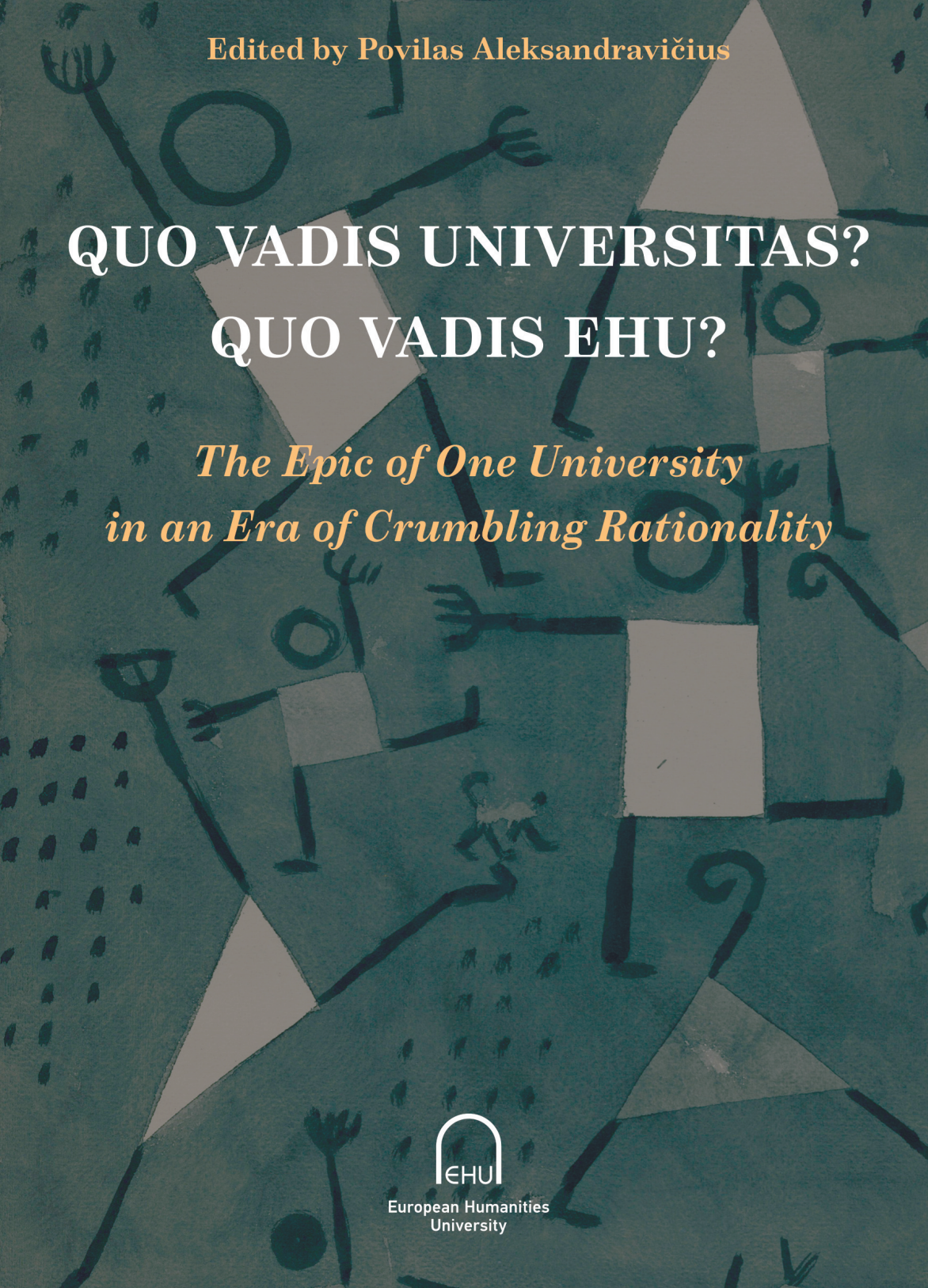
Edited by Povilas Aleksandravičius

QUO VADIS UNIVERSITAS?
QUO VADIS EHU?

The Epic of One University in an Era of Crumbling Rationality



EHU
European Humanities University

EUROPEAN HUMANITIES UNIVERSITY

QUO VADIS UNIVERSITAS?
QUO VADIS EHU?

The Epic of One University in an Era of Crumbling Rationality

MONOGRAPH

Vilnius 2025

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More than a history of one institution, the book offers a deep reflection on the role of the university in a world facing a crisis of rationality. The volume is divided into three parts. The first presents messages from international supporters of EHU. The second explores the mission of the university and the humanities through contributions by John Sallis, Anatoli Mikhailov, Jeremy Adelman, Jeffrey Barash, Vittorio Hösle, and others. The third part looks ahead, focusing on EHU's role and future direction. Addressing the global challenges to education and humanistic thought, the monograph poses a timely and universal question: *Quo vadis, university?*

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3. LIFE AND DESTINY OF A UNIVERSITY

Introductory Word

Quo vadis? Once upon a time, this question was posed to someone who was going to fulfill his mission — filled with suffering, tension and joy — and to open new perspectives of life. It can be posed to every individual, community, nation, and to all of humanity. It is a question about the meaning of history and the role of each participant in it.

This question takes on a special significance within the university community. As a guide to the minds of individuals and nations, the university possesses a universal dimension. It belongs to all of humanity. Where is it going and where is it leading us today?

Nevertheless, each university maintains its specific identity. Because it also belongs to a national community with its distinct, often challenging, and error-laden path. Where does a particular university go when its nation's trajectory becomes unacceptable to it?

Some universities are forced to become universities in exile. What are their conditions and difficulties? What is their mission, meaning, and potential? How does a university manifest its belonging to all humanity within the confines of refuge?

The EHU project was established in Belarus in 1992, coinciding with the country Belarus, attainment of independence and the perception among many that the primary problem had already been resolved. It was built upon a profound understanding that our intellectual state, shaped over time by the dominance of ideological education, proved insufficient to address the complex challenges of societal transformation.

EHU became the first university in the 21st century to be closed for political reasons, as noted by its rector, Anatoli Mikhailov, in his 2009 speech in Berlin during the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the founding of the University in Exile at the New School in New York in 1933 (see: *Social Research*, Vol. 76, No. 3, pp. 849–866). Thus, the year 2024 marks the 20th anniversary of the reestablishment of EHU in Lithuania as a university situated within the educational landscape of the European Union, where alongside Lithuania a pivotal role was played by the US donors.

This anniversary is polysemantic. It expresses the history of a part of Europe characterized by the unresolved tension between democracy and totalitarianism. It embodies a specific paradigm of relations

between nations, as the European Humanities University is a space for the meeting and resolution of mutual tensions between various world nations. It speaks of unique modes of youth formation in exile conditions. It bears witness to hope, mistakes, falls and resurrections.

Who are you and where are you going today, European Humanities Universities?

In this monograph, scholars and societal protagonists from various fields discuss the history, identity, mission and perspectives of the European Humanities University, as well as the role of the university in general in today's Europe and the world, which is experiencing unprecedented tensions.

The occasion for these reflections was an international conference held in Vilnius on September 27–28, 2024. It was dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the exile and establishment of the European Humanities University in Lithuania. The conference was attended by the founders of this university, including Prof. Anatoli Mikhailov at the forefront. A special place in it was occupied by guests from all over the world, world-class political and scientific protagonists who supported the university in the most difficult years of its life several decades ago. All the speeches converged, expressing the same idea: the university must continue to be created, and world support for this process is important not only for the members of this particular university, not only for civil society in Belarus, but also for all of Europe — the whole world. What is happening with this university — its creation, exile, crisis and perspectives of hope — reflects the state of modern rationality, and therefore of all humanity. Therefore, the most important part of the conference was devoted to fundamental reflections about the university and the human being.

The conference participants gladly agreed to convert their reflections into a serious and conceptually unified text — a scientific monograph. Its idea is complex. The emergence, life and destiny of one university, the European Humanities University, is analysed. However, the reflections on a specific university structurally absorb the reflections on the life and destiny of the university as such in the modern world. This inevitably forces us to raise the question of the foundations of humanity, the state of human consciousness and thinking. So, *quo vadis EHU, quo vadis universitas* in an era of crumbling rationality?

The monograph consists of three parts. It was decided that the first part of the monograph should reveal the world's support for

the European Humanities University. Therefore, it includes the words of welcome and reflections delivered during the September 2024 conference, reflecting the world's reaction to the existence of this university, starting with the greetings of the former Chairman of the European Parliament Hans-Gert Pöttering and closing with the speech of *Doctor honor causa* by worldly famous scholar Dan E. Davidson. The reader will also recognize other names known throughout the world: Walter Brogan, Daniel Calingaert, Jonathan Fanton, George A. Krol, Ludger Kühnhardt, Deividas Matulionis, Gregory S. Prince.

The second and central part of the monograph is devoted to fundamental reflections on the university and humanity. However, these reflections were not separated from the European Humanities University, a special case that allows us to see the university as such rooted in the concrete, problematic and dramatic life of human and society. This part therefore begins with John Sallis analysis of the Greek *logos*, called *Reflections on the European Humanities University*. A commentary on this analysis was written by Anatoli Mikhailov, founder of the European Humanities University. John Sallis is one of the greatest thinkers of our time. We learned of his death while preparing this monograph. It is possible that a short essay by John Sallis, here in this book, is the last text he wrote.

