creature in this picture who is happy that Daedalus' son is sinking. This creature is Τάλως, also known as Πέρδιξ, represented in the form of a grey partridge. If postmodernism, with its irony towards history, were to persist, semiotics would have a chance to replace art history as the main view of visuality. Was this symbolic role of the grey partridge obvious to Bruegel? In what language could Bruegel have read Ovid's Metamorphoses? And if Bruegel could read Latin, why didn't he write the Latin inscriptions in his Seven Virtues himself, why did he invite (Allart et Currie, 2013: 115) Coornhert to do so?

In the case of semiotics, there is always the feeling that we are talking about secondary things, about secondary details of the work

of art, leaving the essential unattended. In the case of the 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus', Bruegel himself acted like a professor of semiotics, because he left the hero of this drama unattended — nobody (except the grey partridge!) looks at him, everybody is in his daily routine. But if we apply semiotics, even the author's intentions become blurred and subordinated to the will of the interpreter.

Another competitor for the fashionable retelling of art in postmodernism was critical theory, which would take account of the social representations that Bruegel would like to tell us through the 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus'. The hard and poorly paid labour of the ploughman, the primitive nature of his wooden tools, his skinny horse, the fact that he and the man tending the sheep look in different directions, the absence of women in the painting — all these would be filled with deep meaning and conflict. As if Bruegel had only ever read Marx and was an expert in gender theory.

All the other ways of talking about the 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus' will be as poor as our idea of the original panel painted on the oak by Bruegel and then copied by unknown artists. Did Bruegel's work have a sun on the horizon? Did he depict Daedalus and allow the shepherd to follow him in the sky, or as we can see on the copy in the Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts — the shepherd looks at the sky for no apparent reason? Today, there is no way of verifying this, but it does not seem to matter because these two copies work perfectly separately, like the shadows in Plato's cave, creating an imaginary reality between those who can only stare at a dark stone wall.

Art theory's talk of Northern Renaissance aesthetics, discourse analysis's talk of structure and ideologies, general history's talk of [missing] Bruegel's biography, art historians' talk of various styles and -isms — all these ways of communicating about the visual artefact seem to cancel one of its aspects. At the same time, we agree that whenever we call something a work of art, we think that every detail of what has been put on a canvas is equally important.

So what is the essence of the "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus"? What makes us take it seriously, knowing that it is a shadow of a painting by Bruegel and not Bruegel himself? And how and why should we talk about it with students?

Because Benjamin's enigmatic (and yet central to his entire legacy) passage on "aura" (Benjamin 2008: 24) comes immediately after a paragraph in which he writes about authenticity that cannot be

technically reproduced, from the first publication of "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility" to the present day, the illusion has been created that aura, according to Benjamin, is something that is only inherent in the original and not possible for any technically perfect copy. *"One might focus these aspects of the artwork in the concept of the aura, and go on to say: what withers in the age of the technological reproducibility of the work of art is the latter's aura"* (Benjamin, 2008: 24). These words seem to emphasise what was written above about authenticity: aura is something that is attached to a present being of the original. If Cologne Cathedral remains on the cathedral grounds, near the Hohenzollern Bridge, then the only way to observe its aura is to come there, to Cologne Cathedral, and to breathe the air of the Rein together with the colossal building. But did Benjamin really write this? Because later in his famous essay he recalls the cult value of the work of art and its exhibition value. He states that *"artistic production begins with figures in the service of magic. What is important for these figures is that they are present, not that they are seen. The elk depicted by Stone Age man on the walls of his cave is an instrument of magic, and is exhibited to others only coincidentally"* (Benjamin, 2008: 25).

So it is not the uniqueness or singularity of this moose that gives it an aura, but the ritual in which the cave painting was involved. And it is not the quantity that gives a stone the ritual character that makes it an idol. Buddha statues all over the world are made by technical reproduction in outrageous quantities, you can see the plastic Buddhas everywhere in the temples of Sri Lanka, India and Myanmar. And they are treated as ritual objects. The same goes for plastic virgins and other Christian saints. Rituals are what people choose to participate in or not. And when tourists decide not to address Nike of Samothrace as a goddess and treat her as a museum object to be photographed and Instagrammed, it is not the multiple copies that kill the ritual, but the people themselves.

If Benjamin expects the presence of aura only in original objects, why do we see his mentions of aura in the context of photography? "In photography exhibition value begins to drive back cult value on all fronts. But cult value does not give way without resistance. It falls back to a last entrenchment: the human countenance. It is no accident that the portrait is central to early photography. In the cult of remembrance of dead or absent loved ones, the cult value of the image finds its last refuge. In the fleeting expression of a human face, the aura beckons

from early photographs for the last time. This is what gives them their melancholy and incomparable beauty" (Benjamin, 2008: 27).

The mention of absent or deceased loved ones here seems not at all coincidental: the sense of separation is something that can lead a modern person back to ritual. To treat a printed (or even unprinted, but only seen on the screen of a mobile phone) photograph as an object of cult, of ritual, as an object involved in magic. So the aura is the result of a special kind of attention on the part of the viewer. And not something immanent in an object of art. You can look at Da Vinci's Mona Lisa as if it were a plastic Virgin — and many people do in the Musée du Louvre.

So let us re-read Benjamin's words on the aura and try to apply them to Bruegel's 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus': "What, then, is the aura? a strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance[1], however near it may be. To follow with the eye-while resting on a summer afternoon-a mountain range on the horizon or a branch that casts its shadow on the beholder is to breathe the aura of those mountains, of that branch" (Benjamin, 2008: 25). As we can see, the piece describing the aura, essential not only for this essay but for Benjamin's entire legacy, is couched in a very personal and even metaphorical language. The author departs from the path of scientific objectivity and tries to explain something through the language of comparison, which is very common in poetry and not very welcome in methodologically clear texts (actually, if Benjamin had a strict scientific editor or feedback from peer review, he would have to reformulate it, clearing it of any metaphorical blur). But somehow it is perfectly understandable what exactly he meant. An aura is a strange feeling of distance that comes to the viewer from looking at the work of art, no matter how close it is to the viewer. When we look at the Ghent Altarpiece, embellished by Jan and Hubert van Eyck, we feel the distance in time that separates us from 1432, when it was finished. And at the same time, as the German word "die Ferne" perfectly describes, we experience a sense of spatial distance, as the painting is a mountain range and we are looking at it from a shady valley.

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[1] In original, "Einmalige Erscheinung einer Ferne, so nah sie sein mag", giving additional sense to "Ferne" as a remoteness in time, not only in space.

From now on, following Benjamin, I must move from the scientifically correct way of narrating to a more personal one, as we see in the "aura fragment" of "The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility". Because I believe, and I hope that what I have written above has made this clear, that the only way to talk about art is in terms of maximum personal expression. Science does not work in any of its forms: neither in a form of old-fashioned art history, nor in a form of glamorous and up-to-date semiotics. And so Feyerabend's books (Feyerabend, 1991 and 1993) on the weakness of method should be on the desk of every humanities professor.

I have a high resolution copy of 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus' on my laptop. I've seen Bruegel's works in Brussels, I took my students to the "historical" exhibition "Pieter Bruegel. Once in a Lifetime" in Vienna and was lucky enough to have a long and detailed conversation with the curators who managed to gather almost all of Bruegel's works in one place, the KHM Vienna, and at one time — October 2018 — January 2019. But every time I open a high-resolution copy of 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus' on my laptop, I feel a touch of the aura promised by Benjamin. I know very well that it is not the same as the original. I know very well that very thin traces of black oil left by a tiny brush are not from Bruegel's hand, but from one of his copyists. And yet — I have exactly the feeling described by Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technical Reproducibility". A mountain range seen from afar. A feeling of distance, no matter how close I am to the picture. A portal to another world where the beauty of things is as important as their purpose. I'm hypnotised by the lace pattern of the leaves on the trees, I can't take my eyes off a toy sailing ship and the figures climbing its masts, I feel a sense of physical pleasure as I look at the scarlet shirt of a ploughman, the cave in the rocks above his head and the dreamy transparent city on the horizon, the sun falling into the sea. Isn't it an aura that makes the spectator of art a different creature, unknown to himself? Somehow the fact that I am observing the shadows on a wall of Plato's cave means nothing to me, for I feel that even the flow of thoughts in my head is different, as if I had immediately begun a Maitri meditation.

Is it because I treat the work of art I'm looking at as the subject of a ritual? My own personal ritual of access to truth? Not the "truth" that the social or human sciences are so eager to capture with their

methods, but a truth like the ἀλήθεια Heidegger wrote about in his "The Origin of the Work of Art"?

He used Van Gogh's painting of shoes to illustrate that the source of true art lies in the lumen that arises in the struggle between the earth (die Erde) and the world (die Welt): "What is happening here? What is at work in the work? Van Gogh's painting is the disclosure of what the equipment, the pair of peasant shoes, in truth is. This being steps forward into the unconcealment of its being. The unconcealment of beings is what the Greeks called aλήθεια. We say "truth" and think little enough in using the word. In the work, when there is a disclosure of the being as what and how it is, there is a happening of truth at work" (Heidegger, 2002: 16).

For Heidegger, the truth associated with art does not refer to the objects or personalities represented in the painting. If this art is a true art, then the truth in it is about tearing away the veils of truth concerning the world as such — everything that is represented in the world of things, the nature of its creation. As in the case of the creation of art, creativity is the process of postulating truth by an artist or a poet. They don't seek truth, they make truth through the ritual of creation, and the viewer is able to see this truth, which is a result of the argument of the world and things.

"Art is the origin of both the artwork and the artist. An origin is the source of the essence in which the being of a being presences. What is art? We seek to discover its essential nature in the actual work. The reality of the work was defined in terms of what is at work in the work, in terms, that is, of the happening of truth. This happening we think of as the contesting of the strife between world and earth. In the intense agitation of this conflict presences repose. It is here that the self-subsistence, the resting-in itself of the work finds its ground" (Heidegger, 2002: 33).

And since contact with a work of art has the chance to reveal a truth that its creator postulated through the process of creation, Benjamin's aura can be taken as one of the dimensions of Heidegger's vision of aλήθεια. And instead of retelling the work of art in terms of the history of its creation or our assumption of "what the artist wanted to say", we can include the art itself as one of the speakers in the humanities conversation.

## Bruegel's Art is Ideal for This Because of the Following Reasons:

1. As it was stated before, due to the lack of unquestionable biographical details based on documents, much of what art historians know about Bruegel and his legacy is derived from his paintings themselves. Traditional 'scientific' approaches based on historical methods step back and allow the viewer to simply interpret what he sees and draw his own conclusions, without any written guidance;
2. Some of Bruegel's plots are taken from the Bible, and Greek and Latin authors touch on cornerstones of the European intellectual tradition. You can't look at 'The Procession to Calvary' and not think of the wars between Protestants and Catholics — without knowing (and this is important!) who Bruegel himself was: a Protestant, which would explain the presence of the Pope's entourage on the 4th level — Rotterdam's version of the Tower of Babel — or a Catholic, which would help to understand why part of his legacy was found in collections of people close to the Holy Seat;
3. The puzzling nature of the presentation of these plots, with Christ not easy to find in 'The Procession to Calvary', Daedalus missing in 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus' and so on, makes the viewer work hard to understand the story. The story doesn't jump out at you. The viewer has to activate his eyes and then his mind.

And this is the moment when the observation of art meets the humanities.

## Jonghelinck's *Convivium* as a Form of Approaching Humanities

There is something strange about the KHM's copy of Bruegel's 'Tower of Babel'. It only took a split second for me to notice it, but it took a long 7 years, from 2016 to 2023, to get ready to put it into words. So, yes, in this very case, my understanding preceded the story told by a narrator, as Benjamin promised in his essay on translation. Anyone who looks at the picture — even in its poor copy — will notice this quality. Probably,

as in my case, it will take years to understand the nature of the numbness you feel, but the numbness will hit you immediately. The panel is called "The Tower of Babel". What is depicted here is an act of tragedy: people decided to build a tower, "whose top may reach unto heaven", God got angry and "confound the language of all the earth" and "from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth". Whichever version we take, that of the Bible or that of Flavius Josephus in his 'Judean Antiquities', with King Nimrod as the main anti-hero, it is a tragedy and not a happy event. So why is the overall mood of this painting so bright? Why are the colours so brilliant? Why is the sky blue? Why is there not a single trace of trouble that has happened or is about to happen? Agreed, it is difficult to see the small dark cloud in the top left-hand quarter of the canvas as an impending apocalypse.

In the second version of Bruegel's Tower of Babel, kept in Rotterdam's Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, there is no obvious contradiction between the bleak landscape depicted and the essence of the myth. The painting is dark, the building is deserted, the richly dressed king is absent. The second "tower" creates a sense of tragedy. A black storm cloud is ready to produce the light and what will follow will wash away the figures scattered on the remains of the building, making their evacuation preparations. They tried to challenge the god and failed. It is not the building site, it is the ruin.

In KHM's version, even the details are bright and sunny. People are pulling building materials from ships in the basement, builders are actively engaged in construction on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors, you can see clothes drying and food cooking on the open fire. Not even a sign of abandonment, proliferation or any of the other bad things that the canonical texts tell us about this event. The division of languages hasn't happened yet. While the top of the tower is already in a cloud, touching the sky and defying God. It is not a story of tragedy. It is a story of success. It inspires people to build tall towers and ignore prohibitions.

The possible reason for the mood depicted — as well as the possible reason for the visible difference between the KHM and Rotterdam copies of the Tower of Babel — lies in its provenance. The first documented mention of Bruegel's Tower of Babel is in a catalogue of objects pledged to the city by the Antwerp banker Niclaes Jonghelinck in 1565. Thanks to this transaction, we have one of the few inventories from this period that not only lists the names of the paintings owned

by Jonghelinck, but also a table of their authors. Barbara A. Kaminska states that Jonghelinck was not only a buyer but also a commissioner (Kaminska, 2014, p. 38) of Bruegel's paintings. Among the panels listed in Jonghelinck's inventory of 1565 are 6 of Bruegel's depictions of the seasons (called 'Months' in the inventory), 'The Procession to Calvary' and the Tower of Babel. All these paintings were kept in Jonghelinck's villa called Ter Beke. We have no idea what the structure of the villa was, where exactly Jonghelinck placed Bruegel's paintings, but since 'The Seasons' was displayed in the dining room, Kaminska suggests that "that the Tower of Babel shared the space with those six panels".

According to Kaminska, the wealthy banker Jonghelinck commissioned and exhibited Bruegel's paintings in his villa for a reason. He wanted the paintings to take part in the dining ritual popular in Antwerp in the 1560s. The name of this ritual is convivium. It is the Colloquia familiaria, written in Latin by Erasmus Roterodamus in 1518, that made the tradition of the convivium popular among the wealthy and well-educated citizens of Antwerp. Kaminska explains: "According to Erasmus, Eusebius invited eight of his friends to his country estate for lunch; the meal was preceded and followed by a tour of the garden and house. Erasmus thus set the scene for a colloquium characterised by an informal yet profoundly spiritual atmosphere. The paintings on the walls of Eusebius's house are essential to both the setting and the subject matter. The interior of the summer dining room is decorated with images of the Last Supper, Herod's feast, the rich man and Lazarus, Anthony and Cleopatra, Alexander the Great killing Clitus, and the Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs. The themes of the paintings resonate with the function of the room: the first provides the ultimate example of a meal to be remembered and imitated by all Christians, while the remaining biblical and classical stories of famous feasts warn of the consequences of drunkenness and gluttony. In a prescriptive sense, the paintings are intended to stimulate morally edifying and profitable conversation among the dinner guests. They fulfil exactly the same role as the convivium itself: as Eusebius explained to Timotheus, "this custom, it seems to me, has much to recommend it, because by means of it one can avoid foolish yarns and enjoy profitable conversation. I disagree emphatically with those who think a dinner party isn't enjoyable unless it overflows with silly, bawdy stories and rings with dirty songs" (Kaminska, 2014: 34).

People gather in a dining room, eat and drink, and to avoid dirty jokes and silly anecdotes as the main flow of conversation, they use Bruegel as a starting point for their discussion. As rich landowners were frequent guests at Jonghelinck's house, they had to talk about crops, cattle and agriculture. That's why Jonghelinck commissioned The Seasons from Bruegel, and that's why The Seasons (or Months) are full of herds, cows, shepherds, harvesting and even hunting. Their purpose was to stimulate discussion around the table. The 'Tower of Babel' had the same purpose, because Antwerp itself was like Babylon in the 16th century: a city where many people gathered, speaking different languages and fulfilling the same purpose of multiplying private and common wealth. But Antwerp in the 1560s was Babylon in reverse. That's why the panel Bruegel was commissioned to paint was revertive. He had to tell the story of the division of language and the dispersion of people in such a way that rich people at a table wouldn't lose their appetite and be inspired to quarrel. So his Tower of Babel is a success.

If we consider that Bruegel's paintings were not only used as a starting point for the colloquium, but that they were intended to make people think and argue, isn't this an invitation to find a place for them in the teaching of the humanities? We have no idea how Jonghelinck began his conviviums, and we do not know how good he was at philosophy. Can we imagine him as a tolerant moderator? Did he allow questions and answers? We can read how it was arranged in Erasmus' 'Familiar Colloquies', which influenced Jonghelinck so much that even the allegorical nature of the pictures listed in his inventory is very similar to the listing of the pictures in Euseus' house. In the 'Colloquia familiaria' no one presented a paper or gave a prewritten report. People asked questions and answered them with short remarks, speaking one by one. The owner of the house, Eusebius, was the one who initiated the discussion, but he didn't monopolise the asking of questions, and his way of introducing his "students" to the problems of the humanities was to show them the pictures, the tapestries and the species in his garden. Neither Eusebius nor any of his guests (Pampirus, Polygamus, Glycion, Huguitio and Harry the coachman) were disturbed by the retelling of the biographies of selected artists. The names of the artists were not revealed during the entire colloquium: Flemish Renaissance figures, heroes of Erasmus Roterodamus, themselves acted as if they had read Gadamer's "The Meaning of

Beauty" and realised that there is no way to guess the "author's intention", moreover — every work of art has its own intention, which is greater than any author who participated in its creation: "To understand something, I must be able to identify it. For there was something there that I passed judgment upon and understood. I identify something as it was or as it is, and this identity alone constitutes the meaning of the work". If that is true — and I think everything is in favor of it — there cannot be any kind of artistic production that does not similarly intend what it produces to be what it is" (Gadamer, 1986: 25).

Isn't it the most appropriate way of reaction on arts in humanities in XXI century, when we are equally full of historicism and post modernist irony about historicism? When our approach to art is disciplined enough no to dig down in authors personal life searching for the romantic triggers that caused the beauty of the sonnet or special light on an interior floor?

Flemish and Dutch Renaissance, much more cultivated and mature than the wild Italian Renaissance (the latter praised the unfettered flesh so crazily, was so turned on the joys of the body and things that are out too much), isn't it a model for the humanities after postmodernism? The Flemish Renaissance, which already got rid of the blind obedience to religious institutions, which gave birth to the freedom of thought and legalised the antiquity forbidden in the Middle Ages, but it didn't go as far as the Enlightenment, with its very questionable dialectics, which led directly to the great tragedies, wars and political regimes of the XX century (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002). Just as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood in England in the mid-19th century treated all painters who came after Raphael as irrelevant, perhaps in the humanities we will look back to find the future. Because whoever we take from the great thinkers of the XX century, none of them talked about art and humanities within the existing "methodological" paradigms. Nietzsche wrote 'The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music' (Nietzsche, 1994), avoiding any application of biographical data on Beethoven and Wagner — the only two musicians mentioned in this text.

How can we talk about art in the humanities without touching the authors and their biographies, without trying to find help in art theory or aesthetic history? What will be the way of Roterodamus and Jonghelinck? a way that would be equally praised by Gadamer and Feyerabend?

I think this way is to ask a question. Instead of lecturing the students or holding a debate on -isms, we should organise a convivium in a classroom, deprived of food and drink. Let me propose the possible questions for the copy of 'Landscape with the Fall of Icarus' kept in a Musées royaux des Beaux-Arts in Brussels:

If Daedalus made wings so that his son could escape from the island of Crete, where he was being held by King Minos, does this mean that it was freedom that killed Icarus?

What is the shepherd looking at?

How did the sun melt the wax when it was so close to the horizon?

Why do you think that Daedalus, an ingenious engineer and inventor, didn't talk to his pupil — who happened to be his only son — In a way that didn't take into account Daedalus' knowledge of the wax and the properties of the sun's heat?

Was Daedalus a good or bad character in this story?

Was Daedalus a good or bad teacher of the humanities?

How does this myth relate to the history of humanism in the XX century?

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## — Part 2 —

# European Humanities University: in Search of Human

**Liudmila Ulyashyna**

# From Legal Limbo to Academic Freedom: The Genesis and Perspectives of the EHU

My topic is devoted to our university, the European Humanities University (also known as EHU). The conference took place on the campus of the university, and I find it symbolic that the fate of the EHU — which I will speak about — can serve as an illustration of the conference itself. I will begin my presentation with a quote from the recent resolution "Addressing the specific challenges faced by Belarusians in exile", which was recently adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council, and which underlines this:

> *the European University of Humanities, the only Belarusian university capable of functioning on the basis of academic freedom and observance of European values, has been in exile in Vilnius since 2005. It is capable of exploring new opportunities to further strengthen creative, free, and critical thinking among Belorussian students and has the opportunity to attract scholars and students from the countries of the Eastern Partnership.* (Council of Europe, 2023: 38).

I think we can see this endorsement as both a challenge to meet the stated requirements and an expression of trust. Meanwhile, a Belarusian university is unique in that it has been forced to carry out its mission based on the idea of academic freedom for Belarusians for almost 20 years, being based in the country of the European Union, Lithuania. During this period and beyond, the EHU has experienced and continues to experience the challenges associated with the lack of *Lex Specialis* regulation for this type of higher education institution (hereafter referred to as HEI).

Our phenomenal university is a challenge: for the Lithuanian government to find the most accurate and fair legal provisions, for its academic community to participate in research that will be

useful for the Belarusian society and appreciated by the Lithuanian Research Council, and for the university management to navigate between the existing normative regulations in order to find the most harmonious and effective operation of the university in accordance with the regulations of the host country. Meanwhile, EHU uses its mission as a compass, which is stated in the university statute and sounds as follows:

> *The mission of the University as a student-centered university is to promote civil society development through humanities and liberal arts for students from Belarus and the region by bringing them together and offering international experience in study quality*
> (EHU Statute, 2022, art. 2.1)

To what extent has the declared mission been fulfilled?

What impact has the long history of "foreign" life at the EHU had on the university's ability to provide top-notch academic programs, to operate in an environment of academic freedom in Europe, and yet to benefit Belarusian society? Which rules — the laws of the host country or the norms of the civil society of the place of origin — prevail? Can these two opposites coexist?

Answers to these questions require a clear understanding of who we are, what our strengths and characteristics are, as well as the limits and failures of appropriate state regulation. We will be critical not only of ourselves, but also of external circumstances that may stimulate or inhibit the exercise of academic freedom, even if a HEI operates in a democratic country with a set of preconditions for institutional autonomy and is authorised to carry out educational and research activities in a host state within the European Union.

In my work, I seek answers through historical and legal lenses, bearing in mind that academic freedom is both an end and a means of assessing the scope and character of any higher education institution, including the EHU. I begin by discussing how international human rights law develops and reflects the three facets of academic freedom. A historical overview of the fate of the EHU is then provided, focusing on the transitional period of the Republic of Belarus from the late 1990s to the beginning of the new millennium. Furthermore, the adoption of the idea of 'positive obligations' creates a distinct perspective that allows for the examination of the institution from several angles,

including its academic autonomy and the personal freedoms it affords. In the final section, I provide some analyses of the empirical observations made regarding the impact of the EHU on Belarus. I conclude with some thoughts on how the EHU case can serve as a model of state solidarity in upholding academic freedom while pursuing the values of the international community as a whole.

At the beginning of 2023, a working group of EHU academic staff was mandated by the EHU Senate to determine the legacy and meaning of the EHU's legal status. The occasion for such a task is not only curiosity, but also a kind of spiritual act dedicated to significant dates: the EHU has just completed the 30-year quest for academic independence that has been going on in exile for almost 20 years. I admire the work of Profs. J. Bieliauskaite and A. Makhnach and our inspiring cooperation not only within the Senate mandate but also as a research project with a forthcoming publication. The basic results of our research have already been discussed in the Senate and presented at an international conference at the University of Padua earlier this year. I'm pleased to present them in more detail today (Senate, 2022, 3).

## Academic Freedom (AF)

Academic freedom appears in three manifestations: (1) individual right; (2) collective right of academic autonomy; and (3) both dimensions in conjunction with the concepts "implementation of a state's positive obligations" and/or "obligations towards the international community's interest (Erga omnes)"[1].

**1. As individual academic freedom** is guaranteed by the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (EU Charter), the European

[1] Latin's translation of "towards all" or "towards everyone" is erga omnes. It has been used as a legal phrase in international law to describe duties owed by governments to the world community as a whole. The universal and unquestionable interest in maintaining essential rights and preventing their violation gives rise to an erga omnes obligation. As a result, any state has the authority to report a breach.

Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and a set of universal instruments[2].

While the EU Charter (2000), in its Article 13 titled "Freedom of the Arts and Sciences" reiterates that scientific research shall be free of constraint and academic freedom respected, the European Convention on Human Rights does not provide a specific article in turn, and the European Court of Human Rights has tended to consider issues regarding academic freedom within the ambit of the Convention under Article 10, which guarantees the freedom of expression.

According to the EU Charter, the scope and meaning of all rights corresponding to those secured by the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms should be the same as those established by that Convention. This clause does not preclude Union law from providing further protection (EU Charter (2000), Article 52, Part 3, Scope and Interpretation of Rights and Principles). This clause does not preclude Union law from providing further protection. We assume that UN human rights standards will take precedence over European standards, but only if the former provide a higher level of protection, for example for academic freedom. This point is crucial because we are dealing with Belarusian citizens who have not had, and do not have, access to European human rights protection. While EHU professors and students may in some cases benefit from European justice, global standards may apply to all Belarusians.

Belarus is a state party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966), which in Article 19 adopts the same stance and embraces academic freedom via freedom of expression, as it is in the ECHR (ECHR, 1951, Art.19): the right "to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas of all kinds," emphasizing the necessity of freedom of expression within academic freedom (ICCPR, 1966, Art. 19). Despite the well-developed set of standards on freedom of expression, it is still a problem to understand the content and ways of implementing academic freedom in countries like Belarus. An expert

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2 The International Bill of Human Rights consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols, The International Bill of Human Rights (see Fact Sheet No.2 (Rev.1)).

meeting held on 27–29 May 2020 under the auspices of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression (hereafter SR UN) reached the following conclusions on the scope of academic freedom (AF) as a personal right (Law International Justice Clinic, 2020: 4):

1. AF should not be confused with freedom of expression, as they are separate rights and knowledge.
2. AF has its limitations, and freedom of expression extends beyond them.
3. AF embraces also:
    - *the right of students to seek knowledge, even if it is considered controversial;*
    - *the right of academics to act as" truth seekers and warn society of the dangers to come"; thus, it is necessary that protections be enacted to prevent governments from suppressing academic freedom"* (Law International Justice Clinic, 2020: 4).

Another universal legal instrument protecting individual rights — the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereafter ICESCR) — guarantees the right to education in Article 13. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (hereafter — CESCR Committee) has explicitly stated that the right to education "can only be enjoyed if accompanied by the academic freedom of staff and students" (CESCR, GC 1999: 38). The ICESCR Committee further continues:

> *Members of the academic community, individually or collectively, are free to pursue, develop and transmit knowledge and ideas, through research, teaching, study, discussion, documentation, production, creation or writing. Academic freedom includes the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfil their functions without discrimination or fear of repression by the state or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies, and to enjoy all the internationally recognized human rights applicable to other individuals in the same jurisdiction* (CESCR, GC 1999: 39).

The main determinant of the full realisation of academic freedom, like other fundamental rights, is the political will of the national

leadership. My statement is also relevant to Belarus. The aforementioned factor has affected and continues to affect those who wish to pursue their aspirations for higher education based on liberal arts in an atmosphere of academic freedom. Meanwhile, the desire to live in dignity, to have the right to the full development of the human personality (UDHR, 1948, Art. 26), and to strive for social progress and better standards in larger freedom (UN Charter, Preamble, 1945) are those inalienable rights that belong to everyone. These rights are implemented through the international human rights obligations of most of the world's governments.

**2. A collective or institutional** aspect of academic freedom leads to university autonomy. It is defined in international law in the sense that departments and entire universities are entitled to uphold and promote academic freedom in the course of their internal and external affairs. Moreover, *according* to the Magna Charta Universitatum (1988), a university, as an autonomous *institution at the heart of societies,* **must be** (highlighted by the author) morally and intellectually independent of all political authorities and economic power, while the teaching and research in universities must be inseparable from the changing needs, the demands of society, and advances in scientific knowledge. In response to today's challenges, the Magna Charta was amended in 2020.

Some time ago, in 2012, at a conference dedicated to the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Magna Charter, several new types of challenges were analysed, including political and legislative ones. Sir Peter Scott, Professor of Higher Education Studies at the Institute of Education, University of London, gave the keynote address and presented an analysis of the situation faced by today's 'entrepreneurial' universities as they juggle academic dignity with efficient administration. For the purpose of this paper, his conclusions on the role of the Magna Carta in seeking a balance between values and needs are interesting and seem highly relevant. He emphasised that compromises between academic freedom and efficient administration are necessary for the survival of institutions:

> *"The core values of the Magna Charta (meant MC 1988- note of the author) have a place in establishing the limits of this compromise"* (Adendorff, 2012: 1).

As amended, the Magna Charter 2020 highlights three principles that reflect academics' autonomy´s core values and elements, as follows:

> *... independence: research and teaching must be intellectually and morally independent of all political influence and economic interests.*
> *... teaching and research should be inseparable, with students engaged in the search for knowledge and greater understanding.*
> *... the university as a site for free enquiry and debate, distinguished by its openness to dialogue and rejection of intolerance* (MG Universitatum, 2020).

As we can see, although the first two did not mention the university and its autonomy, they implicitly included academic freedom in their collective and institutional manifestations. Indeed, the activities mentioned in the first two depend very much on the ability of a university to maintain itself as an institution independent of political influence. On the other hand, an institution without learning, teaching and research activities loses its main characteristics that make it worthy of protection.

Expert consultations organised by the SR UN in 2020 highlighted that institutional autonomy protects a university from state control in order to create space for others to pursue knowledge. In addition, autonomy improves access to knowledge and benefits society as a whole. To prevent governments from curtailing academic freedom, all these attributes must be guaranteed, and safeguards must be put in place — In other words, *enacted — to prevent governments from suppressing academic freedom* (Law International Justice Clinic, 2020: 4). The conclusions of the experts pointed to the methods of implementation and the beneficiaries of institutional autonomy, highlighting that:

> *The enjoyment of academic freedom requires the autonomy of institutions of higher education. Autonomy is the degree of self-governance necessary for effective decision-making by institutions of higher education in relation to their academic work, standards, management, and related activities. Self-governance, however, must be consistent with systems of public accountability, especially with respect to funding provided by the state. Given the substantial public investments made in higher education, an appropriate balance has to be*

> *struck between institutional autonomy and accountability. While there is no single model, institutional arrangements should be fair, just, and equitable, and as transparent and participatory as possible* (CESCR, GC, 1999, p.40).

Put simply, institutional autonomy is the right of higher education institutions to decide on academic procedures, what to teach, who to recruit and hire, and which students to admit, emphasised Michael Ignatieff, President and Rector of Central European University (Lyer, 2019: 109). The so-called soft law instruments, such as those mentioned above, can help to identify restrictive practices. However, there are few enforcement tools and modalities to achieve a positive social impact when a government abuses its "positive obligations" to interfere with academic freedom, whether in individual or intuitive dimensions.

**3. State's responsibility to impellent the academic freedom.** International human rights law is a secondary protection mechanism, as national states have primary responsibility for implementing human rights obligations, including for academic freedom. The concept of "positive obligations" vs. "negative obligations" is rooted in the wording of the ICCPR: "Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes *to respect* (negative obligations — *comment of the author)* and *to ensure* (positive obligations — *comment of the author)* to all individuals... the rights recognized in the present Covent, without distinction of any kind... (part 1 of the Article 2). *Respect* means to abstain from individual freedoms, not to disturb their realisation, the wording to *ensure* reminding about specific measures to be undertaken in order to produce a positive social effect. Meanwhile, the ICESCR contains only positive obligations, expressed by the statement "(e)ach State Party to the present Covenant *undertakes to take steps individually and through international assistance and co-operation, ...*to the maximum of its available resources, *with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the rights recognised in the present Covenant by all appropriate means including particularly the adoption of legislative measures*" (part 1 of the Article 2 of the ICECR).

While the ICESCR presents academic freedom in both its individual and institutional dimensions to a much greater extent than other international (such as the ICCPR) and all European commitments (such as the European Charter and the ECHR), for the purposes of this study we'll relax our focus on other instruments and use the ICESCR

framework, and in particular those that elaborate the state's positive objectives.

In addition to the obligations of States-parties to the agreements, the doctrine "Interests of the international community of states as a whole" (hereafter referred to as the "community interest") has been introduced to reflect the purposes of the United Nations as set out in the UN Charter and the UN Bill of Rights (UN Bill)[3]. The preamble to the ICESCR, for example, reiterates the principles proclaimed in the UN Charter and emphasises that:

> *recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world, (paragraph 2) and* reminds *that considering the obligation under the Charter of the United Nation is to promote universal resect and observance of human rights and freedoms* (paragraph 5).

In accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter, every State Party has a legal interest in the fulfilment of its obligations under the Charter of the United Nations, since the provisions relating to the fundamental rights of the human person are *erga omnes* obligations. This means that the protection of rights and freedoms when a State openly refuses or is unable to fulfil its treaty obligations is a matter of community interest.

The HR Committee (2004) recalls that the 'rules concerning the basic rights of the human person' are obligations erga omnes and that there is an obligation under the Charter of the United Nations to promote universal respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms (UN HR Committee, 2004: 2). The Committee recommends that States parties draw attention to possible violations of their obligations under the Covenant by other States parties and call upon them to comply with their obligations, as this should be seen as a reflection of the legitimate interests of the community.

When it comes to academic freedom, it should be understood that respect for this freedom and the facilitation of its implementation

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[3] Iron Curtain, a term introduced by Churchill on March 5, 1946, in his Fulton speech, marked the beginning of the Cold War. It represented an information, political, and border barrier isolating the USSR and other socialist countries from the capitalist countries of the West.

by positive action on the part of a State are directly related to the commitment of the United Nations "to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of human person" (Charter, 1945, Preamble). AF is of particular value because it is aimed at education, which is intended to

> "*to the full development of human personality and strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial and religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace"* (UDHR, 1948, part second, Article 26).

A report entitled "Repressive State Practices in Legislative, Regulatory and Other Restrictions on Higher Education Institutions" (2019), prepared by the International Centre for Non-profit Law, outlines numerous repressive practices against higher education institutions in more than 60 countries, concluding that these practices range from the amendment of higher education laws or regulations to limit autonomy or target specific institutions, to the criminalisation of academics and students for expressing their opinions or participating in peaceful protests, as well as instances of aggressive campus policing or even its militarisation. The assumption that violations of academic freedom, along with other individual and collective rights, would inevitably attract the attention of the international community if a national state failed to implement them due to a lack of political will, as was the case in Belarus in the late 1990s and at the beginning of the new millennium, is untrue. The interests of the international community are, with a few fortunate exceptions, a matter of negligence, despite the existing legal propositions on the solidary actions of the international community for the protection of axiological values recognised by the Charter of the United Nations and international human rights treaties (UN HRC GC 2004: 2).

The solidarity of the Republic of Lithuania towards the EHU, a Belarusian university, is one such positive exception. While erga omnes has been developed as a concept in international law to describe the obligations of governments to report a violation when there is a universal and indisputable interest in upholding fundamental rights and preventing their violation, the current case is about positive measures

aimed at restoring academic freedom to intellectuals by allowing them to work on foreign soil.

## EHU in Historical and Legal Retrospective
## 1. Historical Facts

The European Humanities University (1992) was founded as a private academic entity by Belarusian intellectuals led by academic A. Mikhailov, who is recognised in Western European and American academic circles. The personal initiative, the composition of the co-owners and the manner of its establishment were absolutely unique for the newly proclaimed independence of the Republic of Belarus. After all, the goals of the university were focused on the preparation of highly educated *humanitarian* specialists, fostering dialogue among European cultures to establish a *pan-European cultural space*, preserving spiritual continuity in the context of *new statehood*, training professionals dedicated to *safeguarding human rights and dignity*, and providing opportunities for individuals' *intellectual, cultural, and moral development* (EHU Statute, 1997).