The reflexion on the European Humanities University and on the mission of the university and the humanities in general in an uncertain world is continued by the world-famous historian Jeremy Adelman and philosopher Jeffrey Andrew Barash. Another great thinker of our time Vittorio Hösle, known by anyone familiar with the intellectual life of contemporary world, as soon as he learned about the monograph in preparation, sent us his article *What Are the Humanities and to What End Does One Study Them?* This article, which harmonises perfectly with the overall act of creating of this monograph, has already been published in *Marginalia Review* (Mar 1, 2024), translated to English by R. Bradley Holden and Samuel J. Loncar. We are grateful to the editor-in-chief of the journal *Marginal Review* Samuel Loncar for permission to republish this text as part of our monograph. Natalya Mikhailova and Mariia Laktionkina's text actualizes the situation of the humanities at the university, reflecting on it in the context of technology, and Povilas Aleksandravičius concludes this part of the monograph by raising the problem of crisis of both rationality and university, and proposing to solve it through the expansion of consciousness.

The third part of the monograph, synthesizing the results of the first two parts, continues the reflection on the European Humanities University's rooting in the world. The founder of the university, Anatoli Mikhailov's text is titled *The Possibility of the Impossible*, and Aliaksandr Kalbaska, Liudmila Ulyashyna, Aliaksei Makhnach considers the impossible becoming possible from a historical, legal, and cultural perspective. The monograph concludes with the reflections of the rector of the European Humanities University, Vilius Šadauskas, on the university's future projects. This text is a basis for hope. It encourages working, carrying out specific vital tasks and without losing the sense of the depth of life.

Prof. Dr. Povilas Aleksandravičius

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— Part 1 —

World Support

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Anatoli Mikhailov

Humanities Education in Exile in Its Own Country

It appears now that when European Humanities University was closed in Minsk, Belarus, in 2004, it was nothing but a culmination of a highly uncomfortable way of existing since its founding in 1992. All those years there consisted of being *foreigners in our own home*.

We were not the only ones who were enthusiastic about education at that time. Along with the transformation of numerous institutions of higher learning into "universities" (there was only one university in the Soviet Union — the Belarusian State University in Minsk), various new educational establishments sprang up, mostly for commercial purposes. Most of them intensively exploited highly attractive fields of studies, unknown so far in our previous reality, which promised to provide successful career development. In most cases, however, it was assumed that this alleged professionalism taken in isolation from a different way of life would function without the slightest awareness or understanding that all these fields should have been based on a much deeper understanding of social reality which presupposes the specific framework of an intellectual tradition that has been developing for many centuries. It means that the whole way of life with its existing social infrastructure, economy, fundamental cultural values and system of education, was simply ignored and not transformed. It is no wonder that such activity in education which was vitally important for social transformation did not yield the expected results.

We were clearly aware of our own shortcomings in this area, the idea of opening up new horizons of thought within our programs was not only proclaimed but also demonstrated in practice with the participation of numerous prominent personalities in the field of the humanities during the events organized by EHU which were integrated into our syllabi. It is possible to name only some of these prominent personalities: Manfred Riedel, Klaus Held, Bernard, Christoph Jamme, Vittorio Hösle (Germany), Alfred Grosser (Germany-France), John Sallis, Walter Brogan (USA), Jean Grondin (Canada),

Hans Ruin (Sweden), Sergei Averintsev (Austria-Russia), Alexander Michailov, Olga Sedakova (Russia), Krzysztoph Zanussi (Poland), Alain Fleischer, Nikita Struve (France), Liv Ullmann (Norway), and many others. They were not simply those whose visits to EHU were made possible by the opportunities created by particular countries to visit Belarus within the framework of exchange programs, e.g., Fulbright, DAAD etc. In each particular case of their involvement in EHU activities, our project was identified by them as a place where something unique and unusual was happening in the field of humanities education for the whole region. And, as a result, EHU slowly became an intellectual niche known far beyond Belarus.

At the same time, we were not welcomed by the existing academic community who was at that time in the process of finding ways of its own survival in a new dramatically changed environment. As the identification of EHU as a "European" university inevitably was presupposing the critical attitude to our own state of mind, not too many were able to share this view and to identify themselves as "professionals" in their respective fields. Despite the existence of numerous institutions of research and higher learning, including the huge infrastructure of specialized institutes for the humanities and social sciences of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, there were simply no places where the heritage of the European intellectual tradition was explored and addressed. Those who identified themselves as historians, philosophers, specialists in literature, linguistics, folklore etc., were themselves shaped and dominated by their own education under the strict control of communist ideology. Thus, they continued their research and teaching heavily influenced by the same mentality and manner of thinking. Of course, some of them, as it happens, intensively appropriated and used a new vocabulary for the purpose of their identification and thus received support within the framework of cooperation with the West.

We now know well that the results of these efforts on the part of the West to reform the system of education in the countries of the former Soviet Union did not produce the expected results, as in too many cases it supported activities of an imitational nature. Investing of energy and resources in already existing institutions only created illusions about their ability to be open to real transformation. Unfortunately, there was a lack of the understanding of the need to establish new niches and structures, based on a different intellectual ground. It was

particularly typical of our efforts that EHU, although being a private institution of higher learning, faced enormous difficulties to get support from the European Union where the tradition of the existence of such kinds of institutions was very rare. In Germany, for instance, there was only one private university at that time, the University of Witten-Herdecke, which has been established in 1982 thanks to the initiative of its founding President Konrad Schily, who later on also initiated, together with Jean-Claude Junker and Helmut Kohl, a new project of cooperation between European universities — the *Campus Europae* to participate in which we were invited, even though we formally did not belong to an EU country, while we were still in Minsk.. But these initiatives were very rare and the mainstream of cooperation remained within a bureaucratically determined framework of assistance that was inevitably highly ineffective. Konrad Schily's book *Der staatlich bewirtschaftete Geist* (*The State-Managed Spirit. Ways out of the Educational Crisis*) (1993) reflects highly critical evaluation of this state of affairs in European education which until then had not been properly addressed.

Moreover, a simple fact has been ignored — that a professional community of research and education in the world does not exist within the limitations of national borders. Suffering for many decades under the domination and strict control of communist ideology in social sciences and humanities, during the last years of the Soviet Union there was something like a slowly emerging professional community in various fields which was able to exist and survive only through the very cautious efforts of its participants interested to be involved in cross-border cooperation. However, this cooperation collapsed and those who tried to survive in a difficult time became an isolated minority in their new reality, unable to compete with the newly converted "specialists" from their former fields — "scientific communism", "the history of the Communist Party", "scientific atheism", "Marxist-Leninist philosophy" etc. This switch took place not without its curious cases, as, for instance, in one of the newly emerged countries the idea was expressed to replace the former compulsory subject of curricula "scientific communism" with the subject of "scientific nationalism".

The support provided was based on the assumption that there was a professional community in each particular country, which in reality turned out to be nothing more than an imitation, ignoring the need to create a civilized way of cooperating between the few professionals

dispersed among the many newly created independent states, who from now on had to find a new way for their professional existence. In too many cases there was simply a very naive assumption that the mere implementation of some attractive formulations and principles, hitherto little known and isolated from its deep rootedness in a very foreign tradition, could be applied to the distorted social reality.

Reflecting now on the situation of our very shaky existence — without our own teaching space, dormitory, library, etc, without any financial stability — we were able to survive, but must pay tribute to those few who were able to identify our university as a potentially promising place for support. First of all it was OSI which has perceived the innovative nature of our project and provided support to EHU within the framework of its HESP program based in Budapest. There were also US private foundations — the Carnegie Corporation of New York and John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Great support was also provided by some representatives of the diplomatic community in Belarus who were able to understand the challenges of post-totalitarian transformation and the importance of creating a new generation of those who would be able to participate in it.

David H. Swartz, the first US Ambassador to Belarus (1992–1994) was one of the few who understoond the inefficiency of U.S. policy toward Belarus already at the time and took the his highly unusual step of resigning from his post as an Ambassador as a sign of his protest. In his article published in the newspaper *Washington Times* on June 5, 1997, *The Mess in Belarus: Care of the State Department* he, among other things, expressed criticism of his inability to obtain official US support for EHU, which he described as one of the best institutions of higher learning in the former Soviet Union. The Ambassadors of France, Claude Jolif (1992–1997) and Stephane Chmelewsky (2002–2006), were able to initiate support and invest their personal energy in the creation of a Francophone political science department at EHU in two working languages — French and English.

Generally, however, our expectations regarding the possible support from abroad unfortunately appeared very naive. The established official format of the assistance from the West to the countries of the post-Soviet space, including the sphere of education, was based on a strong belief that the post-totalitarian reality would be enthusiastically receptive to its social transformation. In education, especially in the humanities and social sciences, such efforts, in spite of huge

investments, were based upon the assumption that there was a professional community available and capable of effective cooperation in each newly established independent country. The situation with EHU was not something very special in this case.

I remember my accidental participation in a huge gathering in the meeting in Berlin 2000 with the symbolic title — "Russia What to Do?" (Rußland was tun?). This highly representative meeting was chaired by the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the Russian Prime-Minister Victor Chernomyrdin. Surprisingly, in response to Helmut Kohl's proclamation of the importance of student exchanges between the two countries and his reference to an earlier agreement with Boris Yeltsin to send one thousand students from each side to study abroad, a prominent German philosopher Manfred Riedel raised his hand and publicly asked why such exchanges only involved students from nomenclature universities and not from such innovative universities as European Humanities University in Minsk. Of course, Helmut Kohl was unaware of the existence of such a university as EHU and, in addition, the question was raised outside the context of German-Russian relations, but the issue was formulated by Manfred Riedel in a very appropriate way and it addressed the core problem of cooperation in the field of education between the West and the former Soviet Union. It means that this cooperation took place without a proper understanding on the part of the Western partners that their attempts to impart professional skills in each particular field ignored the whole range of complex issues within what is identified as a "liberal arts education" perceived in its transformative role *vis-a-vis* the previous state of mind of both students and educators.

All these challenges have complicated our lives in various ways. Firstly, how to proceed presenting to the public and to our students something that we ourselves are not very aware of? Secondly, how to survive the dominance of the educational bureaucracy and its regulations, which are heavily determined by our past, where, for instance, the very notions of BA and MA programs were incomprehensible? It was precisely here that we needed a clear understanding of what any kind of specialization, especially in humanities education, should be based on. Our existence in Belarus lasted only twelve years, which is a very short time for any university in the world to demonstrate positive results, especially in such challenging circumstances.

However, it could become an instructive case for analyzing the situation of humanities education and formulating the lessons learned for the foreseeable future.[1]

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Mikhailov, A. (2009). University in exile: The experience of the twenty-first century. *Social Research*, 76(3), 849–866.

[1] See more in Anatoli Mikhailov article *University in Exile: The Experience of the Twenty-First Century* (2009).

Hans-Gert Pöttering

I Will Never Forget My Visits to the European Humanities University

Dear Professor Mikhailov, dear Professors, dear students, ladies and gentlemen, dear guests,

It is with great esteem to congratulate the European Humanities University on its twentieth anniversary. I regret, really regret so much, that I cannot be with you. That's because the board of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is meeting, and this is a very great obligation to always be present for the board of the Adenauer Foundation.

I will never forget my visits to the European Humanities University in Vilnius, and we will never forget that this university was founded because of dictatorship in Belarus. I would like to thank Professor Mikhailov and all those who founded the European Humanities University twenty years ago. This university was founded because there was no democracy in Belarus, and the students who study in Vilnius share all European values: human dignity, freedom, democracy, human rights, law and order and peace. I am very confident that one day we will realize that these values will also be realized in Belarus, and maybe that day is not too far away.

I remember very fondly and with great emotion my meetings with students from the European Humanities University, either in Vilnius or in Strasbourg. It was a great event many years ago, when I was still a Member of the European Parliament, to invite students from the European Humanities University to Strasbourg. One day we will all be together in a great European Union based on human dignity and our European values. I wish the European Humanities University all the best for the future, and I personally hope to visit Vilnius and the European Humanities University many times in the future. All the best to you all. Thank you very much.

George A. Krol

That Light Was Not Extinguished

Дарагія сябры! Dear friends! Добры дзень! Laba diena!

Thank you for this opportunity to say a few words today on this occasion commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the European Humanities University in Vilnius, Lithuania. For me, personally, this is a bittersweet anniversary. My first association with the university was in 1993 in Minsk, Belarus, where I served at American Embassy as a Deputy to Ambassador David Swartz. It was then that I got to meet and work with the university's first rector and founder, Professor Anatoli Mikhailov, who became for me more than a contact, but a dear friend. I remember those early years doing what we could to help realize Dr. Mikhailov's idea of establishing a humanities-based university in Minsk. It was a success, despite great opposition and countless frustrations that Professor Mikhailov, who is probably shaking his head right now remembers all too well. Those were indeed times of great hope and high aspirations, as well as high apprehension over the university's future. But I was so proud of what the university, its brave leaders, faculty and students had achieved by the time I left Minsk in 1995.

Years later in 2003, I returned to Belarus, this time as Ambassador of United States in my own right. And once again, I was proud to reconnect with the university and my old friend Professor Mikhailov. But those times were far different than before. Unfortunately, despite the efforts of myself and other diplomats in Minsk, we weren't able to prevent the closure and eventual departure of the university from its Belarusian birthplace. Seeing this light go out in Minsk remains one of the saddest experiences in my life. But fortunately, that light was not extinguished. And that is what we are celebrating today — the continuation and enrichment of an idea and an institution that still shines and still attracts brave young people with enquiring minds from Belarus and from the entire region.

Like Belarus and Belarusians, Lithuania and its people have a special place in my heart and in my memory as my dear friend Emanuelis Zingeris knows only too well. As an American diplomat

I was in Vilnius in the dark days of 1991, when it was not at all clear, that Lithuania would ever regain its independence, but it did. Although it costed lives of men and women I personally knew, like the martyrs of Medininkai. I think it is therefore fitting, morally and historically, that this university has found a welcome home for the past twenty years. Here in this ancient center of the learning — Vilnius. A place of great historical and cultural value to the peoples of Belarus and Lithuania as well as of this entire region in Europe.

Yes, my friends, I feel sadness today, but I also fell happiness. One precious thing I learned from my time in both Belarus and Lithuania, is that Belarusians and Lithuanians are survivors. You have endured countless tragedies in your long and often entwined history. But your survival is a triumph. Indeed, this university is a triumph, a triumph of education, of good neighborliness, of moral responsibility, leadership, and perseverance. Most of all this university is a triumph of a human spirit, raising above tragedy and pessimism. The saga of the European Humanities University taught me this. It matters little where you are; what matters is what you are, and what you become. Although today I am physically far away from you all. From the bottom of my heart and from the depth of my soul, I thank you, European Humanities University, for this lesson, and I congratulate you. May your light never dim.

Thank you, a truly be *вялікі дзякуй!*

Deividas Matulionis

You Made Everything Possible, and Even Impossible

Dear members of the university community, distinguished professors, researchers, students, and guests,

Today, we celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the European Humanities University in Vilnius. I vividly remember the time when the University was relocated from Minsk to Vilnius. We all remember that it was not an easy process. We gave our helping hand, being fully aware of importance of the mission. I am also proud to have been able to assist in this process at that time and later in the decision to provide premises in the heart of the Old Town of Vilnius. In this context, I would like to emphasise the remarkable role played by Professor Anatoli Mikhailov in the whole undertaking. For me, Mikhailov and EHU are inseparable. My highest respect and admiration for you, dear Professor. You made everything possible, and even impossible, for the success of this unique educational institution.

The University is also one of the few remaining bridges between our two neighboring nations, which share 400 years of common history, but which have recently taken different geopolitical paths, at least for the time being. Personally, I have not lost hope. I still believe in the future of Belarus as a free, democratic, European nation that shares the values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Let us never forget the legacy of Kastus Kalinowski. The EHU helps to keep this dream alive, it's an embodiment of hope, a beacon of the future Belarus. You promote academic freedom and critical thinking, cultivate the next generation of leaders with the necessary skills to advocate and implement change, and challenge the suppression of freedom and democracy.

For twenty years, Lithuania has helped EHU by providing a safe haven and supporting its activities. I am sure that our support will remain strong because we believe in the mission of this university and the values it represents. Congratulations and best wishes to all of you on this important milestone. Thank you.

Jonathan Fanton

Why Would We Be Interested in Helping and Supporting EHU?

I was asked to speak at the opening ceremony of what was then called "E.H.U. International", and I shared the platform with President Adamkus. Here is a little bit of what I said, which I think speaks to your question: Why would we be interested in helping and supporting EHU?

I said: *May it stand as a symbol of hope, that freedom, opportunity, and democratic prosperity will flourish from Belarus when this university returns to its rightful home in Minsk. Let us bear witness today that while the light of learning may burn in exile from Belarus, its spirit lives, it moves among us here, and it motivates the students and faculty in Minsk taking great personal risks to continue their studies, and we salute their courage. We must not, we will not fail them. They can count on our determined effort to attract others to provide material and spiritual support, so that the scholars in peril the world over will take heart that academic freedom eventually will triumph over authoritarian regimes. The living spirit cannot be silenced. We will not let you down.*

That's what I said at the opening, and I think it indicates my belief that EHU represents kind of a beacon of hope for all scholars at risk and for all institutions that faced peril. And if it could successfully relocate, survive, and prosper, which is done, that would be good for all higher education.

Gregory S. Prince, Jr.

Quo Vadis EHU — Witherest Goest Thou?

My answer to that question is very straightforward — EHU should continue to go in exactly the same direction in which its founder pointed it in 2004 –

Be a model for and a statement about the importance of the humanities and a liberal arts-based education for an ever changing world and especially as an antidote to authoritarian based societies.

The real question today, however, is where is the world going. It is not just that societies are moving toward more authoritarian style governments. The real danger is that societies are moving toward an amoral, transaction based "philosophy" as the basis for civil societies. Relationships are defined only in terms of transactions and reciprocity without guard rails and guiding principles. Without frameworks and principles, practice inexorably moves toward who is getting the better deal, and citizens increasingly focus on their individual needs and wants, legitimizing greed. It becomes a formula for fracturing a society.

Describing oneself as a "transactionalist" offers a veneer of respectability for a simple but very amoral philosophy: get as much as you can for the least amount you have to give up. which slides further into you get all you can get away with. It sanitizes the principle that power makes right. It becomes an engine for greed and a mental framework for a social Darwinist-like view that those with the most power and wealth should be leading because they are the smartest and know what is best. As power and wealth accumulate, those who are falling, behind for whatever reason, feel more and more insecure and fearful.

Growing insecurity and fear of the future creates the seed bed for authoritarians. Give me power and I will give you the security you fear you are losing.

The antidote to authoritarianism always has been education but not just any education. It must be an education that focuses on creating habits of mind, not just in transferring knowledge. It is the kind

of education that EHU always has striven to offer — one that develops the capacity of individuals to think clearly, critically and creatively, to judge wisely, to act ethically and humanely and to communicate effectively. It ultimately is a moral education — one that builds the resilience, inventiveness, and entrepreneurial spirit that hold fear at bay; one that creates a mindset that values fact and truth and resists rumor and falsehoods used to stoke anger and fear. It is the antidote to those who would persuade a society they are threatened and that if they give up power to a protector, they will be secure.