The establishment of the EHU was only possible because Belarus proclaimed its independence in 1991 and began the transition by adopting a new constitution and new laws. According to the state (Belarusian Government, 1995, HRC Report), the legal system has clearly opted for democracy and respect for human rights. Meanwhile, by adopting a new law on education, the state has removed academic freedom from the list of guiding principles for education. The list of principles now includes the following:

> *Priority should be given to education; general education is required; the transition to general secondary education as a requirement; access to preschool; technical and vocational education; competitive secondary special education and higher education; continuity of educational levels; national and cultural foundations of education; the importance of universal human values; the humanistic nature of education; environmental orientation of education; democratic governance of education; the secular nature of education* (Article 1).

It is undoubtedly true that academic independence was lost as a result of a relatively unknown phenomenon — a lack of knowledge and willingness to deal with it. Surprisingly, however, the law recognised that the public and private types of institutional education are included in the educational system (Article 15). Despite the fact that the law did not include academic freedom among the fundamental principles, the new Constitution of Belarus included *the freedom of artistic, scientific and technical activity and teaching* in the article devoted to cultural life and intellectual property (Art. 51, Constitution, 1994).

The main danger, however, in the author's opinion, is not the lack of legislation, but the inherited models of assumptions and behaviour from the previous period. One should be aware of the prolonged "Iron Curtain" regime that was established between the Western cultural sphere and the former USSR, of which Belarus was a part for more than 70 years. This situation affected the Belarusian academic and research community, depriving it of free academic exchange for many decades.

Another important feature of the post-totalitarian syndrome is the fact that constitutional guarantees or international agreements protecting academic freedom, the right to education and freedom of speech, and all the rest, were only "a paper protection" (Ludwikowski, 1996: 78). Scholars in the republics of the Soviet Union never enjoyed academic freedom and were almost completely isolated from the theories and doctrines, including the field of international human rights law, developed by their counterparts in Western Europe and North America.

The only way to learn about important intellectual debates in the humanities and social sciences in Western Europe was through their critique as "bourgeois", i.e. as opposed to "socialist". The totalitarianism of the Soviet state, as embodied in Marxist-Leninist ideology, was the basis for both science and general social and legal thought. Since the socialist concept of human rights ignored "rights" in the name of the "common cause" (obzee delo), the population and the state authorities regarded the constitutional provisions as the demagogy, myths and lies typical of a "socialist society" (Alekseev, 1998: 326–340). Thus, the de jure end of the Soviet Union did not mean immediate readiness to join the humanitarian European space. Scholars discussed the very possibility of building a constitutional state on the territory of the former USSR. Describing the legacy of the last 20 years of the Belarusian

State University in 2014, Johnson and Tereshkovich (2014: 2) point to the following features:

> *bureaucratic and authoritarian, and constrained by Soviet-style ideological structures in some academic fields, yet at the same time working aggressively towards a more internalized model, a neoliberal vision of how universities can foster national innovative systems and generate university owned or public-private enterprise*.

## 2. From Totalitarianism to Academic Freedom?

Prof. A. Mikhailov (2009: 849–866), one of the few Belarusian academics who was well prepared for the changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s and who led others from gradual totalitarianism to academic freedom. The EHU operated in Minsk for twelve years (1992–2004). This period includes several critical events that changed the landscape of the country — from a forum for constitutional reforms and hopes, to a referendum conducted against the rule of law and democratic principles that dashed all hopes (1996). The referendum provided the basis for the expansion of presidential powers and was accompanied by changes that reduced the ability of the Constitutional Court to effectively influence the situation of constitutional rights in the country.

All the constitutional guarantees contained in the new constitution (1994) were undermined by successive referendums held in 1996, 2004 and 2022. As a result of the first referendum, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe suspended Belarus' special invitation status in the European human rights organisation. Commenting on the event, Leni Fischer said that the changes initiated by President Alexander Lukashenko and introduced into the Belarusian constitution in the 1996 referendum violated the basic principles of democracy and human rights that underpin the activities of the United European System.

The Belarusian authorities' policy of self-isolation of the legal system of the Republic of Belarus, first of all with regard to European institutions, coincided with a period of deterioration of the university's

position in the country, starting with criticism of the EHU's excessive links with the academic world, diplomats and politicians of the European and world orders, and ending with the language of ultimatums and the withdrawal of the authorisation to conduct educational activities in Belarus.

Objectively, in its short history the EHU has become the best known university in Belarus in the field of humanities and social sciences. However, on 27 July 2004, the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus revoked the EHU's licence to provide educational services on the grounds that "the campus is not suitable for teaching". The authorities' actions sparked protests, and some 200 students and professors defended their right to study and work at the EHU (EHU History 2023). Despite the demonstrations, the EHU in Minsk was forced to suspend its activities in Belarus.

## 3. Planting the EHU on European Soil

EHU lost its home and became a refugee. At that moment EHU Charter (EHU 2001) stipulated the main goal as the *integration of European experience and national traditions in the field of university education on the basis of fundamental scientific research to train a new generation of Belarusian specialists capable of mediating the interaction between the West and the East and promoting a more productive mutual understanding between cultures.*

It was a moment when the academic freedom already established at the EHU needed international support, and in response to the invitation of President Valdas Adamkus, the University was able to move from Belarus to Lithuania, also thanks to the widespread international support. The university started its educational activities in 2005, and was officially recognised as a 'university in exile' in 2018, after the Lithuanian government proposed amendments to the Lithuanian Education Act.

To briefly describe the role of the Lithuanian government, it should be appreciated that the government and its president have manifested the value of academic freedom by taking this significant step to support the initiative to reopen the EHU in Vilnius in 2005.

There is only the *erga omnes* concept, which has so far remained in a state of limbo in order to protect the 'interests of the international

community', with no established practice or direct legal obligation under international refugee or human rights law. Some cases of associations of intellectuals seeking to reopen an exiled university to escape persecution in their country of origin have not been widely recognised or supported, despite the growing number of such universities (Cui, 2018).

Meanwhile, in the case of EHU, a thorough understanding of the situation of academic freedom and other rights in Belarus led to solidarity activities that were fully in line with the values and principles of the international community. The courageous and visionary attitude of the Lithuanian government and president towards the EHU was a huge step forward in terms of solidarity and creating conditions for future generations of Belarusians on Lithuanian soil.

## 4. EHU and the State's Positive Obligation Duty in Action

A Belarusian university began operating in Lithuania as a 'normal' Lithuanian university with Lithuanian accreditation (EHU 2007, 2008). Johnson and Tereshkovich (2014: 2) describe the stance of the EHU as a "self-consciously European institution inspired by a cosmopolitan ethos of liberal education in the arts and humanities, and which embraced Western Scholarly standards and research methodologies". However, there was no *lex specialis* regulation for the university, which was relocated abroad as a forcibly displaced institution pursuing its mission on the basis of academic freedom. Operating *de facto* in Lithuania, the EHU continued to fulfil its mission 'to prepare future leaders of society in a liberal academic environment free from discrimination and ideological control' (EHU 2010: 2) and planned to return to Belarus 'but only when it is convinced that the independence can be guaranteed so that it can function as an autonomous university in the Western liberal arts tradition' (EHU 2010: 2).

The academic community and the management of the university worked hard to meet all the legal requirements for the Lithuanian EHU, but it did not pass the test during the institutional evaluation (2014, 2018). Its educational licence was revoked and the activities of the EHU were under imminent threat of closure. Was it a failure of the university, which did something wrong, or was it a case of the host state failing to fulfil its positive obligations towards the university in

exile and the international community of states as a whole? Under the international human rights obligations set out in the ICCPR,

> *each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to respect and to ensure* ***to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognised in the present Covenant*** *without distinction of any kind, such a race, … national or social origin… or other status" and "[w]here not already provided for by existing legislative or other measures, each State Party, …undertakes to take the necessary steps, in accordance with constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Covenant to adopt such legislative or other measures as may be necessary to give effects to the rights recognized in the present Covenant"* (ICCPR, Art. 2 parts 1 and 2).

Lithuania has been a State Party to the ICCPR and ICESCR since November 1991, and is committed to implementing its obligations towards individuals in good faith. Despite the fact that all legislative acts and other institutional support for Lithuanian higher education institutions were in place, there was a lack of regulation, which would include the EHU, which de facto has its special mission oriented towards Belarusian civil society. As a result, both the students and the academic staff of the EHU faced negative consequences due to the suspension of the educational licence by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Sport (2018).

The complicated situation of the EHU as a 'lex specialis' university and its distinction from other Lithuanian higher education institutions prompted a discussion among members of Parliament, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Seimas, 2018). The lack of a specific legal framework made it impossible for the EHU, as a higher education institution operating outside its home country, in Lithuania, but for the benefit of Belarusian society, to meet the standards set by Lithuanian institutions, as the members of the Parliament noted. As a result — they said — the interests of students, Lithuania's ability to meet its international commitments and its reputation are all at risk. In order to create real opportunities for HEIs that have been forced to cease their activities in their country of origin for political reasons to continue their activities in Lithuania, as well as to create conditions for the students of these institutions to

study freely in Lithuania, it is crucial to establish fair, adequate and at the same time specific methods of evaluation and accreditation of the university in exile. As a result of this discussion, amendments were made to the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania and the definition of the university in exile is defined as "a Lithuanian higher education institution whose activities in its country of origin have been terminated for political reasons". The status of a higher education institution operating in exile is granted by the Government on the proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania" (the Law, 2018, art. 4., para. 6).

These actions were vital for the EHU and for the future generations of Belarus. The host state is further developing the legal framework, which is a constructive step that adapts national regulations to the unique status and mission of the EHU and the need to take them into account while applying European standards for higher education institutions. In order to ensure the quality of studies on the basis of European rules and to fulfil the international requirements of the state, the Lithuanian government is now developing regulations that will meet all the principles of implementation. The EHU continues to function as a university in exile.

## Empirical Observations on Fulfillment of the EHU Mission

The intellectuals who founded the EHU have stated that its primary goal during this period of transition is to "become an intellectual stronghold for Belarus and in the region in order to demonstrate through our practical activity the very much needed paradigm of alternative education that leaves far behind the still dominant ineffective, conservative, and recidivist educational practices" (Mikhailov, 2007).

After a dramatic situation with the review of the EHU's legal status and some requirements related to its operation and evaluation in the host country, a Survey of Impact on the Country of Origin (Belarus) by the European Humanities University, 2021-04-13 (Survey 2021: 2–78) examined the impact of the EHU on Belarusian society and its processes.

It should be noted that the survey coincided with the deterioration of the situation in Belarus, where after the presidential

elections (August, 2020), massive and systematic human rights violations occurred, amounting to the alleged international crimes (OSCE report, Benedek, November 2020).

The results of the survey demonstrated the value of EHU graduates' contributions to the transformation of Belarusian society upon their return to their home country. Its completion in 2020–2021 showed that EHU alumni value the academic and extracurricular opportunities they had while attending the institution, and the impact these experiences had on their subsequent professional and personal development. Alumni from Belarus have had a significant impact on the socio-economic and cultural development of the country. EHU alumni have long contributed significantly to the growth of entrepreneurship, independent research and civil society in Belarus.

Moreover, the authors of the report collected data for comparative analysis by interviewing EHU graduates (114 people) and non-EHU graduates (401 people) as well as EHU students (138 students). It shows that the EHU's liberal arts approach strengthens the personal qualities that make EHU alumni resistant to authoritarian models of behaviour: although only 1/3 of alumni work in their field of study, they often go into self-employment or freelance work: the spheres where creativity and independence are a must. Through its graduates, the EHU also indirectly promotes the concept of socially responsible business. EHU graduates (two thirds of whom returned to Belarus) continue to participate in the social transformation process in the country after their return. They appreciate the advanced soft skills (critical thinking, independent learning, creativity, effective communication) and the academic staff, which the alumni consider to be the strongest features of EHU. The survey also proves that one of the main functions of the EHU is to provide a platform for students and professors with the same democratic values and to "to cement their worldviews'. (Survey, 2021, pp.2–4). All in all, the data and their summary conclusions show the educational, social, axiological and professional impact and prove that the EHU mission has been successfully implemented.

The status granted to the EHU by the Lithuanian government and the apparently successful ongoing activities of the university in the development of civil society in Belarus distinguish it from other Lithuanian higher education institutions today. Meanwhile, the EHU remains on the one hand a Lithuanian higher education institution operating under Lithuanian law, and on the other hand a university

whose main objective is to support the development of civil society in Belarus and for Belarus. As a result, the Lithuanian government is faced with a double challenge when it comes to the positive measures that the state must take in accordance with human rights treaties: "(W)here not already provided for by existing legislative or other measures, each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take the necessary steps, in accordance with its constitutional processes and with the provisions of the present Covenant, to adopt such laws or other measures as may be necessary to give effect to the rights recognized in the present Covenant." (ICCPR, Art. 2, part 2).

In fulfilling this duty, the Lithuanian government fills the gaps in our understanding of the concept of erga omnes by extending its application to cases where a state contributes to the preservation of common values by preventing the destruction of academic freedom through positive and concrete peaceful means provided by another state. Undoubtedly, the Belarusian intellectuals and students who were given the opportunity to exercise academic freedom in the host state have brought the results to all people in both countries, Belarus and Lithuania, as well as to others. Undoubtedly, this example confirms the belief in the possibility of a strong effect of international cooperation as a pro-activity against the efforts of totalitarian regimes.

## About the EHU Perspectives

Despite the fact that the EHU did not 'pass' its institutional evaluation by the Lithuanian State Education Agency in previous years, the real positive indirect impact of the EHU on Belarus appeared to be high.

Its students and graduates are making a difference in the Belarusian landscape by contributing critical thinking, democratic attitudes and self-esteem, which form a new basis for the future Belarusian democratic state. The results of the survey prove that

> *"EHU mainly influence Belarus via its graduates who in their turn are influence by academic staff — it is vital to support the atmosphere where academic staff can focus on teaching and helping students"* (Survey, 2021: 81).

In the opinion of graduates and students, the attitude of academic staff towards students in general and the opportunities to

participate in academic exchange programmes were among the factors most associated with their greatest satisfaction. All in all, it could be considered as a great impact of academic freedom in all its manifestations — individual, institutional and as a positive obligation of a host state that fulfils its obligations as a solidary approach towards free-thinking academics and youth who contribute to the future democratic Belarus.

Today, the EHU STRATEGY for 2021–2026 is being implemented. Will the current EHU strategy be in line with the EHU mission and its achievements? Taking into account the results of previous EHU activities, accumulated in the survey, which highlighted the institutional perspectives of the EHU as an influencer in Belarus, and applying the concept of academic freedom, we can challenge the Strategy with the following questions:

1. Will the EHU's "ideal image" as a Belarusian university in exile continue to provide a space of freedom and camaraderie where a high-quality education may be obtained?
2. Will the EHU continue to be seen by potential students from Belarus and the region as a "contrario" in comparison to home universities that repress student and faculty freedom and are overtly ideological?
3. Is EHU capable of becoming an institutionalized light for social and scientific revolution in Belarus and the region, and will it do so in the future?
4. With the EHU as a success story in mind, may the Lithuanian experience be commended and shared for a broader application for the sake of academic freedom worldwide?

The answers to these questions will come from the future, which is fast approaching and is predicted to be hard and demanding.

Today, when the world is suffering from wars, the suppression of democratic movements and the curtailment of individual rights, a positive example of solidarity in the field of academic freedom would be highly appreciated. Indeed, the strongest means — educational institutions based on academic freedom and intellectuals who share democratic and humanitarian values — resist totalitarianism by raising a new generation of intellectuals and humanists.

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**Dzmitry Kruk**

# Economics and Business in Liberal Arts University: The Way Towards the University of 3rd Generation

Higher education and Universities are undergoing rapid transformations driven by bold trends from both demand and supply sides. According to Wissema (2009) and (2020), these trends encompass shifts in educational design influenced by new pedagogical insights and concepts, alongside an increasing demand for individual competencies emphasizing human development. Wissema (2009) contends that these trends signal the gradual dismantling of the traditional higher education model, epitomized by the Humboldt-type University or the University of the 2nd generation, potentially paving the way for the emergence of the University of the 3rd generation.

Wissema (2020) outlines several characteristics of this envisioned university, including: (i) a foundation in fundamental research, (ii) transdisciplinary research practices, (iii) substantial industry collaboration, (iv) a focus on value creation, (v) cosmopolitanism with English as the lingua franca, (vi) a two-tier structure accommodating mass education with tailored provisions for exceptional students and faculty, and (vii) reduced dependence on direct government funding.

However, it's crucial to recognize that the trajectory of higher education transformation is not universally uniform. Variations exist depending on geographical location and sector, contributing to an environment of uncertainty. Consequently, the path toward the University of the 3rd generation may diverge significantly. The attributes proposed by Wissema (2020) should not be seen as definitive end points, but as preliminary milestones. The journey towards the 3rd generation University is multifaceted, with the composition of its qualities and properties holding significance.

The concept of Liberal Arts education and the experience of Liberal Arts Universities are pertinent in the context of higher education transformation. Liberal Arts institutions inherently embody many qualities deemed essential in the modern world. It's imperative to explore the extent to which they can lead and contribute to the broader transformation of higher education.

Additionally, the realms of economics and business education have witnessed considerable advancement in alignment with the characteristics outlined by Wissema (2020). Economics, long considered a distinctive domain within the social sciences, has demonstrated its capacity to effect societal change through its unique methodologies (Siegfried, 2012). Similarly, business education, by its nature, emphasizes strong collaborations with industry. Thus, integrating economics (Miller, 2021) and business (Paris, 2007) education with Liberal Arts principles and institutions is viewed as a vital strategy and systemic response to the evolving landscape of higher education and modern Universities.

In the Belarusian context, a quasi-natural experiment is unfolding at the European Humanities University (EHU), a Liberal Arts institution operating in exile. EHU is undergoing a transformation marked by the expansion of its Economics and Business Department. How can this expansion be leveraged for the mutual benefit of the University, the Economics and Business department, and facilitate productive transformation? This question serves as the central focus of this article. At a higher level of generality, the article is aimed to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the evolution of higher education and the potential synergies between economics, business, and Liberal Arts education in shaping the University of the 3rd generation.

The study is structured as follows: Section 2 delves into the cognitive and teaching and learning dimensions, examining how economics and business can enrich Liberal Arts education and vice versa. Section 3 explores new avenues for research and engagement in transdisciplinary endeavors resulting from the integration of economics and business studies with the Liberal Arts concept. Section 4 discusses principles and opportunities for strengthening University-industry collaboration, while Section 5 sheds light on practical considerations using the case of the European Humanities University and BISEB as its new branch. Finally, Section 6 provides concluding remarks.