EHU always has committed itself to providing that education. What has changed over twenty years is the need. In 2004, the need was defined primarily in terms of Belarus and post-Soviet societies. Today, unfortunately, the need has expanded to both sides of what was the cold war divide. EHU cannot change direction. It simply must carry a much heavier burden. The world, not just Belarus or Europe, need EHU. I, we, humankind all thank you for defending and promoting what only the study of the humanities and a liberal education can provide — a moral, not an amoral framework, for interacting with each other.

Daniel Calingaert

Reflections on Universities in Exile and Academic Freedom

I very much appreciate this opportunity to mark 20 years of the European Humanities University's progress in exile and to talk about its future.

I first visited EHU in 1994 in Minsk. I was with the Civic Education Project (CEP), which brought young American and West European lecturers to teach regular humanities and social sciences courses at universities across the former communist bloc. From my first meeting with Professor Mikhailov and your colleagues, I saw right away that we were kindred spirits, and CEP started to send lecturers to teach at EHU.

That was quite a contrast to my conversations with Minsk State University, which went on and on and on and led nowhere. Interestingly, at the time, CEP was able to place Western scholars at state universities in pretty much every country of the region except Belarus. I have strong admiration for what EHU has done over the decades in preserving academic freedom and open inquiry.

I will offer some reflections on universities in exile and on their place within international networks. Let me begin with a disclaimer: I will be far less eloquent than every speaker who came before me. I talk more in pragmatic terms and hope that the change of pace at least will be refreshing.

Within the Open Society University Network (OSUN), we have two other universities in exile: the American University of Afghanistan, which operated in the country for about 15 years and had to leave quickly in 2021; and Parami University, which had started to build a campus in Myanmar right around the time that the military coup happened there. They have reconstituted their programs, mostly online.

While I'm less familiar with other examples, I note that there are universities in exile outside of OSUN, such as Off University, which provides a sanctuary for Turkish scholars and courses that are more open-minded than many Turkish students can get within the country.

As I think about the examples inside and outside of OSUN, I note first and foremost that the mission of each university in exile puts academic freedom front and center.

These institutions largely define themselves by promoting academic freedom, which does not exist within their country. And their missions also put strong emphasis on academic rigor, educational excellence, and critical thinking, which is closely connected to academic freedom, as it is the antidote to the closed mindsets that governing regimes in places like Afghanistan and Burma promote. In addition, the universities in exile stress the contributions they make to their country's future by developing and applying knowledge. These contributions to society go beyond intellectual pursuits.

Universities in exile seek to build engagement with their regional community and the global community. They thus counteract the isolation of their country and see their contributions in international terms.

These universities create and maintain educational environments that are uniquely open and rigorous for their country, or more specifically for students from their country. They prepare students to think about a better future. The contrast between universities in exile and their counterparts back home is stark: the counterparts back home are preparing students to reinforce existing restrictions on society. Universities in exile serve a critical function in imagining a better and more internationally connected future.

Universities in exile face significant challenges. I would highlight two. First, they require international connection and support in a world with a very short attention span. That was painfully evident in OSUN's experience. OSUN had a respond rapidly to a series of crises over a period of only two years to support our Burmese partners, then Afghan partners, then Ukrainian partners, then Russian partners. Now we are starting to welcome students from Gaza. As a network of higher education institutions, OSUN is engaged for the long haul, not only for a year or two, trying to provide students with opportunities to complete university degrees.

The second challenge is preserving community from exile. The American University of Afghanistan (AUAF) and Parami University do everything they can to teach in person wherever possible. Obviously, most of their teaching takes place online. But AUAF has managed to set up a campus in Qatar, and Parami created learning

centers, where students can come and learn together. The learning centers inside Myanmar cannot operate openly, but they find places like Buddhist monasteries where government authorities leave them alone.

The best ways to preserve academic freedom are networked and institutional efforts. Students who come from a closed intellectual environment want a broader window to the world and want to complete a full higher education. That requires institutions — universities in exile first and foremost — to make a long-term commitment to get students through full degree programs and to maintain these degree programs for a great many years. Such a commitment is best fulfilled and sustained through a network.

I would like to offer some reflections on OSUN's experience and look back at OSUN's predecessor, the Bard/HESP network supported by the Open Society Foundations (OSF). When EHU was forced 20 years ago to leave Minsk, some of its students went to Smolny College in St. Petersburg, within the Bard/HESP network. Similarly, when the Taliban took over Afghanistan in 2021, OSUN was able, with huge, hands-on support from OSF, to relocate almost 200 students. And not just to get them to safety, but to enroll them in degree programs at the American University of Central Asia in Kyrgyzstan, Bard in New York and in Berlin, American University of Beirut, and elsewhere.

OSUN is defined and driven by its values. I was really struck in our conversations after Russia's invasion of Ukraine that in conversations among the chief academic officers of OSUN partner institutions, there was no jockeying for attention or resources. Instead, everyone focused in a truly earnest way on what they could offer. They just said, here's what my university can do to address the situation. I can take in two more students. Terrific. That's two more students who now have the opportunity to resume their studies. Or, when summer comes, space will open up in our dormitories, and we will welcome displaced students. And we will do whatever we can for threatened scholars. That is the mentality of working together because well all depend on cooperation.

In the most immediate sense, we at OSUN provide sanctuary for threatened scholars, and EHU has welcomed and hosted many colleagues from Russia and Ukraine. Beyond that, we call our program the Threatened Scholars Integration Initiative, with a big emphasis on integration, because it's not just about the survival of these scholars

but really about counteracting the isolation that results from crackdowns on academic freedom. This program provides practical support for threatened scholars to continue their teaching, develop teaching skills if they previously focused on research, make connections internationally, and stay active in their academic field.

As a network of universities, we share course offerings, and each individual institution thus can make a broader range of courses available to its students. Within these courses, OSUN offers educational opportunities that are truly distinct.

I'm glad that Jeremy Adelman spoke before me, as his description of the Global History Lab gave you a very clear picture of what make OSUN courses distinct. Let me add my explanation. I often need to convey to different audiences what is distinctive about the Open Society University Network, because if you only say we have an international university network, it could mean any number of things.

To begin with, I highlight the diversity of our students. We aren't the young person's version of Davos, where students come from different locations but have similar, elite backgrounds. We have some of them in OSUN, which is fine, and we have students from a range of backgrounds, from very different socioeconomic circumstances, such as students in refugee camps in Kenya. All of these students, brought together, learn from each other. That's what makes a genuinely global classroom.

OSUN students learn from each other not only because we put them together but also because there is a great deal of thought that goes into how these courses are designed and taught. We are very deliberate in how we articulate the value added of OSUN courses.

When the Covid pandemic was winding down and students were coming back to in-person classes — we were all sick of Zoom then — we asked ourselves, why would students take more OSUN online courses? We had to identify clearly the value added of OSUN courses and articulate their learning objectives. The first is global learning. Students from widely diverse places and background who learn from each other and engage with faculty across different continents come away with a deeper understanding of the world. As we've seen with Bard students, when they share perspectives with their peers in, say, Bangladesh or Kakuma refugee camp, their eyes open wide.

The second learning objectives is intercultural competence. We put strong emphasis on group projects where students from different

parts of the world have to work together and figure out complex issues. They thus learn to engage constructively with very different people.

The feedback from students on OSUN courses is overwhelmingly positive. Over 85% tell us semester in, semester out that they learn more in these global classrooms than they would in similar courses at their home institution. Global classrooms give opportunities for displaced students and students at universities in exile to overcome the isolation they would get at home, particularly at a state university in their home country, and to open up the world and their place within it.

A while back, the former President of Cornell University, Frank Rhodes, reflected on what it means to learn in a community. Without a community, he said, knowledge becomes idiosyncratic. Your assumptions are not tested, and you can fall into a narrow or even dogmatic set of views. And you miss out on opportunities to be more expansive and to be challenged by different perspectives.

A learning community is a place to test your arguments and conclusions, and beyond that, to identify issues of importance. And it prepares students to contribute to society. Education isn't just an individual action; it also entails learning with other people and figuring out problems cooperatively. Frank Rhodes called this process a humane application of knowledge. To engage with society, you have to understand other people and work with them.

The Open Society University Network is a learning community. It serves to expand the educational experiences of our students and better prepare them to contribute to society in an increasingly interconnected world.

I greatly value EHU's commitment and academic contributions to OSUN, and I very much appreciate how EHU students and faculty draw from the network to strengthen their pursuit of knowledge.

Walter Brogan

A Space for the Humanities in an Exilic Community

I appreciate the opportunity to address those who have gathered together for the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the European Humanities University in Vilnius, Lithuania. I want to say something later about what it means for a University to be an exilic community, which I believe is in some sense a core aspect of what it means to be a University. But may I begin by confessing my silent admiration for Professor Anatoli Mikhailov who has been for me a distant but forceful inspiration in my life and a model of courageous commitment to students and to learning and to the transformative power of academic institutions. Anatoli Mikhailov believes, and I believe, the University has the power to change the world. Mikhailov is a calm beacon of light for so many who are going through tumultuous times and for societies that have undergone and are undergoing seismic shifts, which in his mind provide positive, open, previously unforeseen possibilities for individual and collective becoming.

I had the privilege to offer week-long seminars at the European Humanities University in Minsk in the summers of 1998 and 2000. My assignment was to speak about democracy and the open society to professors from Universities in countries across the former Soviet Union as well as to an amazing coterie of local students. In speaking with Professor Mikhailov I came to understand my mission was to do this work in the spirit of hermeneutics, that is, in the appreciation for history and tradition as the only ground and source out of which any genuine orientation towards the future could emerge. I believe this understanding of thoughtful, grounded transformation is fundamental to what the University and a university education is supposed to achieve.

I remember insisting at the time that there was no way I could come from outside and tell those who are experiencing a revolution in their way of life what an alternative future might look like. I do not think this is our role as educators. To be with University students and

educators is always in principle to be with those who are undergoing revolutions in their lives, who are, as Augustine says, questions unto themselves. And it seems to me that a University education — more than ever in these times of crisis — has to place the spirit of critical questioning at the heart of its mission.

I decided in the end in preparing for these long-ago seminars in Minsk, which were as impactful for me as I hoped they would be for others, to talk about the between-space of transition and the importance of not shifting from one static ideology to another but embracing transition and the life-affirming power of undergoing change. Entering into transition can be painful and risky and vulnerable, but it is exhilarating to discover new possibilities, to meet new ideas, to consider the benefits of other cultural outlooks, and to experience growth. A University is such a space of transition for students.

When I think of the question that challenges us at this conference — *quo vadis?* — I find I am taken aback and confronted (in a productive way). It is such a core existential question, a question that resonates with the other, equally existential question, who am I? I believe that every student who desires a "higher" education is confronted with this question — *quo vado*? — where am I going? — and it is our responsibility as educators not to resolve their question with formulaic responses and cookie-cut answers, but to help them along the way. To be human is not to reach the end of one's destination, but to be underway, that is, to be reaching towards what is to come, open to the challenges and possibilities that will be uncovered along the way. Receiving a Humanities education means entering into is a process of becoming open to the expansion of our horizons.

The question, *Quo vado*? leads to two other related questions that are essential to the cultural formation of University students. Where am I going? cannot be answered from outside by pointing to the attainment of degrees or pockets of information or mastery of skills. It is an existential question and to delve into it requires that we also ask why we are going and how. In other words, the question is implicitly asking about values and about how one should be. Again, I do not think it is our job as educators to tell students what to believe or what to choose. The purpose of education is to help individuals become cultured and cultivated, in the sense conveyed by the German word *Bildung.* To be cultured is to have developed an inner disposition towards the good. It is not a matter of teaching students this value or that but helping

them to become valuators and evaluators. It is not a matter of telling students about ideological decisions that require them to do this or that but helping them to become capable of choosing. The cultivation and formation of the human person is not about developing a particular technological skill (albeit very useful) nor is it about memorizing information; it is about the whole person. It is the kind of education that the Humanities provide and in these times of fragmented and disconnected experiences and specialized training, it is more needed, and I believe more longed-for than ever.

It might on the surface seem rather intangible, but one of the most important traits of a cultured, educated person, one that a Humanities education fosters, is what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls good judgment and good taste, that is, a sense for what is shared in common, a sense for the interconnectedness of things, a sensitivity to relationship and relationality, an appreciation of context and an attunement to the shining forth of beauty in the things we experience. The good, the beautiful and the common all evoke what we might still call the universal. The University is the place where we go to learn to see things in a universal perspective, to see things as belonging within a universe, to see what we experience in relationship to the whole of what is (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 316).

But Gadamer has a non-conventional understanding of the universal which highlights one of the central tenets of an education in the Humanities. He says: "This universality is by no means a universality of concept or of the understanding. A particular is not *determined* by a universal, nothing is proved conclusively. The universal viewpoints to which the cultivated person keeps himself or herself open are not a fixed applicable yardstick but are present to him only as the viewpoints of possible others" (TM17). In other words, we gain access to this awareness of the universal, this sense of the common, through sharing with others, through dialogue and conversation. Conversation is at the heart of democracy and the willingness to speak is a *sine qua non* for a healthy political life in the future. Sadly, we live in times of division, where the breakdown in our ability to talk with each other is apparent. Aristotle defines the human being as the animal who can talk (*logos*). A University without Humanities has lost its core purpose as being a site of shared learning where we can, in conversation, test the limits of our thinking (what Gadamer calls prejudice) against others and reach out for sites of agreement and cooperation.

Because of the commitment to dialogue and searching together for truth, the Humanities holds the soul of the University in its hands and a University without Humanities is a soulless institution.

It can be difficult to resist thinking of this notion of the communal in terms of tethering the particular to a fixed unchangeable universal. But this would be the opposite of what Gadamer has in mind. The universal or what he sometimes calls common sense is for him a notion not of fixity but of expansiveness, growth, motility and openness. It is what allows us to be embedded in our situatedness and the concreteness of our particular lives while at the same time being open to what is other than ourselves, open to challenges from the unfamiliar and foreign that promises to alter our rigid perspective and allow us to grow towards what is beyond the limits of our own being. The universal for Gadamer is not some pre-given third site that stands above each dialogue partner or each tradition and to which one dialogue partner and another can appeal in order to find common ground and agreement. Learning to be in touch with the universal does require self-transcendence, but only because it teaches us that to be human is to be finite in such a way that we are in our very nature always reaching beyond ourselves. My hope is that this kind of concrete universal can come alive and be sustained in a University dedicated to the Humanities.

There is a special reason to be hopeful for the future of Humanities at the European Humanities University in Vilnius. It has to do with the importance, mentioned above, of being open to the unfamiliar and the foreign as an essential aspect of the University's commitment to the universal spirit of humanity. A community in exile is especially well-situated to appreciate this essential aspect of a Humanities education. Crossing borders, not allowing borders to stand for closure and exclusion, but seeing borders between each other and between nations as porous and as thresholds of gathering is so essential for the future of humanity.

The comradeship of Lithuania in welcoming their neighbors from Belarus is a perfect example of the hospitality that the Humanities and a Humanities University intends to foster. It is the sense of hospitality that is described by Homer where the Greek people welcome the stranger into their midst without condition or question because this person may indeed be a god. It is the willingness to stand in relation to another in a space of incalculability and absolute risk, a space

of the between where an encounter with the other occurs, where one's openness to what is beyond exceeds all boundaries. It is an exilic space that I think is exactly the space that the Humanities occupies in the University and in society.

Ludger Kühnhardt

To Approach Our Understanding of European Humanism

— 1 —

On April 24, 2024, French President Emmanuel Macron addressed the students of Europe at Sorbonne University. Five years earlier, he had done the same. In 2017, Macron invented a new concept, the political thought figure 'European sovereignty'. After Jean Bodin's concept of autonomous state sovereignty under one rule and one law in the 16th century, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of popular sovereignty in order to enhance legitimate order and rule in the 18th century, Emmanuel Macron coined the term 'European sovereignty' in order to frame Europe's self-assertion and self-defense in a dangerous world.

In 2024, Macron added a philosophical and ethical notion to his concept of the future of Europe. He called for a renewal of European humanism. He called for a Humanism 2.0. It is interesting to note whom the philosopher president cited in his reflection about humanism. He described Peter Sloterdijk as an ironic pessimist, who can perfectly well give meaning and words to the currently widespread attitude of a Europe in decline, full of deep self-doubt. He recalled Albert Camus' letter to a German friend, in which he argues that Europeans are different from others and how they are different. Macron endorsed the ideas used by George Steiner to describe what is different about European humanism: the idea of the freedom of the rule of law, the will to preserve knowledge and culture, and the idea of the equality of all human beings. Finally, Macron quoted Hannah Arendt. In her book 'The Human Condition', Hannah Arendt argued that the best way to recognize and structure the future in times of trouble is to make promises and keep them. This is a fascinating perspective from which to approach our understanding of European humanism. What Arendt was alluding to is a life based on trust, reliability and truth. She also wrote about the importance of promises. Whoever

keeps a promise preserves the human dignity of others and is worthy of respect. To keep a promise is to believe in the future of humanity. In this sense, the European Humanities University is a promise kept. EHU is a vivid expression of truth, of trust and of reliability. First and foremost, EHU has kept the promise of its founding director, Anatoli Mikhailov. Anatoli Mikhailov's promises were so simple and so powerful when he funded EHU: the promise that pluralism defeats sterile opportunism and conformism, the promise that truth makes academia worthwhile and the promise that freedom will always prevail with the talents and aspirations of new generations of students and with the professional dedication of those who remain eternal students, even if they are called professors, rectors or university administrators. EHU embodies European humanism at its best.

— 2 —

Twenty years ago, the world was a different place. The American century was still alive, although 9/11 and the disaster of regime change in Iraq had shown the creeping demolition of unilinear US global hegemonism. World capitalism was still in full swing, the global financial crisis of 2008 still a long way off. It turned out to become a crisis of greed, excessive consumerism and lack of moderation. The European Union was still proud of its wave of enlargements. EU leaders declared how great it was to be surrounded by a ring of friends and hoped to continue projecting their ideas of freedom, democracy, peace and prosperity. But the limits of this export formula became increasingly apparent. In 2004, after the genocide of more than a million people in Rwanda, the ugliest violence continued in the Congo, with more than five million dead by then. This catastrophe, like many others outside Europe, was barely noticed in Europe.

Year after year, the global South came closer to the doorstep of a negligent and narrow-minded Europe. The first dead illegal migrants had reached the shores of European beaches. In 2006, Russian President Vladimir Putin described the collapse of the Soviet Union as the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century. Most Western observers thought he was just being nostalgic. In Belarus, President Alexander Lukashenka closed the European Humanities University.

When Lukashenka took office ten years ago in 1994, he was seen by some analysts as a promising reformer. History has judged him as well as Vladimir Putin. History never ends. The hope of progress so often turns out to be an illusion. But human dignity does not disappear, and hope is the last to die.