## Cognitive and Learning Dimension: How Economics and Business Can Enrich Liberal Arts Education and Vice Versa

Economic knowledge to a large extent is based on the spirit of liberal arts. A century-old citation by Keynes, depicts the economist as someone who must possess a rare combination of gifts: 'He must be mathematician, historian, statesman, philosopher-in some degree (Keynes, 1924). He must understand symbols and speak in words. He must contemplate the particular in terms of the general, and touch abstract and concrete in the same flight of thought. He must study the present in the light of the past for the purposes of the future'. This multidisciplinary approach remains relevant today, although not all economists may fully endorse it.

In the last 50–60 years, economists have focused on developing methods that bear resemblance to those of natural sciences. The convergence of methods with the natural sciences has not been an end in itself, although economics is frequently criticized in this manner (e.g. Lawson, 2020). Rather this is a result of gradual evolution. In the research of the 1950s–1970s, economists step by step identified and developed a unique approach to analyzing social reality: modeling the economic preferences and expectations of individuals, which enables predicting their behavior with a significant degree of accuracy. In other words, economists have partially formalized human behavior — intentional individuals with changing preferences and expectations, thereby partially formalizing social reality. This has provided the discipline with significant advantages, allowing it to achieve tangible results in influencing the social environment (Siegfried, 2012). Consequently, it has enhanced the prestige and profitability of the profession (Freeman, 1999).

Such changes within economics have influenced its relationship with other social sciences, causing it to increasingly stand out from the family of social sciences. This occurred for several reasons. Firstly, economic theory increasingly diverged from other social sciences in its methodology and orientation towards formal modeling as a priority scientific tool. Economists and representatives of other social sciences found it increasingly difficult to find a common research language and toolkit. Secondly, this state of affairs led to a certain snobbery on the part of economists towards other social sciences,

eliciting a reciprocal reaction from representatives of these disciplines (Leijonhufvud, 1973). Economists often began to view their discipline as the most advanced and superior to other social sciences. This situation was particularly exacerbated in the 1990s–2000s (Colander, 2005). During that period the influence of economists on public life — in policymaking, key positions in many business sectors, as public figures, and as consultants — significantly increased (Fourcade, Ollion and Algan, 2015). Thirdly, economics and its methods began to actively penetrate into adjacent spheres, including other social sciences (e.g., Baron and Hannan, 1994: 1111–1146). Economists themselves often interpret this phenomenon in the spirit of their superiority, labeling it as "economics, the queen of the social sciences," echoing the well-known dictum of Lerner: "Economics has gained the title of queen of the social sciences by choosing solved political problems as its domain" (Lerner, 1972). Beyond economics, however, such a state of affairs is often marked more as economic imperialism, implying a significant negative connotation (Fine, 2000).

There are fundamental differences in the interpretation of the origins and consequences of the tacit cold war between economics and other social sciences. For example, one pole postulates the unconditional superiority of economics and its methods over other social disciplines, assuming that such a state of affairs is justified and will persist in the future (Colander, 2005). The other pole posits that behind the lofty ambitions of economics and economists lies a near emptiness. This position suggests that even the strengths of economics as a science are largely illusory and artificial (Lawson, 2015). For instance, within this approach, it is postulated that the foundation of economics as a science consists not of facts but rather of elements of faith and belief (Nelson, 2014). Advocates of this approach view prospects for change within the field of economics with great skepticism, as they believe that for effective reform of economics, it would be necessary to revise almost all of its fundamental foundations (Lawson, 2020). Bourdieu formulates this position in the most radical form: "This tutelary theory is a pure mathematical fiction. From the start it has been founded on a formidable abstraction (Bourdieu, 1998). For, in the name of a narrow and strict conception of rationality as individual rationality, it brackets the economic and social conditions of rational orientations and the economic and social structures that are the condition of their application. From this sort of original

sin, inscribed in the Walrasian myth of "pure theory", flow all of the deficiencies and faults of the discipline of economics and the fatal obstinacy with which it attaches itself to the arbitrary opposition which it induces, through its mere existence, between a properly economic logic, based on competition and efficiency, and social logic, which is subject to the rule of fairness." Such assessments suggest that the special position of economics is at least undeserved, and over time the situation will change or should be preemptively changed, as the failures of economics become increasingly apparent.

It is quite natural that there are intermediate positions between the two poles. Until the mid-2000s, however, they did not attract as much attention as the polar positions mentioned above. But the situation began to change with the onset of the Great Recession. For mainstream economics, which failed to predict and prevent the 2007–2008 financial crisis, the situation deteriorated. Confidence in the omnipotence of economics and economic methods wavered both within the profession and beyond. Economists began to look more critically at themselves and their capabilities, often conducting self-criticism. Krugman's article became a watershed moment in this regard, initiating a serious revision of both the science itself and its methods, as well as the methods of its teaching, and the possibilities of interaction with other disciplines (Krugman, 2009).

The intermediate position, which can now be referred to as mainstream, involves a high appraisal of economic methods and the practical achievements based on them. However, it emphasizes that these achievements have a flip side. In particular, uncritical and irrelevant use of economic models and methods can lead to false postulates (Rodrik, 2015). Moreover, an excessive focus on the modeling environment poses the risk that economists will not bring their "laboratory world" closer to the real world but rather create a pseudo-world (Summers, 1991). Another important postulate is the recognition of the existence of blind spots in economics (Rodrik, 2015; Borio, 2018). They arise because economic science deliberately reduces the social context, imposing certain boundaries on it, for example, to increase the validity of its methods and models. A strategic response to the postulated problems increasingly involves enhancing collaboration with other social sciences. Social sciences may become the moral and academic "tuning fork" for determining the directions in which the economics should develop.

Moreover, Streeten points to mutual interest in the development of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary cooperation between economics and other sciences (Streeten, 2002). As to a large extent a consensus among economist this view was summarized by R. Thaler in his Nobel Prize lecture: "It is possible to do economics without homo economicus. If we learn from other social scientists, we can improve economics, we can increase its explanatory power and it can give us all kinds of new tools that we can use to improve people's outcomes" (Backhouse and Fontaine, 2018).

The critical view of economic science on itself and the significant reconsideration of its sphere have also been reflected in the mechanics and methods of teaching economics. The need to consider a broad social context in the study of economics and conducting economic research has become one of the key considerations, changing the content of economic education today. For example, this is the priority task set by the international initiative CORE Econ, whose principles are increasingly being implemented in the educational practice of universities worldwide: "change economics education globally to a focus on the most important problems faced by our societies including climate change, injustice, innovation and the future of work". As Bowles and Carlin show, such an approach significantly changes the content of economic education and its corresponding methodological settings (Bowles and Carlin, 2020: 196). The content of economic education de facto goes far beyond the traditional boundaries of economic disciplines and becomes interdisciplinary. This approach is very close to the tradition of Liberal Arts education. And somewhat arbitrarily, it can be said that such a model of economic education represents a reduced approach to Liberal Arts. Students' worldview expands with such an approach (Bowles and Carlin, 2023). Students are provided with much more opportunities for conscious "navigation" between economic models and methods. In other words, such an approach provides grounds for countering the fundamental weaknesses indicated by Rodrik (2015). Additionally, this approach cultivates students' research orientation towards real-world problems rather than a "laboratory" or "pseudo-world" (Summers, 1991).

Alongside substantive changes, economic education today is one of the pioneers in developing and implementing new and advanced teaching methods (Birdi et al., 2023). Being leaders in terms of educational tools and methods has been characteristic of economic

education for a long time. This is probably due to economics' long-standing position at the forefront of many social fields. Therefore, to maintain such positions, economic education traditionally actively tests and implements advanced teaching methods. Another reason for this state of affairs is likely the close connection of economic education with business education. The latter, by its very nature, aims to cultivate new, more efficient practices and teaching methods, and its natural connection with the industry contributes to this even more. Economic education is privileged in this regard. From its perspective, business education can be seen as a space for experimenting and testing new practices and methods. Those that demonstrate effectiveness and success can be quickly adapted in the adjacent segment, i.e., economic education.

From the perspective of economics, all the described changes and trends increase the attractiveness of interacting with other social sciences in education and research. Moreover, the tradition and mechanics of Liberal Arts education look very promising in this regard. This tradition largely corresponds to the spirit of economics. The implementation of economics into the Liberal Arts system provides grounds for expecting the preservation of its strong qualities while partially neutralizing its existing shortcomings. From a pragmatic standpoint, economists have reasons to hope that such a path will partially eliminate blind spots. Ultimately, this is one of the priority paths today for the renewal and transformation of economic science. By initiating an end to the cold war with other social sciences, economic science acts not only as a beneficiary but also as a donor. In the context of education, the new stage of integration of economic science and economic thinking into the family of social sciences is a path to significantly strengthening students' competencies. For example, economists' competitive advantage in practically influencing all social fields (Fourcade, Ollion and Algan, 2015) is an important reserve that is less realized in other social sciences. Similarly, the situation is with teaching methods and tools. The significant contribution of economic science, with its wealth of experience, can enhance the research potential of social sciences. Economists still have significant advantages in research methods. Involving and adapting such methods in other social fields — culture, education, civil society, politics, etc. — but no longer in the spirit of economic imperialism, but taking into account the specifics of these social fields and in collaboration with their researchers,

can significantly expand the research boundaries of social sciences. Referring to Wissema (2020) this would mean an important step towards the standards of the 3rd generation University in the dimension of study and learning.

## The Patterns for Research Development

A new era of collaboration between economics and other social sciences holds immense potential due to the integration and interaction of research methods, paving the way for transdisciplinarity and a deeper understanding of social reality. Unlike the doctrine of "economic imperialism," which often portrays the forceful intrusion of economic theory and methods into other social science fields, this research program entails genuine cooperation to create a new, higher-level research space. By integrating diverse methods from economics, sociology, political science, anthropology, psychology, and history, transdisciplinary research can provide comprehensive insights into multifaceted problems. This collaborative approach enables researchers to examine issues from various perspectives, leveraging the strengths of each discipline. For example, economists can contribute quantitative modeling and experimental frameworks, sociologists bring expertise in social structures and interactions, political scientists offer insights into governance and power dynamics, anthropologists provide cultural context, psychologists offer insights into human behavior, and historians shed light on the historical evolution of societal phenomena.

This combination of methods empowers researchers to address real-world problems with greater depth and nuance. For instance, studying poverty necessitates not only economic analysis of income distribution but also sociological understanding of social exclusion, psychological insights into poverty's impact on mental health, and historical perspectives on its root causes. This blend of disciplines often gives rise to a new research space, distinct from both within-discipline and interdisciplinary approaches.

The formation of a transdisciplinary level of research is driven not only by the integration and combination of research methods (economic theory and other social disciplines) but also by other factors such as research agenda and design. A notable example in this regard is modern political economy (Jakee, 2021). While it is often classified in

the taxonomy of social sciences as an economic discipline or an interdisciplinary intersection of economics and political science, it is pertinent to consider this field as truly transdisciplinary. Firstly, it combines more than two disciplinary spheres, drawing not only from economic theory and political science but also from sociology, history, and other fields. Secondly, and more importantly, through such integration, it has de facto created a new dimension of research.

Researchers in political economy employ a variety of methods, including quantitative analysis, qualitative research, game theory, historical analysis, and comparative analysis. By integrating insights from multiple disciplines and employing diverse methodologies, political economists explore complex issues such as income inequality, globalization, and economic development. Modern political economy exemplifies the principles of transdisciplinary research by integrating concepts, methods, and perspectives from multiple disciplines to gain a comprehensive understanding of complex interactions.

Another example of existing achievements with claims to transdisciplinarity is the field of behavioral economics. Initially, behavioral economics emerged from the collaboration between psychology and economics, stemming from the seminal works of psychologists such as Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky. These works shed light on cognitive biases and heuristics that challenge the notion of rational choice. However, this research proposition has given rise to a much broader spectrum of research questions and applications beyond interdisciplinary psychology-economics issues.

For instance, in finance, behavioral economics has revolutionized the understanding of investor behavior and market dynamics. It reveals patterns of irrationality and market anomalies, providing valuable insights into asset pricing and investment strategies. The field has elucidated phenomena such as herd behavior, overreaction, and loss aversion, which have significant implications for portfolio management and risk assessment. By incorporating psychological insights into financial models, practitioners can better navigate the complexities of financial markets and mitigate the impact of irrational decision-making (Buttenheim, Moffitt and Beatty, 2023).

Furthermore, behavioral economics finds applications in diverse domains such as public policy, healthcare, marketing, and many others. In public policy, behavioral insights inform the design of interventions aimed at influencing individual behavior towards socially desirable

outcomes. Governments leverage concepts like default options, framing, and incentives to encourage behaviors such as savings, vaccination, and environmental conservation. Similarly, in healthcare, behavioral economics informs strategies to promote healthier lifestyles, enhance patient compliance, and optimize healthcare delivery. By understanding the psychological drivers of health-related decisions, policymakers and practitioners can design more effective interventions tailored to individual preferences and behaviors. In marketing, the field offers valuable insights into consumer behavior and decision-making. Marketers leverage principles such as social proof, scarcity, and anchoring to influence consumer choices and preferences. By understanding the cognitive biases and emotional drivers that underpin consumer decisions, businesses can design more persuasive marketing campaigns, optimize pricing strategies, and enhance customer engagement. Thus, the transdisciplinary nature of behavioral economics empowers practitioners across various fields to address complex challenges and drive desirable changes (Buttenheim, Moffitt and Beatty, 2023).

Similarly, the collaboration between economics and other social sciences offers vast potential for groundbreaking transdisciplinary research across various domains, each presenting unique opportunities for innovation and societal impact. In the realm of law and economics, the integration of economic principles with legal theory opens avenues for studying and understanding complex phenomena, such as the patterns in innovation and digitalization fields, the incentives behind productivity gains, financial development, and social behavior patterns. Economics and sociology converge to explore new insights into income inequality, social mobility, and the impact of economic policies on marginalized communities.

Moreover, the study of the social context for business development delves into how economic activities intersect with cultural, political, and environmental factors. By incorporating insights from anthropology, political science, and environmental studies, researchers can analyze how businesses navigate diverse social landscapes, address societal needs, and contribute to sustainable development. Business ethics emerges as a critical domain where economics intersects with ethical theory and social norms. By examining the ethical implications of economic decisions and corporate behavior, researchers can develop frameworks for responsible business conduct, corporate governance,

and stakeholder engagement. This collaboration promotes ethical leadership, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility, fostering trust and integrity in the business community.

In the domain of the green economy, the collaboration between economics and environmental science drives research on sustainable development, renewable energy, and climate change mitigation. Researchers can assess the costs and benefits of green technologies, design policies for carbon pricing and emissions trading, and promote the transition to a low-carbon economy. Another area ripe for transdisciplinary research is education, where economics intersects with psychology, pedagogy and sociology to inform educational policy and practice. By examining the economic determinants of educational outcomes, researchers can identify barriers to access, equity, and quality in education systems. This collaboration informs strategies for educational reform, teacher training, and curriculum development, promoting lifelong learning and human capital development.

Taken together, these research domains serve as evidence for better policy decisions. Hence, such collaborations enable researchers to generate innovative solutions for a paradigm shift in policymaking, paving the way for transformative change and societal progress. To a large extent, this represents a return to the ancient idea that collaborative research between economics and other social sciences is the most effective way to secure progress in policymaking (Williamson, 1946).

## The Patterns towards University-Industry Collaboration

University-industry collaboration stands as a cornerstone for contemporary universities, representing the most effective means to foster value creation within the academic sphere (Wissema, 2009). This symbiotic relationship not only addresses pressing educational challenges but also offers systemic solutions to broader societal issues, particularly the erosion of human capital within nations.

The imperative for collaboration between universities and industrial partners is underscored by the imperative to adapt to evolving market demands and technological advancements. Ivascu, Cirjaliu and Draghici summarize a business model for such collaboration, recognizing universities as pivotal partners for industries in tackling

challenges beyond their individual capacities (Ivascu, Cirjaliu and Draghici, 2016). Through joint projects, universities offer their expertise and research capabilities, complementing the resources and needs of industrial partners. This collaborative framework not only facilitates the development of competitive products but also fosters innovation and value creation.

Strategic collaborations between academia and industry yield manifold benefits. For academics, it provides opportunities to address real-world challenges, access new skills and resources, and witness tangible impacts of their research. Meanwhile, companies enhance their performance by leveraging academic expertise, developing new technologies, and mitigating risks associated with research investments. Moreover, such collaborations contribute to national growth and productivity, driving innovation and competitiveness.

Despite the evident benefits, realizing the full potential of university-industry collaborations requires concerted efforts and supportive policies (Dowling, 2015). Efficient brokerage mechanisms are essential to facilitate collaborations, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while pump-prime funding can stimulate the development of sustainable research partnerships. Additionally, technology transfer offices must prioritize knowledge exchange over short-term income generation, ensuring equitable agreements that promote public benefit (Dowling, 2015).

University-industry collaboration is not only crucial but also achievable for universities across various disciplines. However, economic and business universities and programs stand out as particularly well-positioned to foster such collaboration. The inherent nature of economic and business education aligns closely with the needs and demands of the industry. Students in these programs are equipped with a wide spectrum of quantitative methods, diverse skill set that includes analytical thinking, problem-solving, and a deep understanding of market dynamics. Moreover, the curriculum often incorporates real-world case studies, internships, and industry projects, providing students with hands-on experience and exposure to industry practices. These attributes make economic and business programs highly attractive to businesses seeking to collaborate with academia. By engaging with these programs, industries gain access to a pool of talented individuals who possess the requisite knowledge and skills to address contemporary challenges. Additionally, collaboration with

economic and business universities offers businesses opportunities for research and innovation.

In essence, economic and business universities play a pivotal role in bridging the gap between academia and industry. This makes them natural intermediaries for facilitating partnerships with the business sector. Economic and business programs serve as conduits for industry engagement, they can share best practices, establish partnership models, and facilitate knowledge exchange with other academic disciplines. As such, these programs have the potential to serve as accelerators for collaboration with industry in other fields. By leveraging the strengths of economic and business programs, universities can cultivate a culture of collaboration that extends beyond their traditional boundaries, ultimately benefiting both academia and industry alike.

In the realms of social sciences and humanities, university-industry collaboration remains somewhat underdeveloped and encounters various challenges (The Finnish Research Impact Foundation, 2023). The nature of research in these fields may not always align seamlessly with the immediate needs or objectives of corporate partners. Additionally, the outcomes of social science and humanities research may be less tangible or directly applicable to industry compared for instance to engineering, or economics and business. Despite these obstacles, such collaboration is not only feasible but also imperative for both academia in social sciences and humanities and industry. Therefore, it becomes crucial to explore innovative formats and offer tangible value propositions to industry partners in order to promote and enhance collaboration in these fields.