Today, twenty years later, EHU is still operating. It is a symbol of freedom, resiliency and truth. It is a symbol of European humanism against all forces of darkness, of intimidation and of intellectual conformism. Lukashenka uses people as weapons in his hybrid war against the West. His alter ego Putin is wasting endless Russian lives in his senseless war against a free, proud and strong Ukraine, which is resisting with incredible resilience and courage despite so many casualties and losses in Ukraine. Ukraine certainly embodies European humanism 2.0. On the other hand, Russia has left the European peace order. For the time being, peace in Europe is only possible against Russia, not with it. Russian mercenaries in Africa have undermined stability where it was once a cherished reality, especially in the Sahel. Russia has shot the whole world back into a global cold war, to say the least.

What will the world look like in 20 years' time?There are known knowns. We know that demographic trends will push Europe further into a position of marginality, while it remains exposed to the desire for migration, given Europe's quality of life, which is itself based on Europe's humanism. There are unknown knowns. These are phenomena that will happen without us knowing how, when and why. One of these unknown knowns is the future of freedom. There is no doubt that people want to live in dignity and respect, free from interference and intimidation by others. Everywhere. But how this is translated into social structures and political order is a matter of trial and error, past experience and present revisionism, archaic vestiges and postmodern illusions. We do not yet know what the world map of freedom will look like in 2044. But no one can stop us from being optimistic about the future of freedom in Belarus. Finally, there are the unknown unknowns. These include the future of the global climate, global health and global politics. Who would have thought twenty years ago that Lithuania would be a full member of NATO and the EU, using the same currency as people in Portugal? Who can predict what Belarus will look like in twenty years' time? At best, we can create scenarios that might help us through times of unknown

unknowns. One lesson for the future is obvious: optimism and hope die last, even in our time of chaos, geopolitical confusion and threats, violence and dictatorial aspirations. That is why it is worth reflecting on European humanism and its role in academia.

— 3 —

Humanism, the search for truth and academia are intertwined. This should prevent academic discourses from becoming a victim or even producer of the "Zeitgeist" in all its variants. Kierkegaard did not say it but the fine quip is often attributed to him: Who marries "Zeitgeist" will become a widower soon. Academics are not prominent figures like B-movie actors, but should be — at best — mature personalities and role models.

Freedom and truth are open to interpretation and ideological manipulation. Freedom and truth are relational terms which require to understand the context in which they are supposed to thrive. Whether or not progress is real or an imagined illusion might be a matter of debate. But freedom is real and truth can be tested. We have all seen the damage that fake news can cause.

The space for the future role of the European Humanities University is big and promising. Over the next twenty years, EHU can develop from its defiant beginnings as university in exile into a unique brand name for excellence in higher education. Honest and innovative transdisciplinary studies and research are the way to excellence. EHU has already achieved a lot. But, if I may express this gift of hope at today's commemorative celebration: There is always more to be done.

This is why, a few years ago, I proposed the establishment of an EHU Academy/Institute of Advanced Studies. Such an Institute of Advanced Studies could serve as a hub to bring together academics and practitioners from the Atlantic world and from Eurasia. Today this outreach is more urgent more urgent than ever. While politics has become silent because of the use of military power, academic life must continue. To broaden each other's perspectives. To think beyond what is impossible today. To open avenues — a kind of two-track diplomacy — that can work towards a better future even in times of serious tension and division.

But the future of EHU does not depend solely on institutional expansion. EHU like all other higher education institutions, must participate in the search for timely answers to the daunting question of what sustainable education is all about. It is not just about sharing and projecting knowledge. Measuring and counting is important. But understanding and interpreting our reality and the concepts with which we try to grasp it is equally, if not more, important. To do this, EHU students and academics must have a personal moral and intellectual compass. Education is not without inner meaning. In German, since Lessing we speak of 'Erziehung' when we say 'education'. It means more than formation. Lessing has left us with a complex script of philosophy of history, "Über die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts", published in 1780. He correlated the stages of individual education with the exposition of divine revelation. This is not the moment for a lecture on the details of a path that could lead from immediate sensual punishments and rewards, through the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, to a life without rewards and punishments because autonomous human reason is so developed that people do good because it is good. When you hear this, you might think of the unpleasant reality that university studies come with grades or you may think of the importance of the International Court of Justice to punish war crimes. The gap between present imperfection and future perfection, it seems, is permanent. But the promise to narrow it, that is what Hannah Arendt taught us as our best possible effort.

In this context, an EHU Institute for Advanced Studies could conduct research on comparative religion, among many other important issues, especially on strategic security. As we would see, most of our political vocabulary has religious underpinnings or foundations. We cannot understand different political cultures without diving deeply into their respective presuppositions. Is mercy, even in the most secular sense of the world, dependent on theological notions and absent in some world religions, especially Islam? Is the idea of childhood and youth different in Western and non-Western civilizations because of religious preconditions? Is social doctrine related to anthropological differences between the different Christian denominations? What are the theological preconditions on which democracy and the rule of law can grow?

Lessing has also left us his famous book "Nathan the Wise" with the judge's assumption in the "Ring Parable", according to which

the real ring was lost. The path toward the future is paved with scepticism. But the promise to overcome scepticism as far as we can with the help of our autonomous reason is a powerful tool to resist frustration and cynicism. This is true for the future of freedom in Belarus. This is true for the future of European humanism. And it is certainly true for a bright future of the European Humanities University.

Dan E. Davidson

Speech of Doctor Honoris Causa

Professor Mikhailov! Acting Rector Šadauskas!

Today's recognition by EHU, especially at this significant milestone in the University's history in exile, is deeply meaningful for me, and very humbling in the light of EHU's distinguished mission and extraordinary history. There are, of course, many others who have contributed greatly to the support and advancement of this remarkable educational institution among former members of the Governing Board members, in particular, the late Per Unckel, Ann Lonsdale, Blair Ruble and Greg Prince, to name only a few.

The group, however, to whom the greatest debt is owed for EHU's growth and continued success, apart from the Founder himself, is the EHU faculty, chairs and deans, for their devotion to the University and to the welfare and overall development of their students, despite the particular sacrifices and uncertainties they and their families have had endure as a faculty in exile. They have educated, mentored and prepared successive generations of students for productive and fulfilling lives, as enlightened, democratically-minded citizens, while also maintaining EHU's reputation for leadership and academic integrity as Europe's longest-standing scholarly community in exile.

And for all the trauma caused by the forced closure of the Minsk campus in the late summer of 2004, I believe that the present generation of Belarusian students has experienced a still more serious crisis in their student years, one that began with the massive Belarus election fraud of 2020 and the COVID pandemic, followed by Russia's continuing war of aggression in Ukraine, and the barrage of disinformation and persistent rumors concerning what turn that war might yet take for Belarus.

EHU cannot, nor should it, shelter its students from such concerns, but the Univesity does provide an environment where students can engage these inescapable realities in a spirit of open inquiry and freedom of thought, and with a more long-term view of the future.

Regarding that freedom, to paraphrase a fellow Slavist, Historian Tim Snyder, Freedom is not just the *absence* of authoritarianism, it is also the *presence of the good,* of values that ensure that legitimate choices are possible and that ones basic safety and well-being are also provided for. (Tim Snyder, *On Freedom,* 2024.)

EHU is a place of such values: an institution dedicated to learning, situated within a free and independent host country, but still Belarusian in terms of its languages and cultural context, a rule-governed academic and social community where freedom of speech, freedom of language, critical thinking, shared governance, and constructive discussions are not only permitted, but expected of everyone.

Belarusian students who are ready to take the risk of studying at EHU, or transferring to EHU, are students who want a European education and an EU degree; many have lost faith in Belarus state institutions. But, despite the common language, study at EHU represents a shock to many new students, especially those who find themselves outside the boundaries of their authoritarian homeland for the first time.

For a generation of Belarusian students and their parents, the shift from an authoritarian mindset, heavily influenced by the state-controlled media and characterized by monopolistic forms of thinking dating to Soviet times, often exhibit ethnocentric, deterministic, self-censoring behaviors upon arrival on campus, reluctant to take responsibility for decision making, or to express independent initiative. The necessary shift to a more open, pluralistic, ethno-relative, flexible mindset necessary for operating successfully in a democratic society requires nothing short of a transformation in the student's thinking. EHU provides its students with that possibility through its curriculum and its day-to-day modeling of the principles of critical thinking, over the course of the four-year educational experience at the University.

"The words are familiar but the meanings are different," as one first-year EHU student once explained to me, referring to differences in her understanding of the meaning of the word "failure" when spoken by a young western entrepreneur and when used by a young Belarusian counterpart. For the former, product or business failures are commonplace and viewed, truly, as opportunities to learn and to generate helpful feedback for the next version of the same product, if there is to be one. For the latter, a failure is a failure, a potential source of shame, a violation of trust of those who supported you,

possibly a source of punishment, should one of the supporters have been a state actor. On this background it is more a surprise that there are any Belarusian entrepreneurs and start-ups at all, and worth noting that a surprising percentage of them are female!

Still, the confrontation with a different value system within an otherwise familiar setting can be shocking, creating cognitive dissonance, or emotional dis-equilibrium, usually both, and for a few, the step out of their comfort zone at EHU may be a step too far. But for most students, EHU will be transformative, in both the popular sense of the word, as well the more technical sense in which that word is used in educational and human development research.

My own field, as Professor Mikhailov mentioned, is language and culture, and as a result of observing the power of immersion education, particularly language-empowered overseas study and research, I can attest to how long-term immersion study experiences have contributed to the intellectual, emotional and intercultural development of multiple generations of young-adult American students, participating in American Councils federally supported overseas immersion program in the critical languages.[2]

Transformative change takes place over time as a result of sustained and positive contact with persons of different mindsets and life experiences, whether it might be an American students studying the languages and cultures of a critical region of the world in China for the first time, or a Belarusan student, who has never known a president other than Lukashenko nor can remember a time when Russia didn't occupy nearly a fifth of Ukraine. For such a student, travelling to Vilnius and enrolling in EHU can be no less of a shock.

All of this is a simple reminder of the reason there is an EHU and why its mission continues to be so important in today's geo-political environment.

I will end on a final positive note: and that is to welcome the USA back to the EHU funder group, thanks to the USAID's decision to make a substantial multi-year grant to EHU in support of scholarships and

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[2] Transformative learnings is well theorized and influenced by Paolo Freire, Juergen Habermas, Lev Vygotsky, Jack Mezirow, and J.M. Dirkx. See also in our book *Transformative Language Learning and Teaching* (Leaver, Davidson, Campbell 2021).

programmatic support to strengthen placement, internships and leadership training. I am also pleased to take note that American Councils was selected to administer this award, in close cooperation with the EHU Trust Fund, and that Kevin Reiling, AC Director for Belarus and the Baltics, will be a principal point of contact for that grant.

I conclude therefore by congratulating Kevin on this important new role, to which he has contributed greatly, and EHU on the return of a Trans-Atlantic Partnership to support the university during the coming challenging years!

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— Part 2 —

University Foundations

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John Sallis

Reflections on the European Humanities University

We are all Greeks. Because we are all Greeks, we call ourselves *humans* and carry on practices that we designate as humanities. Despite the fact that the words are synonyms, it is imperative to distinguish the practices of the humanities from practices defined by their utilitarian nature. The Humanities University is devoted to λόγος, to nothing else, even when it is diverted into μῦθος or into what we call scientific discourse. It is because our universities — and there is none other than humanities universities — are devoted to a certain kind of discourse, our universities are bound to λόγος, to λόγος in its specific manifestations. Thus, despite ourselves, we are logicians and have as our source Aristotle, the "father" of logic. Yet, what can be said in and by logic can be said in many ways. We are thus manifoldly Greek. Indeed we are nothing but Greek, for all the linguistic and conceptual resources at our disposal have their origin in Greek thought, language, art, drama, and all that contributed to the glory that was Greek. These sources delimit our humanistic education as, in our time, it both promises renewal and, at the same time, is called on to guard itself against all that would rob it of its capacity to illuminate the space of human existence.

Anatoli Mikhailov

Some Reflections on the Text by John Sallis

All difficulties begin with logos — not thinking per se, but thought expressed in words.

—Hannah Arendt

The text by John Sallis, while being very laconic, is an invitation to ponder upon a challenging issue of our state of mind searching for its roots in the time of crisis. This issue has been determining his thought for decades and was especially elaborated in his books *Being and Logos* (1974), *Chorology: On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus* (1999), *Platonic Legacies* (2004) and various other publications. During his seminar at the European Humanities University in Minsk, he also raised the issue of the value of Greek legacy for our thinking.

Those whom we call "the Greeks" now appear to us, in our "uprooted time" (Simone Weil, 2002), as a rule, as a group of diverse ancient thinkers who became canonized and to whom we prefer to relate ourselves in our interpretations from the vantage point of our allegedly professional knowledge.

In no way should we limit their names to those whom we traditionally call "philosophers": "Indeed, the philosophers might be the ones who opened the door to something that would no longer be deemed "Greek" (Schmidt, 2006: 111).

With all appreciation of the contribution of philosophy in the development of the Occidental intellectual tradition, our contemporary way of thought demonstrates how much we have become the victims of an abstract language and terminology, trapped in words, caught up in abstractions that distort rather than reveal our reality. In Heidegger's words, as a consequence, we are witnessing our fatal estrangement from Being.

The challenges of our addressing the Greek beginnings are determined in this case by the specificity of the present Western type of thinking and the previous stages of its developments through medieval scholasticism, modernity, and German idealism up to Nietzsche and our times, and which, as a result, become, within their dominating scholarly attitude and interpretation, even more hidden and inaccessible for us than ever before. That is why Martin Heidegger in his *Beiträge zur Philosophie* raises the issue of recollecting and even "destroying" this tradition and taking up it anew in order to get access to reality we live in, as not overshadowed by our present abstract and confused conceptuality.

We need to realize, however, that we face a lot of challenges here, related to the use of basic notions and their commonly accepted meanings. For instance, the vocabularies of both the Greek and Latin languages do not contain a single term that corresponds to our commonly used notion of "consciousness" in the presently established sense as the indication of the cognitive faculty by which we represent our thought about reality and about ourselves. The ancient authors tended to employ a set of various expressions linked to the name of capacity of awareness and self-awareness distinctive from what was an equivalent of the Cartesian *cogitatio* and later converted to *conscientia* on which the German expression *Bewußtsein* was based with all confidence in its power of addressing Being.

For this reason, in pre-Socratic Greece, the very understanding of what is presently identified as "knowledge" was predominantly connected with the term of *aisthēsis* which carries the meaning of "sensation", "perception", and "feeling", which decisively determine the way of human being in the world. For instance, in Plato's dialogue *Theaetetus,* which presents Socrates in his search of a definition of knowledge (*epistêmê*) he briefly considers "that it might be even ultimately reducible to *aisthēsis*". Most translators of the dialogue have rendered the term in this setting by "perception," "sensation," or a reasoned mix, such as "sense perception".

But it is clear that more than sense data in any modern sense is at issue in the dialogue, for the *dramatis personae* who discuss the term show no signs of doubting that the field of *aisthēsis* can easily embrace affective, as well as perceptual, phenomena. By "senses" (*aisthēsis*), Socrates explains, one means not only "sight, hearing, smell, the sense of the cold and the hot," but also "pleasure and pain, desire

and fear; and there are great many more, of which many have names and of which an infinite number have none at all." (Heller-Roazen, 2007: 23) As a result, concludes Daniel Heller-Roazen, already "by Plato's time *aisthēsis* had become a weasel word. Almost everything that affects a living being can be subsumed under it." (2007: 24) We know that in his later development in the search for the ground of knowledge, Socrates, however, had tended to rely on a concept as a solid and secure ground which has since then become a dominant motif of Western intellectual tradition of thought.

The crucial issue is: how can we address the present reality before the possible ossification of language in the concept that lies behind Plato's hesitations to write texts? After Husserl's famous phenomenological slogan "*Zurück zu den Sachen selbst*", with its invitation to see the things which surround us as if seen for the first time, and Hugo von Hofmanstahl's acknowledgment in his *The Letter of Lord Chandon* of the lack of words to express the vitality of the lived experience, there was even a growing recognition of the necessity to keep silence instead of enlarging the vastness of already written or published texts. With the reference to Heidegger's paradoxical point of view according to which "a being who is language-bound is one whose ability to speak is beholden to a fundamental condition of speechlessness", Walter Brogan argues that the situation when "the word fails" means " not accidentally or on a particular occasion; the failure here is catastrophic, an absolute loss of the word. Yet, precisely through this dumbfoundedness, ironically that the word first emerges. The genesis of speaking is the powerlessness before speaking" (Brogan, 2013: 42).

It means that in order to find the way of addressing Greek tradition we need to overcome what is called by Iris Murdoch "the sickness of the language" and become aware of the limits of conceptuality with a new rigor and self-reflective energy "as the limits of conceptuality, as the agility of language itself is probed" (Schmidt, 2001: 11). That is why when we address the question of how to get access to the roots of Greek tradition, we are confronted not with mere academic discussions. What is at stake is the very understanding of the nature of human being in the time of its crisis.

But here we are confronted with the most challenging issue — the issue of translation. The constructive power of language to address the world via language that has been crucial to man's survival in the face of ineluctable biological constraints is complicated by the diversity

of languages, while each of them maps the world differently. This means that each language structures and organizes reality in its own way, thereby determining the components of reality that are peculiar to this given language. In our time of exceeding globalization, the issue at stake is: how are we able to overcome the existing barriers of the particular linguistic realities and enter into a meaningful dialogue based on common roots?

This issue arises, argues George Steiner, in the larger and more habitual sense when two languages meet. "That there should be two different languages, that there should been, at a rough estimate, more than twenty thousand spoken on this planet, is the Babel-question. Why should *homo sapiens sapiens*, he asks, genetically and physiologically uniform in almost all respects, subject to identical biological-environmental constraints and evolutionary possibilities, speak thousands of mutually incomprehensible tongues, some of which are set only a few miles apart?" (Steiner, 1998: XII–XIII). It is evident that "the increasing domination of an Anglo-American Esperanto across the planet" looks to be obvious and possibly irreversible: "Science, technology, commerce, and world-finance speak more or less American English... Throughout most of the underdeveloped world, this speech is the only foreseeable escalator to economic and social emancipation. What matters more, the 'languages' of computers, the meta-linguistic codes and algorithms of electronic communication which are revolutionizing almost every facet of knowledge and production, of information and projection, are founded on a sub-text, on a linguistic 'pre-history', which is fundamentally Anglo-American (in the ways in which we may say that Catholicism and its history had a foundational Latinity) (Steiner, 1998. Ibid: XVII).