To overcome the challenges and promote collaboration in social sciences and humanities, it is crucial to explore new formats and approaches that resonate with industry partners. In a long-term perspective, this may involve developing tailored research projects or leveraging emerging technologies to address industry challenges from a social or humanistic perspective. Moreover, universities can enhance the value proposition for industry by highlighting the long-term benefits of investing in research and innovation in social sciences and humanities, such as improved corporate social responsibility, enhanced brand reputation, and better understanding of diverse societal contexts.

In a shorter-run, an effective approach to foster university-industry collaboration for humanities and social sciences might lie in their active engagement in interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary

cooperation. These collaborative endeavors offer a short and promising pathway to bridge the gap between academia and industry, particularly in domains where their intersections are most relevant and impactful. As highlighted in Section 3 of the article, various domains emerging from transdisciplinary research present fertile ground for collaboration between academia focused in social science and humanities, and industry. These include areas such as law and economics, sociology and economics, the study of social contexts for business development, business ethics, green economy, and education and educational studies.

Each of these domains offers rich opportunities for joint exploration and problem-solving, addressing pressing societal challenges while generating valuable insights for both academia and industry. All these domains are promising in terms of producing research outputs relevant for business. The latter is crucial, while the major demand of business for collaboration with universities is 'relevant problems to solve' (The Finnish Research Impact Foundation, 2023). By focusing on relevant problems to solve, universities and industry can cultivate mutually beneficial collaborations that yield practical solutions, drive innovation, and create lasting societal impact.

## BISEB at EHU: New Opportunities towards the 3rd generation University

The establishment of the BEROC-IPM School of Economics and Business (BISEB) within the European Humanities University (EHU) marks a significant stride towards realizing the principles of the University of the 3rd Generation outlined by Wissema (2020).

First, we are going to establish a contemporary program in 'Business Economics', which equips students with a unique set of competencies. To a huge extent it becomes possible due to the integration of competencies in economics and business one the one hand (those of BEROC), and social science and humanities, on the other hand (those of EHU). In essence, the BA program at BISEB represents a fusion of competencies from mathematics, statistics, social sciences, IT, and finally economics and business, offering students a holistic educational experience that is both comprehensive and forward-thinking. By equipping students with a diverse skill set and

interdisciplinary perspective, we empower them to thrive in a rapidly evolving economic landscape and make meaningful contributions to society and the global economy.

Students undergo rigorous training in mathematical concepts and statistical techniques, empowering them with the analytical tools needed to dissect complex economic phenomena and make data-driven decisions. This emphasis on quantitative literacy ensures that our graduates possess a competitive edge in an increasingly data-driven world. Complementing their quantitative acumen, students engage deeply with the social sciences, gaining a comprehensive understanding of the broader societal and global context in which economic principles operate. Through engagement with the social sciences students explore the multifaceted factors that shape economic behavior and outcomes, developing a nuanced perspective that transcends narrow economic frameworks. Furthermore, our BA program incorporates cutting-edge IT skills, with a particular focus on data science, data analytics, machine learning, and artificial intelligence (AI). In today's digital age, proficiency in these areas is essential for navigating the complexities of contemporary economics and business. Amidst this tapestry, students delve into a wide range of economic and business disciplines. Through a diverse array of courses, students acquire both theoretical knowledge and practical skills, preparing them to tackle real-world challenges with confidence and competence.

At the core of BISEB lies a fundamental principle: we live in a globalized world, and we strive to be at its academic and research frontier. Hence, BISEB is dedicated to fostering international collaboration and engagement, both within the academic community and beyond. One of the key pillars of our commitment to academic excellence is our international collaboration. BEROC RC — one of the founders of BISEB — is the part of the Forum for Research in Eastern Europe (FREE) Network, and keeps close ties with 'Belarusian economic diaspora', i.e. Belarusian economists working at leading Universities worldwide. This provides BISEB with invaluable access to cutting-edge academic and research standards and ensures that our academic programs are informed by the latest advancements in economic theory and practice. BISEB will actively engages international scholars and experts, inviting them to serve as guest lecturers and visiting professors. By tapping into the expertise of these distinguished academics, we enrich our educational offerings with diverse perspectives

and insights from the global academic community. Moreover, BISEB facilitates peer academic and research cooperation between its students and their counterparts at partnering institutions around the world. Through collaborative projects, joint research initiatives, and student exchange programs, we foster cross-cultural understanding, preparing our students to thrive in a globally interconnected world.

Second, BISEB has the ambition to become the engine for developing transdisciplinary research. Both regarding global context, and those more applied and focused on Belarusian agenda. BISEB is rooted in the principles of fundamental research, ensuring that academic inquiry remains at the core of its mission. By fostering a culture of curiosity, exploration, and intellectual rigor, BISEB aims at cultivating a dynamic learning environment that encourages innovation and discovery. Moreover, BISEB embraces transdisciplinary research practices. Through interdisciplinary collaboration, students and faculty alike have the opportunity to explore the intersections between economics, business, and other social sciences, generating novel insights and driving meaningful impact.

For developing students' research skills BISEB will suggest a groundbreaking initiative: the Research Lab project. Designed to promote collaboration and innovation across disciplines, the Research Lab will offer students of EHU from diverse backgrounds the opportunity to engage in transdisciplinary research, transcending traditional academic boundaries and fostering a culture of interdisciplinary inquiry. It will serve as a dynamic platform where students studying economics, humanities, informatics, law, and other fields come together to form small research teams. These teams embark on collaborative projects that address complex challenges from multiple perspectives, drawing upon the unique insights and expertise of each team member.

One of the key objectives of the Research Lab is to break down silos between academic disciplines and encourage students to think beyond the confines of their own fields. By working alongside peers with different backgrounds and perspectives, students gain a deeper understanding of interdisciplinary approaches to problem-solving and develop the skills necessary for effective collaboration in diverse settings. Moreover, the Research Lab will provide students with hands-on experience in conducting research, from formulating research questions to collecting and analyzing data, and disseminating findings. Under the guidance of faculty mentors from various disciplines,

students learn research methodologies and techniques, honing their critical thinking and analytical skills in the process.

The projects undertaken in the Research Lab will span a wide range of topics, reflecting the diverse interests and expertise of the student participants. From exploring the socio-economic impacts of technological innovation, through studying the cross-cutting issues in social sciences and business, to examining the opportunities commercialization of creative ideas in the humanities, the Research Lab offers students the freedom to pursue their intellectual passions and contribute to cutting-edge scholarship in their respective fields. In addition to fostering collaboration among students, the Research Lab also serves as a catalyst for interdisciplinary dialogue and engagement within the wider academic community. By providing a platform for interdisciplinary inquiry and fostering a culture of inclusivity and innovation, the Research Lab empowers students to become the next generation of thought leaders and change-makers in their respective fields.

Third, at the core of BISEB's philosophy lies a commitment to value creation, both within the confines of the classroom and extending beyond. To achieve this, BISEB endeavors to establish robust university-industry collaborations, bridging the divide between academia and the corporate sphere. A pivotal principle for BISEB is securing a synergy between economic and business education. This is critically important for securing both the quality of education and research in BISEB, as well as its financial sustainability. An intermediation between economic and business education is mutually beneficial in terms of quality. Moreover, close ties of BISEB with firms due to business education is a severe precondition for financial sustainability. Business education traditionally generates significant positive margin, which can be used for softening budget constraints of the BA-program. Moreover, explicit career perspectives in innovative Belarusian businesses (due to a close cooperation with them) will expand the demand for BA-program, hence, enhancing corresponding revenues.

However, although the integration of economic and business education facilitates access and interaction with business entities, it alone does not ensure effective university-industry partnerships. To achieve true collaboration, we must strive to be competitive in value creation and offer unique services tailored to the needs of businesses. BISEB has identified two initiatives to accomplish this goal: (i) fostering collaboration between students and businesses through practical

engagement as an integral part of their studies, and (ii) establishing a business incubator as an integral component of BISEB's framework.

Through our practical engagement initiative, students have the opportunity to apply their theoretical knowledge and skills in real business settings, thereby enhancing their learning experience and professional development. For instance, students may provide marketing and business analysis services to partnering companies as part of their coursework. This not only allows them to gain practical insights into industry practices but also enables them to contribute meaningfully to the operations of businesses. By working closely with professionals in the field, students acquire valuable industry-specific skills and build networks that can pave the way for future career opportunities.

BISEB is going to house a dedicated business incubator aimed at nurturing entrepreneurial talent and fostering innovation. Within the incubator, students have the unique opportunity to develop and launch their own start-up ventures under the guidance of experienced mentors and industry experts. Whether it's developing a new product or service, refining a business model, or securing funding, students enrolled in the business incubator gain invaluable hands-on experience in every aspect of entrepreneurship. Moreover, the incubator will provide a supportive environment where students can collaborate with like-minded peers, exchange ideas, and receive constructive feedback on their ventures.

By forging partnerships with leading companies and organizations, BISEB ensures that its educational programs remain relevant and responsive to the needs of the market, while also creating valuable opportunities for students to gain real-world experience and connections.

In addition to addressing educational challenges, BISEB offers a systemic response to critical national issues, particularly the erosion of human capital in Belarus. This erosion poses a significant threat to the country's pursuit of democratic change. In the spheres of economics and business, the impact of educational shortcomings is particularly acute, jeopardizing future prospects for the country. Historically, Belarusian students in these fields had some limited opportunities for global advancement, thus fostering both economic growth and democratic values. However, these mechanisms have faltered in recent years. Young Belarusians now lack access to quality education domestically, hindering their career prospects. Likewise, businesses are relocating or

seeking educational alternatives due to declining standards at home. These trends pose substantial risks to Belarusian human capital and the country's future.

To safeguard and enhance Belarusian human capital, thereby supporting democratic transition and national development, it is imperative to offer high-caliber economic and business education aligned with European standards. BISEB will serve as a conduit for Belarusian students and businesses to access contemporary European education in economics and business, thereby contributing to regional development and bolstering the nation's prospects.

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The trajectory of higher education transformation, as outlined by Wissema (2020), represents a dynamic and multifaceted journey toward the emergence of the University of the 3rd generation. While his proposed attributes serve as provisional milestones, it's essential to recognize that the path may diverge significantly based on geographical location and sectoral variations. Liberal Arts education and institutions play a crucial role in this transformation, embodying qualities deemed essential in the modern world. Additionally, economic and business education also play an essential role. Academia and research in these fields possess valuable competitive advantages that are crucial for development towards the principles of the 3rd generation University. By integrating economics and business education with Liberal Arts principles, universities can foster a holistic approach to education that meets the demands of the 21st century.

The case of the European Humanities University (EHU) and its new branch, BISEB, exemplifies the potential for productive transformation through collaboration. By leveraging the synergies between economics, business, and Liberal Arts education, EHU and BISEB stand poised to contribute to the ongoing discourse on the evolution of higher education. Moving forward, fostering cognitive enrichment through interdisciplinary studies, exploring new avenues for transdisciplinary research, and strengthening university-industry collaboration will be essential. By embracing these principles and opportunities, they can move together towards the University of the 3rd generation and driving societal change in the years to come.

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**Mariia Laktionkina, Aliaksei Makhnach**

# Humanities Education in an Inhuman Time

Hannah Arendt begins her collection of essays "Between Past and Future: Eight Exercises in Political Thought" with the aphorism of the French poet and writer René Char: "We obtained our legacy without a testament" (Arendt, 1961: 3). She draws attention to the fact that the European tradition has indeed lost the energy to connect the past with the future. The decay of the tradition puts questions the future itself. According to Hannah Arendt, the person responsible for the tradition is "He" from the parable of the same name by Franz Kafka (Arendt, 1961: 7). But "He" also acquired himself without a testament; without any notification of what should rightfully belong to him and what is of value to he values. The only hope to get this testament is the past, which is however unreachable due to the "malfunction," as Franz Kafka writes, of the human mind (Arendt, 1961: 9). This is a defect that allows to neglect and ignore the past, while focusing on the present-day problems. To overcome the "malfunction", "He" must turn to the past, find a tradition and try to understand his role assigned to him in it. However, Kafka's "He" is facing the "law" anticipating the revelation of the truth about himself. But this is intricate either, because the main language of understanding oneself in the European tradition to which he belongs and in which the key truths are hidden, is the language of the absurd. Kafka himself sees "His" calling in the following way: "He does not live for the sake of his personal life, he does not think for the sake of his personal thinking. He feels that he lives and thinks under the compulsion of a certain family, although abundant with the force of life and thought, still formally being in a formal need of him, according to some unknown law. Due to this unknown family and due to this unknown law, he cannot be released" (Kafka: 13).

Bringing "Him" back to his own tradition is one of the most pressing problems of humanities education today. Tradition is the "law" of Kafka. Over a long period of time, it has been accumulating the main

values of the "family", which are so important that "because of this unknown law, one cannot be let go". Both Hannah Arendt and Franz Kafka have long been recognized as "They" within the European intellectual tradition. What should "We" do here and now to make the next "He", "She" and "They" appear, and without whom any understanding of the future of the European intellectual tradition will be meaningless? Evgeniy Zamyatin drew attention to the importance of the appearance of "Them" in a short essay "Tomorrow". He wrote that the world is still kicking thanks to heretics only: Christ, Copernicus, Tolstoy (Zamyatin: 1). He believes that these are "Them" that are able to cope with the problems depicted in his novel "We" and that are still relevant today. But what should the educational space be like to provide "Them" with the opportunity to become themselves, to find their own language and to discover its power?

## „D'où venons nous? Que sommes nous? Où allons nous?"[1]

The efforts of "Them" demonstrated not only the continuity of ideas and ways of thinking, but have also ensured the continuity of the historical heritage, separating what is lifeless from what is worthy and alive, and therefore necessary to preserve in the European tradition. But are the values that shaped one of the most significant civilizations still viable today? Can the tradition that gave birth to such phenomena as democracy, Christianity, law, humanism, perspective in philosophy, literature, art, etc., just lose its continuity and ability to reproduce, and eventually end? In the "The Crisis of Education" essay, Hannah Arendt emphasizes that a world in which no interest is shown decays and collapses (Arendt, 1961: 192). The break of the 20th and 21st centuries' generations with the tradition that created the modern European world, just speeds this process up. The "Europeanness" is no longer a tradition linking the origins of Europe with its future. It has become a phenomenon by default, by right of birth, by geographical localization, by the presence of a common bureaucracy, a common

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[1] Gauguin, Paul. *D'où venons nous? Que sommes nous? Où allons nous?* 1897–1898. Museum of Fine Arts, Boston..

market and currency, etc. Truth, justice and mystery — the key values of the European civilization, have devalued and radically transformed their content today. The "Europeanness" has become the foundation of modern barbarism. Its content is the loss of tradition, which has led to the "malfunction" of the modern mind, as Franz Kafka wrote.

The loss of tradition aggravates the situation, with "mediocrity" becoming not an exception, but the norm of modern society. The phenomenon of the "Revolt of the Masses," which José Ortega y Gasset explored back in the mid-twentieth century, is now radically manifesting itself, raising the question of the viability of democracy as one of the fundamental freedoms of the European civilization. The mass media have described the 2024 elections, in which half the world's population will participate, as one of the most radical challenges to democracy. The "Us versus Them", so common in modern political campaigns, is a key slogan of the society that George Orwell described in "1984". Mediocrity becomes an individual choice of a human. This is not an acquired intellectual disability, since children are always spontaneous by nature. Mediocrity is a person's individual refusal to make an effort in an attempt to avoid intellectual or emotional stress; the lack of desire for creative self-realization and for the development of imagination. Sophocles revealed the nature of mediocrity: "Blessed is your life if you live without thoughts." This diagnosis is not something fundamentally new to the European tradition. Scary is the scale of this phenomenon in the situation of demographic growth of the 20th and 21st centuries. Today we have to admit that the attempts of Søren Kierkegaard (lazy mass), Fyodor Dostoevsky (everyoneness), Leo Tolstoy (Ivan Ilyich), Martin Heidegger (man), José Ortega y Gasset (mass), Robert Musil (man without qualities), Giorgio Agamben (the man without content), Hannah Arendt (the banality of evil), Gianni Vattimo (weakened thinking) and Olga Sedakova (mediocrity as a social danger) are still ignored. Eventually, as Peter Sloterdijk writes, this led to people "domesticating themselves and directing selection towards nurturing a livable domestic animal within themselves" (Sloterdijk: 1).

Rationality, as the potential ability of human beings not to harm themselves, has become a deficit. Therefore, the most appropriate term to characterise the current processes is crisis. The crisis in the economy, politics, ecology, education, etc. But is the today's human mind capable of coping with the existing crises and protecting humanity

from a series of upcoming ones? What should be the language capable of revealing the premonition of a catastrophe? The 1920s are strangely consonant with the 2020s, to which we are doomed today. Paul Valéry, in his 1919 essay "The Crisis of the Spirit," wrote: "An extraordinary thrill ran through the brain of Europe. With all her mental nodes, she felt that she no longer recognized herself, that she no longer resembled herself, that she was in danger of losing self-awareness — the self-awareness accumulated through centuries of misfortunes; by thousands of people of the highest importance; by geographical, ethnic, historical circumstances which cannot be counted (Valeri, 1976: 106). Walter Benjamin found the same idea in the work of Paul Klee: "Klee has a painting called "Angelus Novus". It shows an angel being about to move away from the object of his gaze. His eyes are wide open, his mouth ajar, his wings are spread. This is what the angel of history should look like. His face is turned to the past. Where we see a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe, which continuously piles debris upon debris and throws them at his feet. The angel might like to stay, to awaken the dead and restore what was destroyed. But a hurricane wind blows from paradise, which caught his wings with such force that he can no longer fold them. This hurricane carries him uncontrollably into the future, to which his back is turned, while the mountain of rubble in front of him grows into the sky. This hurricane is what we call history" (Sholem, 1997: 1). How to bring back rationality, which is the only thing capable of disclosing to the modern man his nature and the history of what he is potentially capable of?

An encounter with history leads to a deep individual experience that provokes many self-addressed questions. The ability to start a conversation with oneself amidst life routines and information noise, when there is practically no time for conversing, is extremely important for that knowledge about oneself, which should be called humanitarian. This meeting will hopefully provide humility with a deep understanding of human inadequacy, both to the tradition itself and to the world that this tradition is generating. Thus, meeting the tradition and surpassing it becomes an extremely important task on the path of becoming a person.

Hence, the potential of a place and its ability to interact with people is extremely interesting. We are talking about places where meeting a genius loci becomes a memorable event. About the places where many people come in search for truth, in the first place, about

themselves. An important feature of this phenomenon is its ability to preserve its founding principle. The Greek ἀρχή, the beginning assumes a powerful energy capable of resisting and transcending time. The "archaism" of a place testifies to its ability not only to protect its origins, but also to generate the meanings necessary for its preservation. Moreover, the term genius itself, as a derivative from the Latin "gigno" (to give birth) and "genre" (to produce, to give birth), indicates the ability of a "locus" (place) to create something that is fundamentally new. First of all, we are talking about ensuring that this new thing correlates with the place, becomes a continuation of the astounding tradition that defines the place itself. Secondly, it is about the bearers of the tradition, who have been able to understand and preserve it, realizing its importance for the future. Thirdly, it is about the heritage of the place, which embodies its tradition and which is recognized by the heirs as a testament. It turns out that the genius loci is a vicious circle: heritage — tradition — humanities. Taken separately, each element becomes lifeless and loses its essential content.

Another important aspect is that we are interested not just in the genius loci of a particular city, but in that of Europe as a space, summarizing the creative energy of individual European cities in critical periods of history. Those periods required rational solutions to take us away from edge of the abyss. A century ago, Lev Shestov saw this rationality in the beginnings of Europe as the sum of the wisdom of Hellenic Athens and of the Christianity of the biblical Jerusalem. The third component is undoubtedly the law of ancient Rome. The Renaissance, in turn, is the sum of the creative energy of the Italian artists and thinkers of Florence and Venice, taken up by the "Northern Renaissance" of Belgian Brussels and German Nuremberg. The Age of Enlightenment owes its emergence to the intellectual efforts of thinkers in London, Paris, Berlin and St. Petersburg. Of extreme importance are also creators, whose conformity with the place where they created still shapes the European tradition. This tradition is inconceivable without the Athens of Pericles, Socrates, Aristophanes and Phidias; the Rome of Gaius Julius Caesar, Cicero and Ovid; the Jerusalem of Christ; the Florence of Dante, Lorenzo de' Medici, da Vinci and Michelangelo; the London of Shakespeare; the Paris of Robespierre and Moliere; the Petersburg of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.

Conformity to the place makes it possible to be recognized by others and to become a genius. But have cities have retained that magic

and energy for transforming a personality? Which genii loci existing today have this potential? It is becomes important not only to immerse into a place, but also to delve in its time layers. We are talking about archaeological immersion, but not so much into the material space, but rather into the time of the maximum manifestation of a genius loci. Such intellectual "excavations" bring about very interesting phenomena that are crucial for understanding of which today's creations within the tradition can become a guideline for the next generation and tomorrow's heritage. The ability of genius loci to alter a person is still an important aspect of the European civilization. It led to the emergence of the Platonic Academy in Athens and in Rome, universities in Paris and Bologna. At the same time, it is important to understand that neither the academy, nor the university replaced the genius loci; they just became another fragment in the mosaic of the spirit of the place.

The idea of establishing the European Humanities University in 1992 was brought about by the need to overcome the long-lasting intellectual isolation of Belarus. It was necessary to appeal to the European intellectual tradition and the values of European culture as a common civilizational space, to which the countries of Eastern Europe undoubtedly belong. The need to transform the content of Belarusian education at the end of the XXth century brought about the hope that the values of European culture will become the backbone of these transformations. That is why the university was given the name "European", which was supported by a significant number of European countries. From the very beginning, the university contributed to foster a generation with an original mindset in economics, social life and culture; capable of steering Belarus away from the legacy of totalitarianism to an open society based on the values of the European civilization [8, 83]. It was not about a theoretical quest for "Europeanness," but about how to practically implement this "Europeanness" in a completely alien educational space.

The key question, which is still relevant today, is the content of education, which promotes a specific, more practical way of thinking. The content that urges a person to become an author in the broadest sense of the term. These must be people who have the qualities that Aristotle points to in the 6th book of his "Nicomachean Ethics" — not just actors, but creators.

The danger here is that what is called humanities education and social sciences is often grounded on theoretical concepts that are

excitingly novel, yet completely impracticable. At the same time, pure theorists in the humanities and social sciences are much less harmful than those who attempted to prove their theories in practice. The XXth century has too many examples of such humanitarian "experiments" aimed at creating ideal societies at the cost of millions of human lives.

It was the last century that saw curious and mutually exclusive interpretations of the term "humanitarian". On the one hand, we can interpret "humanitarian" as a person's opportunity to self-actualize, based on the outstanding achievements of human creative thought. However, a person gets constantly trapped in a chain of "humanitarian disasters", each of which turns out to be stronger and deeper than the previous one and requires special "humanitarian aid" to overcome it. The close intertwining of these understandings becomes inevitable. Discoveries and breakthroughs in the natural sciences are increasingly seen as essential to the search for other habitable planets. It is quite possible, however, that humanity could spare itself the need to search for such a future if we use breakthroughs in the humanities and social sciences to understand humanitarian disasters and find ways to prevent them. We may call it pessimism, based on the experience and rethinking of the XXth century. But what can we do if so far we've been rather observing Nietzsche's "eternal return"? What if "The blind lead the blind," as in Bruegel's painting, and what if Prometheus's torment is in vain?

Directly related to this is another "eternal problem" of humanities education: the most "marvelous" ideas should not only be spoken, but also heard. In Pieter Bruegel's painting "The Fall of Icarus" one can barely notice the main characters of the myth. Just the gaze of the shepherd indicates Daedalus, while only the legs of Icarus can be seen above the surface of the water. Few of the painting's characters care about what is happening, about the tragedy itself. The key question is how Daedalus, the grandiose creator of so many incredible things, including wings, could not find the language to explain to his only son how to use them? His instructions were not enough. What special power did Daedalus' tongue have to possess for Icarus to hear him? And how strong should the cry of the drowning Icarus have to be for the others to rush to his aid? It appeared to be extremely difficult, almost impossible, to establish a Belarusian university that was capable of discovering the power of language able to draw attention to existing and potential threats to humans and humanity. The "Europeanism"

failed, and the university got closed and then relocated of the Universit from Minsk to Vilnius in 2004. After more than fifteen years of survival in Lithuania as a "university in exile", its "Europeanness" began to be perceived by many as a mere geographical location within the borders of the EU or as compliance with the Bologna Process' criteria regulating the European educational space. The "Europeanness" in the name of the university has almost lost its original meaning.

## "Du suchst zuviel fremde Hilfe"[2]

Europe began with Ancient Greek heroes, the whose myths have survived for 2500 years. Homer's "Odyssey" became a kind of a textbook in humanities, which value for the Greeks themselves was the fact that the myth was recorded as a text. In the mid-19th century, Søren Kierkegaard's short essay "The Present Age" stated that the time of real heroes had finished and the time of the crowd had come [?]. Mediocrity began to produce values of its own.

Franz Kafka was very sensitive to the phenomenon of mediocrity. He foresaw the loss of the person's sense of calling ("At the Gates of the Law"), the power of anonymous bureaucracy ("The Castle"), the inability to cope with technological progress ("In the Penal Colony"), and many more phenomena that we recognize nowadays. Humanities education, once passed on by word of mouth and then recorded in the "great books," is today stone-dead in the "scientific article," which language only its author can understand. Since Wilhelm Dilthey, for more than a century of their existence, humanities have arrived at the understanding of what a particular scientific discipline is, with its conceptual apparatus and methods. At the same time, humanities have significantly limited the understanding of the nature or of a human, endowing it with all sorts of abstract characteristics within the framework of their conceptual apparatus. All kinds of "-ologies" are competing with "-studies" for the creation of "-isms". The insane number of anonymous social roles of a modern human created by the social sciences has made the situation even worse. The man's understanding of himself has turned into

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2 Der Process, 1925. Franz Kafka,

Salvador Dali's "Anthropomorphic Locker", where you are simultaneously a citizen, a teacher, a voter, a driver, a consumer, etc. Analysis as a method of natural sciences has further defragmented the understanding of the phenomenon of the human, making its wholesome perception almost impossible.

The claims of various sciences to the term "human" have turned it into the Tower of Babel, where an attempt to find a common language is doomed to failure. The only language capable of coping with this task is the language of art. However, art has for a long time been excluded from the humanities, which lay claim to the truth about humans. The works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder raise questions about human nature that are still relevant today. A 15-minute fragment of Franz Schubert's "Adagio" conveys an understanding of the phenomenon of life. Charles Baudelaire's "Carrion" is still one of the most amazing poems about love. However, an encounter with each of these works of art is practically impossible today, since humanities education is incapable of eventfulness, of preparing for a real meeting with a work of art. This real meeting could be described with such verbs as "recognize", "tune into", "get to know", instead of "see", "hear" and "know". However, recognizing the crisis in the humanities does not yet provide an understanding of how to overcome it.

We should admit that it is dangerous to continue the transformation of the humanities education on the principles that were in use in the previous century, that is, in conformity with natural sciences. Humanities education has practically lost the ability to provoke understanding allowing to detect upcoming dangers and employ thinking to minimize them. Ignoring this fact turns a meeting with the real world into a shock, indicating a person's unpreparedness for the world and a discrepancy between expectations and reality full of problems and dangers to be overcome. This leads to the fact that real understanding becomes a real deficit in the modern world. Unfortunately, understanding, as one of the key phenomena of human intellectual activity, is inversely correlated with population growth. The formula is simple enough. The more is the population of the world, the less is a single person's ability to speak and thereby to understand understanding. The problem is not really the "revolt of the masses," which in the present century might be much more destructive than before. The problem is the progressive inability to speak, diagnosed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, which gives way to various forms of misunderstanding and,

as a consequence, to the world based on all forms of violence, as was pointed out by Hannah Arendt. The inability to speak is aggravated by the fact that the problems facing humanity are formulated in the language of the sciences, in which the individual is always an exception, secondary to the universal. Thus, the formation of an individual language, borrowing its content from the real living world, both factual and historical, still remains one of the most important tasks of humanities education. Rodin's "Thinker" is a remarkable image itself, but let us not forget that it is part of the larger "Gates of Hell" composition, depicting characters from Dante's tragedy, who immersed the thinker into his meditation.

The problem of a person's conformity to the world cannot be solved without a person's conformity to himself. Conformity presupposes "understanding" not as a mental operation, but as a practical action, readiness and ability to make the most effective use of existing potential and opportunities to prevent upcoming threats. Every threat requires the attention and caution of a person. A threat always presupposes a certain situation, which is a problem that requires a solution. A threat uses not only a person's intellectual capacity to question the causes and consequences of a dangerous situation; it mobilises all the person's abilities, both emotional and physical, and focuses them on a common goal — to avoid or minimise the threat. In such a situation, any subject-object relationship, and, strictly speaking, any theory, does not make any sense. A person becomes a whole being, mobilising all his abilities to overcome the danger and, in some cases, to overcome himself. An example is Brodsky, who nevertheless left the room in the direction of chronos, cosmos, eros, race and virus.

Another paradox has to do with the fact that it is only a real danger and its overcoming brings about the understanding of the correspondence between a person and its potential. The shocks and related emotions one has survived are to be analyzed for the sake of understanding of what the nature of a particular person is and what it means to correspond to oneself. Franz Kafka was very sensitive to his own unpreparedness for the world. His villager in the parable "Before the Law" is not ready to act. Beckett's "Waiting for Godot" has become a key current strategy for human survival. This unpreparedness reveals itself in the very situation of a person's coming into this world without an actual desire or consent to that. This fundamental "unpreparedness" of a person to confirm to himself and to the world makes

the key need to prepare himself for himself and for the world with all its dangers by means of what should be called humanitarian education. Can the present progressive incompatibility with the world and with oneself be perceived as a situation of dehumanisation, as a misunderstanding of human potential?

The situation is further aggravated by the fact that the upcoming dangers often leave us no time to understand their nature, since all the efforts are targeted at minimizing their consequences. This is the law that makes Friedrich Nietzsche's eternal return possible. History has lost the opportunity to be part of a real world; it has turned into a science searching for regular patterns, but not a cure for eternally stepping on the same rake. In today's European intellectual tradition, Prometheus has finally given way to Epimetheus. History has given way to progress, which has further widened the gap between the modern world and the person capable of corresponding to it.

The situation is aggravated by the radical progress of technologies, which today claim not only "intelligence", but raise the even more significant question of that the "living", which has created the "artificial", becomes completely dependent on the latter. The progress of the "artificial" raises an important question of an even greater degradation of the "living". Ignoring this problem has already led to the fact that nuclear technology has made the world itself mortal. Modern discussions between pessimists and optimists about the future of humanity in the situation of the dominance of "artificial intelligence" just indicate that we are once again unprepared for what we have created. The inability to *understand* and, as a result, to *comply with* this world repeatedly leads to large-scale humanitarian disasters, each of them surpassing the previous ones in its scope and impact.

We should admit that the XXth century developed a certain immunity to disasters in humans. They have practically deprived the modern language of the ability to recognize existing threats and to warn of them. Language itself has become a threat, the overcoming of which leads to an even greater degradation of language and an inability to call a spade a spade. One of the key experiences of the early 1920s has to do with the prophetic predictions of George Orwell in "1984", such as the slogans "war is peace", "freedom is slavery", "ignorance is strength" and so on. The discrepancy between the concept and the content of this concept shapes a world where there exists a theory with incredibly beautiful constructions and concepts and a reality

for which there is not just not enough language to understand it, but which is strenuously ignored until the moment it turns into another humanitarian catastrophe. Thus, Gregor Samsa, who was horrified by his transformation, is an excellent Kafkaesque illustration of what is happening today.

Can then humanities education provide an insight into which humanitarian catastrophes will be threatening the current generation and how we can get prepared for them? What should the humanitarian knowledge be to allow a person correspond to such a world? How to reconcile with it? Isn't humanitarian education transforming its content towards an understanding of what humanitarian aid is?

Unfortunately, all these pessimistic ideas are not fundamentally new; the European intellectual tradition have voiced them many times. The only question of interest is how realistic is the transformation of humanities education today?

## "We" ("Мы")[3]

The unique feature of the European Humanities University has always been its potential to be a platform for educational experiments. At its creation, the university had an experimental status associated with the implementation of the Bologna education system into the standards of the higher education system of Belarus. This enabled to create an educational space that was fundamentally different from that of the other Belarusian universities. The same is true for Lithuania, where educational programs of a Belarusian university are implemented in the European educational space. The university's mission, characteristic of most educational institutions in the European Union, allowed us to focus on the search for new experimental formats and tools for the educational environment. This was due to the responsibility towards the applicants from Belarus, who wanted to receive a European quality education, but were not ready for it in practice. As a part of the university, the Department of Humanities and Arts has been a platform for practical transformation of humanities education since its creation in 2017.

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[3] Yevgeny Zamyatin. 1920.

The main problem that needs to be solved in the course of this transformation is the dehumanization of the modern human. The main goal was to get back the fundamental values and meanings. On this path, it was important to overcome the focus on anonymous theoretical truths that ignore the historicism of both the world and of the human life, and to focus on very definite problems that require practical solutions from both students and professors, here and now, in the situation of a series of crises that the region has experienced over the past decades. The optimism regarding social transformations in the region is nothing but cynicism and lack of responsibility towards those who participate in these experiments and then pay for them.

This situation has become a vivid example of negligence in handling the content of the concepts, that have been worn out and distorted in the course of time and turned into clichés. The concept of critical thinking has practically lost the problem-solving part of its content, focusing on criticism. It is this second part of critical thinking that we lack today, thus being unable to understand the ways out of the current series of crises in the region. This to some degree applies to juggling other popular modern concepts. We are talking about human rights, civil society, gender equality, etc. Teaching courses in philosophy, ethics and aesthetics that ignore the definite person in definite circumstances makes the situation even worse. In this sense, dehumanization is directly related today to the loss of thinking, which should be based on a language associated with reality, but not with theory. The language of the theory further exacerbates the gap between what is happening in the region and the language in which it is conceptualized. The efforts of the professors and students of the Humanities and Arts Department have been focused on overcoming this problem. For several years, they've been trying to create an educational space aimed at understanding the key problems that students will face in their lives and in their creative self-realisation, as well as the ways of their practical transformation.

The Department of Humanities and Arts has indeed become a laboratory for collaborative creative activity, uniting faculty and students in an attempt to understand the challenges facing humanity that require creative rethinking. The key substantive pillars of humanitarian knowledge are being discussed by a team of like-minded people who exchange their ideas within the three educational spheres — design, theater and heritage, complementing and strengthening each other.

The experience of the Humanities and Arts Department in creating an environment that enables liberal arts education laid the foundation for cooperation with the BS program "Informatic", which was launched at the university in 2022. This brought about the space for discussing the problem of the status of a human being and technology from different points of view.

The result of the practical transformation of liberal arts education in the Humanities and Arts Department is the "Core Curriculum", a module of seminars that consists of four interrelated courses prepared in collaboration with the Bard College. The module is common to all the educational programs of the department. It begins with the "Language and Thinking" seminar in the first year, where the key phenomena of humanitarian knowledge are addressed, and ends with the "Hermeneutic Seminar" in the last year of study, where students have the opportunity to focus on the phenomenon of individual creativity and to demonstrate the original language they have been working on throughout their studies.

The first course, "Language and Thinking," poses a simple question before the students: "What does it mean to be human?" The course addresses the languages of science, music, literature and poetry, visual arts and theatrical performance, which can fill the human phenomenon with content. The natural result of the course is the understanding that the human phenomenon in the first approximation is incomprehensible, since there is no language capable of it. At the same time, the language of art, which does not claim to reveal the content of a concept, gives each student a chance to acquire a set of new personal meanings. This entails the problem of reason that shapes the ability to choose those meanings that a person is able to understand or appropriate to himself. The choice as such enables the students to question the basis of the judgment about the nature of the phenomenon of taste that influences this choice. The lack of a clear content in quite a simple practical task of "being yourself" makes people cautious towards the language being used by default without any understanding of the content. Professors don't give "correct" answers in the seminars, leaving students the opportunity to create their own truths in horizontal communication. The ability to speak at a common level allows students to seek and go beyond their own language skills. Slowly reading small fragments of texts by Franz Kafka's "Before the Law" or Albert Camus' "The Myth of Sisyphus" becomes a kind of a mirror in which

the students recognize the meanings that are important for thinking about themselves. The work with Paul Klee's painting "The Tightrope Walker" not only references Friedrich Nietzsche's "Thus Spoke Zarathustra", but presents a visual representation of how radical self-understanding should be. The final task of the course is a short essay, which, aiming to answer the question "What does it mean to be human?" leads the students to the questions "What does it mean to be yourself?" and "What does it mean to be alive?". All the three questions are references to the problem of that the phenomenon of a human cannot be understood and appropriated without understanding what the phenomenon of a specific human life in specific historical conditions is. Filling the phenomena of life and the world with individual meanings becomes the next linguistic and mental task for the students.

The first-year Introduction to the Humanities seminar is the backbone of the Core Curriculum. The course is taught to all the students of the Humanities and Arts Department. The groups bring together students from different programmes in the department: "Visual Design", "Theater Arts and Acting" and "European Heritage". About a hundred students are divided into groups of 20–25 people. These groups are further divided into smaller groups of 4–5 students each, that have same students throughout the whole course. The seminar does not include lectures, just an introductory orientation, which sets the key tasks for the upcoming intensive week-long module. The course includes four intensive modules: "Life as a task and challenge", "Humanitarian knowledge in the modern global world", "The language of humanitarian knowledge". The class-work is based on the pre-read texts and assignments, which enable a deep penetration into the material.

The seminar provides an understanding of the guidelines that are extremely important for a person's self-realization. The guidelines are understanding of what life is, what is the word we live in, what language a person uses to explain itself to itself, and what the education should be like to prepare us for this. The phenomenon of a person's life can be understood by default only and requires to understand itself just in situations of an existential upheaval. To create an educational space that is capable of doing the same is a mission almost impossible. This course makes it possible through the module "Life as a task and challenge". This module is based on teamwork under extremely tight deadlines, followed by a final conference with a public presentation of

the group work's results. This approach brings about specific emotions and requires maximum inclusion in the process from each participant. The module starts with reading "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" by Leo Tolstoy and "Peter Camenzind" by Hermann Hesse.

The second module of the course — "Humanitarian knowledge in the modern global world" — is focused on understanding the phenomenon of the modern world in which the individual life unfolds. The key texts of the module are the texts by Friedrich Nietzsche "Ecce homo" and Vasil Bykov "Sotnikov". Unlike the two literary texts in the first module, Friedrich Nietzsche's text is quite difficult to understand for students, most of whom acquired reading and retelling skills at school. The students read this text in mini-groups, discussing each complicated aspect. The second guideline is the question directly related to the topic of the module: "What kind of world did Friedrich Nietzsche not want to live in?" Perceiving the world as a set of values, understanding the content of which is the individual task of each person, becomes the key task of the module. These values bring about yet another understanding of the world as that of an option. Vasil Bykov's novel makes the students understand that being in the world requires constantly choosing among those options as well as among the grounds for their choice. Humility to the world or the ability to fit into it becomes an important humanities' skill.

The third module — "The Language of Humanitarian Knowledge" — involves working with "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka and "The Myth of Sisyphus" by Albert Camus. The absence of the language through which one can understand oneself is absurd in itself. Humans have eventually understood many phenomena around them, but have never been able to approach the real understanding of the phenomenon of human itself. The original meaning of the word absurdity is the conversation of the deaf. This indeed symbolizes the use of the language without understanding its words' meanings. The devaluation of language in its turn complicates any attempt to comprehend particular phenomena that a person encounters. Hence, "newspeaks" appear, filling worn-out concepts with new, often opposite, meanings, as George Orwell showed in "1984". The texts of Franz Kafka and Albert Camus suggest the idea of absurd as the initial bias of human attention. "The Metamorphosis" by Franz Kafka reveals the depth of deafness in a person's everyday life and the character's horror of the inability to transmit what is happening

to him to the closest people. Albert Camus' "Sisyphus" is also close to the students. All the artificial forms of social interaction remain actually intact throughout the history; the only thing that changes is the language of concepts through which these processes are understood. Modern slavery takes new forms. After Camus' Sisyphus, who spent his whole life getting up in the morning to go to work, comes Sisyphus, who gets up in the morning to devote the time of his life to technology and gadgets.

In order to understand the problem of human existence in the modern world, it is necessary to ask what education should be. The last module is a forum for discussing what exactly a humanities education and its values should be. Man's unpreparedness for the modern world is the leitmotif of the texts of Martin Heidegger "The Age of the World Picture" and Hannah Arendt's "Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man". The speed of the technological progress does not match the speed with which the participant of this progress correlates to the world he has created. This brings about the loss of responsibility for the technologies that we produce and to ourselves; while the technologies themselves become a threat to humans.

Reading texts is necessary for further collective and individual tasks within the module. At the end of the module, students draft an essay "My Life as a Story," molding the individual understanding of what their own life is. The draft may be later updated as a result of understanding of their own life being a linear process: from the sunny day when they were born, or first kindergarten memories to the pivotal events that required self-reflection. This brings about the understanding of what it has we have managed to cope with and what to expect in the future.

Ultimately, we are not talking about the history of a specific human life, but about its historicism. The important phenomena that students pay attention while analyzing life is the understanding of its temporary nature, its fragility, its ruthlessness. The difference in the life attitudes between the characters of Leo Tolstoy and Hermann Hesse illustrate an idea of the life mediocre and of the life authentic, the latter viewed as an open project in which everyone inevitably has to invest himself. The texts of Friedrich Nietzsche and Vasil Bykov exemplify an individual history of each person as the result of individual choices, leading to certain actions. Ultimately, this provides an understanding of the specific nature of a particular person.

Understanding the historicity of an individual life is necessary for predicting what exactly this or that person will be capable of in future and what its calling is. The second term essay concerns the problem of human vocation. At first the task to understand the phenomenon of calling bewilders students and makes them find the answer in a professional vocation. Most essay drafts assume this vector of self-understanding. At the same time, a number of draft texts represent really deep attempts to understand their calling, with meditations on the calling to be alive or the calling to be young. The task to write essays about themselves allows to avoid anonymity or discussing it abstractly. Learning about themselves through essay writing is not always a pleasant exercise for students. Their attempts to use ChatGPT look funny, since language models use the concepts that the students have not yet internalized and are thus unable to explain.

The students share their essays in mini-groups. Each mini-group then selects the strongest essay to present to the study group. From these ones, one text is selected in a general discussion, and is then presented at the final conference. This lets everyone evaluate the quality of thinking of the students whose essays have been selected from each study group. They set the high level, which is accepted and clear to everyone. The essays "My Life as a Story" presented at the final conference demonstrate the power of language, which is extremely important in understanding the cornerstone for humanities at a humanities university — that is, individual authorship. It is important for students not only to have their authorship publicly recognized by their peers, but also to receive feedback from the professors who are professional writers.

Group assignments involve preparing for a symposium and making a creative project. The aim of the symposium is to handle two painful humanities' problems — epigonism and imitation. It involves solving problems that, in essence, have no solution. This assumes a situation in which searching for answers in the Internet is virtually impossible. The only way to find answers is brainstorming. The first drafts of the symposia require refining under stringent deadlines, which gives students the opportunity to understand how thinking works in a real life situation. An important skill acquired is the archeology of thinking, which requires abandoning the first ideas that come to mind and makes the students dig deep in search for the really valuable meanings. An important aspect of the symposia is synthesis viewed

as a way of thinking, enabling to see the whole picture and to overcome the defragmenting analysis. Finding the common traits of Franz Schubert's quintet (C major, Adagio, 1828) and the works of Hermann Hesse "Peter Camenzind" (1904) and Leo Tolstoy's "Death of Ivan Ilyich" (1886) lets the participants understand the finite character of human life. Determining what the texts "Ecce homo" by Friedrich Nietzsche, "Sotnikov" by Vasil Bykov and the iPhone 15 Pro Max have in common, raises the question of how to use this finite time in a situation of boredom aggravated by the deliberate technological pressure on a person.

Having done the same assignments, all the study groups eventually deliver public presentations and join a common discussion. It should be stressed that the most important object for understanding are not the literary works, but the fourth constituent of the task, which is how these tasks contribute to understanding of each module's topic and which essential insights into an individual life's phenomenon they provide for each student. Doing same assignments in all the study groups provides a fertile ground for discussions at public conferences in which both the professors and students participate. The final task for the symposium is the "Manifesto for a Liberal Education," which demonstrates the values that the students are trying to pursue throughout their university studies.

Another collective task is a creative project implemented in mini-group within one term. The project is a kind of "initiation" for first-year students, proving their readiness to move along the path of authorship. Yet, in most cases, the projects prove quite the opposite — the inability to self-actualize in humanities. The educational space is focused on retrieving "knowledge" and "understanding" in activity, in "doing", which is radically different from the "chatter" so typical of the humanities. It requires constant tension and effort from the students. Ultimately, the successful projects themselves become guidelines for the other students. The authors of the successful projects realize the price of their success. But of even more importance is understanding that the following project has to surpass the preceding one, requiring even more effort and time.

An example of a successful work is "The Matisse Syndrome" project, by first-year students in European Heritage and Visual Design programs. It was inspired by Stendhal's contemplation of the beautiful Florence. The extreme degree of tourists' exaltation from perceiving

certain works of Florentine art was named "Stendhal Syndrome" in the XX century. The authors of the project had the same experience when contemplating Matisse's "Dance" at the Hermitage in St. Petersburg. The encounter with this work of art is truly mesmerizing. The picture is one of the most powerful metaphors for the state that can be named "being alive." The authors of the project got permission from the Hermitage to film in the museum before its opening hours, which allowed them to shoot one documentary and one short feature film about experiencing this work of art. In 2024, the students' attention is focused on a project commemorating the 100th anniversary of Franz Kafka's death.

The second year seminar "Introduction to Social Sciences" is aimed at understanding the phenomenon of social reality. The seminar discusses the very phenomenon of social reality, its nature, individual and collective responsibility for it and about our attempts to transform this social reality through social imagination. It is important to emphasize that this is not about abstract theorizing, but about an attempt to understand the social reality of the university itself. Understanding the nature of the EHU requires sharing the responsibility for the university among both the faculty and the students — which is the key focus of this seminar. Among the topics discussed have been the following: the university amidst the pandemic, the events of 2020 in Belarus and of 2022 in Ukraine as well as many others issues, sensitive for the students and the faculty.

It should be stressed that understanding the nature of the social reality of the university and the responsibility for it requires the use of social problem-solving imagination. For the first seminar's module called "The university as a social project," the students read "Gulliver's Travels" by Jonathan Swift and a fragment of Søren Kierkegaard's essay "The Present Age." The reality described in both the books is everything but provoking social optimism. The described social processes and phenomena are easily recognized by the students, as in the case of Jonathan Swift's "yahoo" or Søren Kierkegaard's "public."

The next module of the course examines the nature of the phenomenon of social optimism using numbers, percentages and statistical data. It introduces two texts on the phenomenon of the Enlightenment: "What is Enlightenment" by Immanuel Kant and "Dialectics of the Enlightenment" by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer. The texts reveal the enthusiasm that the Enlightenment idea, which

declared the hope for social progress, caused at its onset and the results it led to. Viewed from this perspective, the history of our university itself is the result of the continuous attempts of various knowledgeable "enlighteners" to design a bright future for the professors and students.

The third module of the course is devoted to the problem of individual and collective responsibility in relation to social reality, referring to the texts "Responsibility and Judgment" by Hannah Arendt and "The Revolt of the Masses" by José Ortega y Gasset. The nature of the university, which has been facing existential challenges throughout its history, lets us understand how fragile it is and that we should join our efforts to keep it alive.

The last module of the course, "Social Transformations of Post-Totalitarian Societies," offers to work with the texts "Animal Farm" by George Orwell and "The Sociological Imagination" by Charles Mills. The core problem of the module addresses the situation that brought about the establishment of the EHU in 1992. It was the period of searching for substantial foundations on which to ground the social transformation of the newly-independent societies of the early 1990s. Education in the social sciences and humanities should prepare professionals for the coming transformations. We must admit that the University's mission is still relevant today.

The key group assignment of the second year seminar is the symposium. Students receive collaborative mind-on assignments and prepare public presentations. The topics of the symposiums reflect the problems of the everyday social reality of the university. Thus, in the winter of 2024, within the second module of this course, our students worked on the projects with pessimistic and optimistic scenarios for the university in a five-year perspective. In the spring of 2024, within the third module, the students got the opportunity, to come up with their criteria for a prospective rector, based on the texts of Hannah Arendt and José Ortega y Gasset. Public debates between study groups have become a new element of the second year seminar. The debates first occur between the mini-groups, and the winners participate in the final conference. To participate in the debate, each student submits his or her written arguments, which are then evaluated by the teacher. As a part of the first module of the seminar in the fall of 2023, the students got several topics for debating, among which "Social sciences contribution to addressing the current challenges: the case of Belarus" aroused the greatest enthusiasm.

Projects are a mandatory element of the second year seminar. They aim at solving specific problems of this university. One of these projects was a student conference on using artificial intelligence tools in the educational process, for the most part in teaching design, where "Midjourney" imagery tools have been available since 2023. During the conference, the students and professors discussed both the "red lines" for the use of AI tools and the upcoming transformations in design that require changes in the teaching of this subject.

The "Core Curriculum" module ends with the Third year seminar — the Hermeneutic Seminar. This seminar develops an understanding of the nature of each person's individual creative potential. One cannot be a writer without finding one's own language and one's own way of thinking that uses that language. Moreover, creativity is impossible without education and without understanding the foundations of the tradition in which the authors are positioned and where they are going to realize their potential. It is thus important not only to understand what creativity is, but also to recognize this understanding as being crucial to making oneself as an author. What is more, this course involves addressing the work of a specific author, understanding its nature and the subsequent individual attempt to surpass it, to create an individual project related to the author's work. It has to do with what it means to be the author of one's life, fulfilling the life's key mission — creating something new. The key author analyzed in this seminar is Georg Gadamer with fragments from his "Relevance of the Beautiful" and several chapters from "Truth and Method" devoted to the problem of experience and taste. The students also work with the texts of Martin Heidegger "The Origin of the Work of Art" and with Thomas Eliott's "Tradition and Individual Talent". Over the past few years, the students also turned to the works of Joseph Brodsky, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Andy Warhol and others in this seminar. As a result of the seminar's work, several exhibitions were prepared outside the university, at which the best student projects were exhibited.

The module "European Toposes" is common to all the department's study programs. It is dedicated to understanding the European tradition associated with such cities as Vilnius, Paris, Florence and Athens. The key criterion for choosing these toposes was the phenomenon of the genius loci, or the spirit of a place, capable of awakening incredible creative energy in a person. By the European tradition we mean the basis of upbringing, which gave rise to a language controlled

by thinking and imagination, allowing us to foresee the future. We are not talking here about the European tradition as a whole, which is impossible to embrace today, but about those places where this tradition has been manifested itself in its most concentrated form. Certain toposes served as the basis for understanding of the modern Europe. The Europe which cannot be imagined without ancient philosophy, the Italian Renaissance, the French literature, overcoming of replication and the Soviet past. In this regard, the opportunity to visit a certain city gives a chance to see the objects that where created long ago, have become heritage and could still surprise and inspire the creation of something new in the future. These are the places that can change a person, his language and his thinking, as well as his understanding of what one should dare to become an author. It is important to emphasize that we are discussing not just the epochs in which those toposes were formed, but also about how the phenomenon of genius loci still manifests itself in these cities, supplying energy for creating trends in modern culture, art and education.

The programs of the Humanities and Arts Department are aimed not at teaching the skills of a particular craft or profession, but at the creation of new knowledge, new formats or new products in a specific professional field, be it heritage, design or theater. We thus don't have to target the labor which is already saturated with professionals, but rather focus on obtaining and individually combining skills allowing to create a person's own workplace. And it is not about business, but about choosing an area in which one will realize his or her creative potential.

An important practical aspect of this module is the project approach. The success of technological projects that shape the future directly depends on project work in small groups, much more efficient than any individual effort. Understanding the essence of a project, team work, personal qualities, communicating under tight deadlines, and the ability to cope with stress — these are the skills that are in high demand today. Both professors and students are involved in the project work, making it the key format of the educational process. Participants cooperatively search for solutions to intractable problems in a continuous process of co-creation. The advantage of a project-based approach is its focus on the practical outcome — a product that can be demonstrated to an audience, be it a theatrical performance, a design exhibition or a heritage media project.

Particular attention in the module "European Toposes" is paid to the speedy "immersion" of the students in the European tradition. The genius loci is seen not just as a city's protector, but as the ability to concentrate the tradition. The appeal to the phenomenon of cities such as Athens, Rome, Jerusalem, Florence, Venice, London, Krakow, Vilnius, Paris, Berlin, Vienna or St. Petersburg illustrates the idea of the continuity of the European intellectual tradition and its creative potential from the beginning of the idea of Europe to the present days. What is more, addressing the phenomenon of these cities lets the students understand historical phenomena in specific historical spaces and populated with specific historical characters.

The most outstanding example of such a manifestation of genius loci is Florence. The very name of the city (blooming in Italian) speaks volumes. Not only is it an example of the continuity of European intellectual ideas from antiquity to the Enlightenment, but it has also retained the capacity to encourage a productive reappraisal of the European tradition.

Florence is also the cradle of the key philosophical, artistic and political ideas that have shaped the Western world as a whole. As early as 1300, the reigning pontiff Boniface VIII found it necessary to add to the four elements of earth, water, air and fire a fifth element — the Florentines, "who seem to rule the world." Without Florence, the European tradition of the last five centuries is unthinkable. For instance, humanities education, born in the bowels of medieval Florence as "studia humanitas," is today one of the most recognizable brands of American education — "liberal arts education."

Florence's genius loci was born in its competition with the whole world. This required not only imagination, but also certain boldness. The Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, for example, was designed in such a way as to make it impossible to repeat. Meeting the creative genius of the Florentines can still be a profound experience. One of the most famous cases of such happened to Stendhal in 1813. The French writer's visit to the Basilica of Santa Croce in Florence, where such famous Florentines as Machiavelli, Galileo, Michelangelo and others are buried, invoked in him the sensations that later got the medical name "Stendhal syndrome." What we are talking about here is an experience of genius loci so profound that a person cannot cope with it alone.

This ability of a place to transform a person has survived to this day. It seems important from the point of view of immersing students of the humanities in the European tradition. The city becomes an educational space provoking insights, as the synthesis of emotional experience and intellectual questioning. Auguste Rodin is called the only student of Michelangelo Buonarotti, although four centuries separate them. A visit to Florence the 19th century changed Rodin for the rest of his life. The encounter with the genius loci of Florence determined a significant part of Rodin's work and linked him to the great Florentines: Dante Alighieri, Lorenzo Ghiberti and Michelangelo himself. "The Gates of Hell" by Rodin, based on Dante Alighieri's "Divine Comedy", became a reply to "The Gates of Heaven" by Lorenzo Ghiberti, while the central figure of "The Thinker" composition is not inferior in monumentality to "David" himself.

Rodin's case is one of many evidences of how the European tradition, supported by the genius loci phenomenon, shapes what we today call liberal arts education: the realization of an individual opportunity to become an author in the broad sense of this word and to find your own expressive language. Ultimately, we are talking about a modern city that represents an exceptional example of the European tradition. This is not just an example of conservation, research and revitalizing the heritage that has turned Florence into a target of tourist pilgrimage; this is an example of how a city can accumulate intellectual energy that still has the potential to transform the European culture. This is largely possible because the city has become a home for intellectual communities (science and art, architecture, poetry and literature, sculpture, music and theater) — both synchronous and asynchronous, tied with the same intellectual tradition. Florence is a cultural space, where, for example, Dante's "Divine Comedy" was illustrated by Sandro Botticelli, Gustave Doré, Auguste Rodin and Salvador Dalí. Another example is the Platonic Academy in Careggia, where the texts of the ancient philosophers Marsilio Fechini, Cosimo de' Medici, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and Sandro Botticelli were translated and discussed.

Immersing the EHU students into the European tradition of Florence, gives them the opportunity to focus on completely different narratives, which later give start to many educational projects. Comprehending the nature of Stendhal's syndrome is one of them. The students were able to interview the first researcher of the syndrome,

Graziella Magherini (Halaburda, 2019: 1). This students' research was later referred to by the BBC, which made its own report on this phenomenon (Stables: 1).

The students' individual experiences of Florence were revealed in a theatrical project supervised by the director Alexander Marchenko in 2019. In the same year, students of the Visual Design program presented a project commemorating the 500th anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death. The 2022 project revealed the individual meanings of genius loci of all the expedition's participants. Its results are presented in an exhibition organized at the university (Rilke: 1**)**.

On May 17 1898, Rilke wrote in his Florentine diary: "Three generations keep following one another. The first finds God; the second builds over Him the temple vaults too tight for Him, thus binding Him with chains; and the third, impoverished as it has become, steals the God's house stone by stone to build miserable huts out of them. And then a God-seeking generation comes again. Dante, Botticelli and Fra Bartolomeo belonged to it". I hope that the idealism with which young people encounter the genius loci of Florence will enable them to become another God-seeking generation within the framework of the European tradition, so that we can assume that the phenomenon of the genius loci is the ultimate manifestation of the European tradition, which manifests itself first of all in the heritage that is central to understanding the idea of "Europeanness". This phenomenon has a powerful potential for education that claims the right to be called humanitarian, because it allows students to see clearly who they have to surpass in order to leave their mark on this tradition.

The experience of creating a new educational space within the Humanities and Arts Department based on the "Core Curriculum" and "European Topos" became a practical foundation for cooperation with the professors and students of the bachelor's program "Informatics". This cooperation is carried out within the framework of two joint courses "Language and Thinking" and "Digital Society". When introducing the chapter "The Conquest of Space and the Stature of Man" from Hannah Arendt's "Eight Exercises in Political Thought" to Computer Science students in the fall term of 2023, we couldn't even imagine what their perception of this text would be. This text came last in the anthology for an intensive, week-long immersion in the content of a liberal arts education during their first week of study. The experiment with the BS "Informstic" program

was a risky attempt to "impose" a humanities course as "mandatory" for IT students, to make them pay the price for studying their subject at a humanities' university.

Hannah Arendt's text was first read by students in class and then as a hometask. On the following day, they read it in small groups as part of the "Reading in Zones" task. Each group was required to synthesize collective answers to eight fairly simple questions about the text and write them down in the appropriate zones for a subsequent presentation. The students' readiness to understand this text in the fall semester was associated with two phenomena that resonated in 2023. The first was the advent of the generative language model ChatGPT, while the second was the release of "Oppenheimer" by Christopher Nolan. The problem of the status of man within the progress of physical science and the development of space technology, formulated by Hannah Arendt back in the early 1960s, turned out to be extremely relevant today. Christopher Nolan's film is an artistic interpretation of what Arendt wrote about. In both cases, questions have been raised about the lack of sufficient humanitarian expertise in the development of new technologies and about the responsibility of scientists for the consequences of the use of their inventions.

It was clear that the key interest of the students was neither space technology, nor nuclear physics, but the rapid progress of generative language models. While reading Hanna Arendt, one student group replaced space technologies with ChatGPT. It turned out that the problem of understanding the status of man in a situation of technological progress, formulated by Arendt, still remains unresolved and requires intellectual efforts. It is to be stressed that Hannah Arendt, both at the beginning and at the end of the text, writes that understanding of this problem is impossible in the language of science, but it must occur in a language understandable beyond the scientific community. The one hundred million GPT chat users within just the first month didn't just set a record, but made all of them full-fledged participants in the experiment, evaluating the technology from a humanitarian perspective, namely, providing insight of what exactly this technology can give to a particular person.

The solution to this problem was initially announced to be the goal of the non-profit organization "OpenAI", which welcomed everyone to take part in updating the technology's open code. In less than a year since the end of 2023, this technology has not only shown

the incredible speed of development, but also revealed the limits of human understanding of what is happening in the world. Sam Altman, the "OpenAI" creator, claimed in an interview that the point of establishing the non-profit organization was to be able to invent a "red button" in case the technology gets out of control. It is interesting what exactly those "red lines" are.

The very "openness" of the inability to understand the potential threats of the technology is very similar to what Hannah Arendt described at the dawn of the nuclear weapons' era seventy years ago. Understanding the technology and its potential threats became possible only after its practical application had revealed its destructive potential. The rapid development of technology raises the question of the human status this process once again. Hannah Arendt wrote that in 1957, when the first space satellite was launched, there appeared slogans like "The man has taken the first step towards escaping his Earth prison" (p. 7). We may then ask what slogans shall we hear today, concerning the technology which claims to possess "intelligence" previously inherent to humans only? The current situation is not fundamentally new for humans, since as early as in the 5th century BC Protagoras said that the man is the measure of things. But since then, the "living", which created the "artificial", has actually lost the opportunity to demonstrate its exceptional value. The situation is unfavorable for humans and raises the question of what can help us to cope with the loss of our human status? How can we bring the modern way of thinking back to the Augustinian *quaestio mihi factus sum* (I have become a question to myself)? But can we really do it today, when the label of "digital" can be attributed to all phenomena of human life? And this is not a complaint about technology, this is a question about human thinking. Are we ready for the "living" being no longer able to resist the "artificial"?

The questions posed during the "Language and Thinking" seminar are a good background for the further conversation with the students within the "Digital Society" course. In the introduction to "Vita Activa", Hannah Arendt, wrote that "a brief review of modern science fiction, which weird madness unfortunately alarms no one so far, demonstrates how the authors' ideas indulge the masses' desires and innermost longings." (p. 8). Students begin to recognise modern society by immersing themselves in dystopian literary works such as "We" by Yevgeny Zamyatin, "Brave New World" by Aldous Huxley,

"1984" by George Orwell and "Gulliver's Travels" by Jonathan Swift. Learning about the structure of the described technological societies, enables the students to notice how precisely the authors predicted and demonstrated the modern world.

The second part of the work focuses on the large collective monograph "The Digital Society" (2023). The book reveals the most recent societal transformations in the technological revolution era associated with the advent of artificial intelligence. However, the current pace of technological development is such that the monograph, published only a year ago, is already out of date. In the spring of 2023, ChatGPT 3.5 was unaware of the monograph's texts, but we simply cannot predict what AI tools our students will be using in the 2024 seminar.

This speed of transformation allows us to evaluate the social changes taking place in real time. The main task of the students is to draw a mind map modelling the structure of society and the dynamics of its transformations under the pressure of modern technologies, based on the text of the monograph. In this way, the students will be able to identify the social processes that have not yet been digitised and look for possible transformation paths, treating them as start-up potentials. It should be emphasised that the students of the Computer Science programme in the Digital Society seminar acquire both the technological and the humanitarian expertise of the coming transformations, which are gaining momentum under the pressure of technology. Concerns about the development of AI enable students to question the role and prospects of the IT industry, as well as their own career opportunities. The Digital Society seminar has become an experimental laboratory where both humanitarian and technological expertise of social transformations are developed.

The European Humanities University, due to its specific history, is doomed to constantly review the concepts enshrined in its title. The search for guidelines that remain flexible due to the very nature of the "university in exile" enables the faculty and the students to treat the university as a platform for educational experiments. This educational space can help us find fruitful ways of transforming humanitarian education, which is currently facing the devaluation of both the phenomenon of education itself and its humanitarian component, the latter being hostage to the human sciences. The fruits of this transformation are the author's type of thinking, creativity and the ability to apply their products. To create something new, you

need tradition as a background. Immersed in tradition, one acquires one's own language, which gives one the chance to try to go beyond it, while remaining a part of it. The "Europeanness" of the university was thus an attempt to find intellectual foundations for the transformation of the Belarusian reality in the early 1990s. The European intellectual tradition has been the basis for the academic programs of the university since its foundation. The practical implementation of the "Europeanness" has become possible within the educational space created at the Humanities and Arts Department, where students meet the European tradition not only at the academic courses, but also beyond them, by means of undertaking creative projects in the cities blessed by the energy of "genius loci". This encounter should stimulate the birth of a language of self-communication in the process of correlating yourself with the creators who have surpassed the tradition. Today we urgently need a language capable of stimulating a way of thinking capable of coping with a series of economic crises, the rise of totalitarianism, migration and environmental crises, as well as the crisis of culture and education. It is the kind of thinking that once created this university and that is still in great demand both in the region and globally. Such thinking is extremely important in the face of today's dehumanising transformations. The situation is aggravated by the rapid progress of information technologies, which lay claim to the purely human phenomenon of "intelligence". This situation calls for a review of the very phenomenon of humanitarian education, which is supposed to take the form of humanitarian emergency aid.

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# About the Authors

**Aleksandravičius Povilas**
is a Professor at the European Humanities University and at Mykolas Romeris University in Vilnius. In 2009 he received a doctorate in philosophy at the Catholic University of Paris and the University of Poitiers, having defended his thesis on the problem of time in the thinking of M. Heidegger and Thomas Aquinas. In his scientific research, he examines various anthropological conceptions, issues of European identity, the process of globalization, the dynamics of modern human thinking and the impact of technology on it, the philosophical aspects of various spiritual-mystical traditions, and delves into the philosophy of H. Bergson. His last monograph is "Europe as a Way of Thinking: Foundations of an Open Society" (2019). He translates philosophical and theological works from French into Lithuanian, the last translation being H. Bergson's "La pensée et le mouvant" (2021).

**Barash Jeffrey Andrew**
is Emeritus Professor of Philosophy at the University of Amiens, France. He obtained his doctorate at the University of Chicago and his Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches en Philosophie at the University of Paris Ouest — Nanterre. He has taught as a guest professor at the University of Hamburg and at Boston College and has served as Mellon Fellow at the Society of Fellows in Humanities at Columbia University, Humboldt Fellow at the University of Bielefeld, Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute, Max-Planck Fellow at the University of Konstanz, and Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. His publications have focused on the themes of collective memory and its modern articulations, political philosophy, historicism and modern German thought. He is the author of several books, including: Martin Heidegger and the Problem of Historical Meaning (second, paperback edition, New York: Fordham University Press, 2003), Politiques de l'histoire. L'historicisme comme promesse et comme mythe (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2004), Collective Memory and the Historical Past (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016, second paperback edition, 2020), and Shadows of Being: Encounters with Heidegger in Political Theory and Historical Reflection (Stuttgart: Ibidem Verlag, 2022). He has also edited the book The Social Construction of Reality. The Legacy of Ernst Cassirer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008).

**Geske André**
is a researcher at Strasbourg University. He is a visiting professor of theology at Faculté Jean Calvin in France and in some seminaries in Brazil. In his scientific research, he explores philosophically the formation of the modern hermeneutical paradigm (Heidegger, Ricœur, Gadamer), the ethics of alterity and the religious phenomenon and its implication in daily life. He has published articles on the philosophy of religion such as 'Homo Culturalis, Homo Religiosus: The crisis of modern culture as the crisis of religion' and 'Solidarity in the Fall: An essay on self-deception' and he has given conferences in Europe and Latin America. He contributes to the research group at the Fonds Paul Ricœur in Paris.

**Kruk Dzmitry**
is the Director of EHU branch 'BEROC-IPM School of Economics and Business', and Senior researcher in BEROC Research Center. He is a PhD candidate at Krakow University of Economics and holds a Master's degree in Economics from Belarusian State University. His scientific interests encompass economic growth, the interconnection between finance and economic growth, and monetary policy issues. Additionally, he actively participates in applied research and initiatives focusing on economic education and its integration with business education. As the senior lecturer has got 20 years of teaching experience in economic disciplines in the Belarusian State University and European Humanities University.

**Laktionkina Mariia**
is currently a faculty member at the European Humanities University and a faculty associate at the Institute for Writing and Thinking at Bard College. She also serves as an Academic Adviser at the Open Society University Network. Mariia Laktionkina teaches various courses, including Language & Thinking, First-Year Seminar: Introduction to Humanities, Second-Year Seminar: Introduction to Social Sciences, Hermeneutic Seminar, and Global Citizenship. Her professional interests focus on the role of the humanities in shaping individuals who can think across disciplines, apply critical thinking, navigate complex and conflicting worlds, and adapt to new and unpredictable environments. In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Laktionkina has been actively involved in designing new programs and implementing innovative strategies in the curriculum at EHU. Her current research and practical

interests include public policy, philosophy of literature, pedagogical practices in liberal arts education, and higher education management.

Education:

- 2007–2011 — B.A., Political Science, National Pedagogical Dragomanov University, Kyiv, Ukraine
- 2009–2013 — B.A., Law, National University of State Tax Service of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine
- 2011–2013 — M.A., Political and Social Critique, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania. Full-time Master degree study scholarship granted by the Ministry of Education, Sciences and Sport of Lithuania
- 2013–2015 — LL.M., Master of International and European Law, Vilnius University, Lithuania. Under the supervision of Dainius Zalimas, former President Justice of Constitutional Court of Lithuania. Dean Fellowship at Law Department, Vilnius University.

**Makhnach Aliaksei**
is the Head of the Academic Department of Humanities and Arts at the European Humanities University. PhD in history, with research interests and teaching area in Humanities, European intellectual tradition and Educology. Under his leadership, educational programs in the fields of humanities and arts were prepared and implemented — BA European Heritage and MA Cultural heritage development, as well as BA Theater Arts and Acting and MA Visual Plasticity.

Education:

- 1994–1999 — BA, Archaeology, Belarusian State University (Department of Archaeology and Ethnography, Historical Department), Minsk, Belarus
- 1999–2000 — MA, Museum Work and Protection of Monuments, Belarusian State University (Department of Archive and Museum Work, Historical Department), Minsk, Belarus
- 2005 — PhD candidate, Historical Sciences (Ethnology, Ethnography and Anthropology), Belarusian State University, Minsk, Belarus.

**Martinovich Victor**
is an Associate Professor at Department of Humanities and Arts of European Humanities University. He defended a PhD at Vilnius' Academy of arts on a topic of years spent by Marc Chagall in Vitebsk on position of "commissaire of fine arts", he published a monograph assuming the findings of PhD (Rodina. Marc Chagall in Vitebsk, EHU, 2016). As a Fulbright professor at Hunter College New York, he is currently working on a research "Arts as a language of Humanities".

**Mikhailov Anatoli**
is a Professor at the Department of Humanities and Arts of European Humanity University. He received his PhD in 1966 from Friedrich-Schiller-University of Jena, with the title of the dissertation "Martin Heidegger und seine Kehre". His activities, already in the time of the Soviet Union, were concentrated on overcoming the strict ideological control dominating philosophy. His book on philosophical hermeneutics, published in Minsk in 1984, was the first to present the so far unknown tradition and problems of hermeneutics to the Soviet public.

Anatoli Mikhailov was member of Martin-Heidegger-Gesellschaft (Germany), as well as member of the editorial board of "Mesotes" journal (Vienna) and "Schopenhauer-Studien" (Hamburg). Over the years, presented at 50+ conferences in Germany, USA, France, Austria, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Hungary. In 1989, organized in Moscow the conference dedicated to Heidegger's 100th anniversary and invited Jürgen Habermas and organized his first visit to the Soviet Union, also translating Habermas' talk subsequently. In cooperation with Professor Friethof Rodi (Bochum, Germany) and with the support of Fritz Thyssen-Stiftung (Germany) initiated the translation into Russian of six volumes of Wilhelm Dilthey's Collected Works.

In 1992 founded the European Humanities University in Minsk, Belarus.

Some of the recent publications:

- University in Exile: The Experience of the Twenty-First Century. Social Research. New York, 2009.
- The Language of Art: a Saving Power? In: Art History and Emergency. Yale University Press, 2016.
- On the Responsibility of an "Intellectual". Obschaja Tetrad. (In Russian). Moscow-Riga, 2017.

- The Language of Humanities. (Editor and Author of the Foreword and the article "Being and Language". Vilnius, 2020.
- Being-in-the-World. Obschaja Tetrad. (In Russian). Riga, 2022.
- Thinking in Crisis: On the (Ir)Responsibility of the Philosopher. In: Thinking in Crisis. Ed. by P. Aleksandravicius. Vilnius, 2023.

Awards:

- The Ordre des Palmes académiques France (2003)
- Goethe Medal, Germany (2004)
- The Ion Ratiu Democracy Award, USA (2007)
- Ordinas "Už Nuopelnus Lietuvai", Lithuania (2008)
- The Edita and Iva Morris Hiroshima Foundation Prize for Peace and Culture (2015)

**Ulyashyna Liudmila,**
is an Associate Professor at the European Humanity University (EHU, Lithuania), is the Head of the Center of Constitutionalism and Human Rights. With a background in law from Belarusian State University, Ruhr-University (Germany), Oslo University (Norway), and Vilnius University (Lithuania), she has developed a new perspective by conducting her research and teaching various subjects, including human rights law, international law, non-discrimination law, labor law, legal ethics, and gender aspects of human rights law. Her research includes themes on challenges in the practical application of international human rights standards, international criminal justice, human rights education for lawyers, the lawyers' associations, participatory democracy, and the effectiveness of international protection mechanisms. Exploring her extensive education and practical experience, she makes an invaluable contribution in the field, inspiring those seeking to understand and uphold human rights principles.

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Authors:
Prof. Dr. Povilas Aleksandravičius (EHU)
Prof. Dr. Jeffrey Andrew Barash (University of Amiens)
André Geske, PhD candidate (Strasbourg University)
Dzmitry Kruk, PhD candidate (BEROC-IPM
School of Economics and Business)
Mariia Laktionkina, MA (EHU)
Dr. Aliaksei Makhnach (EHU)
Dr. Victor Martinovich (EHU)
Prof. Dr. Anatoli Mikhailov (EHU)
Dr. Liudmila Ulyashyna (EHU)

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Tel.: 231 6684, 276 0118
Email: info@ciklonas.lt



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