In order to confront this confusing reality, we need to address the humanities as the only niche and possibility to resist the destructive process of the still dominating illusions that in each particular language we might expect equal efforts of getting authentic access to the roots of Greek tradition. And in this case, we need to start with understanding its basic notions. William Richardson insists in this context, for instance, that Heidegger's claim that the term *logon* in the Greek conception of human being as *zoon logon echon* should be understood as "discourse" rather than "reason", that is, human being as *parlêtre* rather than as "rational animal." What would have happened to the metaphysical tradition if logos, as Aristotle understood it, had

been translated originally as "discourse" (or its equivalent) rather than as *ratio*/"reason"/ *Vernunft*, must remain pure speculation, but it is very clear that for Heidegger any new inception of philosophy should include that type of question as grist for its mill: an another beginning "can only happen... by our taking upon ourselves the effort to transform man, and thereby traditional metaphysics, into a more originary existence, so as to let the ancient fundamental questions spring forth anew from this" (Richardson, 2006: 101). It is highly important during this process to escape the temptation of finding terms which pretend to express the full radiance of lived experience of the ancient times and fix it in terminology for possible ubiquitous operations.

We should not limit the understanding of the issue of translation to its habitual perception. Roman Jacobson differentiates between interlingual translation, which consists in "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language" and intralingual translation, which is "an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language." (cit. after Sallis. 2002: 23) It means that "the most difficult task is always the translation of one's own language into its ownmost word. That is why, for example, the translation of the German thinker into the German language is especially difficult — because there reigns the tenacious prejudice to the effect that we who speak German would understand the German word without further ado, since it belongs, after all, to our own language, whereas, on the contrary, to translate a Greek word we must in the first place learn that foreign tongue" (Warnek. 2006: 61).

Dealing with translation as the way of genuine interpretation of the meaning of a text, we also need to recognize the limitation of the particular national languages and their corresponding spiritual environment, which do not always have the capacity to express its meaningful content without getting access to the roots of the expressed meaning and the creation within the particular linguistic tradition of a meaningful content of another linguistic reality.

It results in a painful recognition that within the coalescing "of interpretation with intra- and interlingual translations... we may relinquish the possibility of an absolute transfer of the keywords into English. Rather than striving for the absolute transfer of these keywords, we should aim for a more modest but obtainable goal of using words that do not purport to replace the German originals but merely approximate them. In short, we should abandon the notion of an absolute transfer

in favor of an approximate translation". (Emad, 2007: 24) Very often we are confronted here with the existence of linguistic norms in one language which do not apply in the sphere of other languages. When we ignore it, we inevitably distort the meaning of the text.

In the chapter "*The story of a Comma*" from his book *The Responsibility of the Philosopher,* Gianni Vattimo mentions, for instance, his attempt to render into Italian the meaning of a sentence from Gadamer's well famous book "*Wahrheit und Methode*": "Sein, das verstanden werden kann, ist Sprache" ("Being that can be understood is language" — AM). Vattimo's attempt to keep commas from the original text "even if their presence in the original German is dictated by grammatical conventions that do not apply in Italian (or English), where they strictly speaking should be omitted" was incorrect. But when Vattimo raised the issue of such translation with Gadamer himself, Gadamer disagreed because there was a risk of being misunderstood. He was convinced that "Some readers, for example, might wrongly infer that there was a Being that was incomprehensible and that was different from language" (Vattimo. 2000: 56–57).

Theorizing about human life, our attempts to address it within the constraints of conceptuality carries with it the danger of its distortion which is being inevitably paid by disastrous political, social, and economic consequences. In this context, Dennis Schmidt reminds us of the necessity to discover the heritage of the Greek tradition in its close relationship with the Greek tragedy which can open to us the destiny, vulnerability and fragility of the human being to which all of us are exposed and which is no subject to any sort of knowing. Tragic arts, "according to Greek tragedy, is the source of human greatness and ruin at once. In a celebrated choral ode in Sophocles' *Antigone* this is characterized as *to deinon*. This word, according to Heidegger, will name the secret that belongs to tragedy and the knowledge that cannot be grasped, only suffered. It is a difficult word, as Heidegger argues, it is the lack of this word that remains the obstacle for any understanding of the ancient world. Translations of this world (in English they range from "wondrous" to "strange", "enormous" and even "monstrous") do in fact serve as a kind of a litmus test for the reception of tragedy" (Schmidt, 2001: 15).

Facing such a challenge, we should learn lessons from Hölderlin's translations of the language in Sophocles tragedies not simply rendering it into German but attempting "to rejuvenate the German language"

and "to teach the German language to speak Greek. But, of course, such language would not simply be ancient Greek again. No restoration of an ancient, the dead, language or culture is intended here; rather, some new language, something hitherto unheard, unspoken, is to be the language of these translations." (Schmidt, 2001: 150)

Far from being the issue of any sort of merely academic research, we are facing here the basic principle of positioning human being in the world, which has determined the Western tradition from the ancient times through Francis Bacon's "knowledge is power" up to Nietzsche's "will to power", and to our excessive admiration of the power of present technologies with their promise of illusionary confidence or control over our lives. Today, as we approach the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, we must recognize that the mere continuation of this tradition which has brought us to the stage of deep crisis, without radical questioning its very nature, is nothing but a demonstration of our own irresponsibility and the loss of human dignity.

The greatest temptation in our attempts to address the Greek heritage consists in feeling our alleged superiority based on the advancement of knowledge and technological achievements of our time. We ignore herewith the warnings of Simone Weil in her brilliant essay on *Iliad* that the power given to man could bring dangerous consequences if it is not recognized in its limits. She applies the notion of "geometry" as the notion determining the very nature of human destiny used by Greeks, as it was presented in Homer's *Iliad*, to demonstrate that the misuse of force is inevitably brings punishment and claims that since that time European languages have lost the meaning of geometry and our presently application of geometrical notions is limited only to material things but not to morality as a means of measure (Weil: 2006).

That is why the potential to rediscover the Greek heritage in its authentic form becomes so crucial for us at the present time. And its importance is not simply dictated by our academic interests to preserve the tradition of a bygone era. We should understand that "the turn to Greece is propelled by the desire to arrive at an ethical idea that is far-reaching enough to serve as a response to times of crisis in the present age. Given the sense that our present crisis is sufficiently severe and profound to be called a crisis of the fundaments of Western culture, such an idea must clearly be revolutionary and

radical in its reach" (Schmidt, 18). However, if the situation with access to the Greek heritage has been brought presently to such a state of confusion even in the landscape of some "major" European languages, what could be expected when we find ourselves immersed in the linguistic realities of other traditions? Is it possible to hope that, in each particular case, similar efforts could be made to deal with the Greek heritage in its utmost authentic forms? How, then, would it be possible to face the reality of interaction between linguistically isolated worlds? To what extent can we avoid the danger of oversimplifying the richness of human's experience by the newly arisen enthusiasm for the language of AI which is expected to solve all our human problems? These questions demand our attention and arduous attempts to think them through in order to arrive at a better grasp of which ways out of the crisis can be imagined.

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Anatoli Mikhailov

John Sallis: In Memoriam

This monograph was already in process of being prepared for publication when we received the sad news of John Sallis' death. He died on February 18, 2025.

John Sallis (1938–2025) was called the "dean" of continental philosophy in the United States and is one of the foremost thinkers in the phenomenological, hermeneutic and deconstructive traditions of philosophy. Some time will be needed to properly understand the heritage of what has been done by John Sallis far beyond philosophy as a discipline. His Collected Writings will include more than 40 volumes, he also edited many, e.g. "The Philosophical Vision of Paul Klee" (2014). His works have been translated into more than a dozen languages, including Chinese and Japanese: "Shades — of Painting at the Limit" (1998), "Force of Imagination", "The Sense of the Elemental" (2000), "The Verge of Philosophy" (2008), "Transfigurements. On the True Sense of Art" (2008), "The Return of Nature. On the Beyond of Sense" (2016).

John Sallis was the founding editor of *Research in Phenomenology*, the premiere Journal in this field of research. He also co-founded the *Ancient Philosophy Society* and in the mid-1970s, and the *Collegium Phaenomenologicum*, which brings together leading scholars of continental European philosophy and graduate students from around the world each year in Umbria, Italy. He also had a lifelong commitment to the interpretation of the Platonic texts. His early monumental work "Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogue" and his book "Chorology. On Beginning in Plato's Timaeus" provoked the movement into philosophy which coincides with the beginning of philosophy itself.

One cannot underestimate the importance of Sallis' scholarship for the appreciation of music, painting, and sculpture, and for his ability to reunite philosophy with poetry and literature. His works are truly unique within the current landscape of research in humanities. Particularly illuminating was his approach to the issue of imagination — not as activity created by a sovereign and autonomous subject

but as a human response to nature: "The song of the mountain conveys a teaching. It is a teaching concerning the power of the earth, the secret strength of things, and the force of imagination" (Sallis 2000: 5). In his reference to Shelley's poem "Mont Blanc", he speaks of imagination as an echo and articulation of poetic reaction to "The secret Strength of things which govern thought" (2000: 3). Here we are approaching a proper understanding of the nature of Kant's notion of the sublime and the problem of the term "*Kraft*" as presented in Kant's last Critique.

I had the luck of meeting John Sallis on various occasions in the US and Germany at the conferences on phenomenology and Heidegger philosophy, where I have always been deeply impressed by his extraordinary ability to articulate the issues of thinking which were far from being common and were highly unusual within the tradition dominated by an analytical thought. In particular, he deserves gratitude and appreciation for rendering the ideas of Heidegger's heritage not properly known in the Anglo-Saxon world before the seventies of the last century.

It is most remarkable that only a few months before his death, his book *Heidegger's Ontological Project. On Being and Time was* published by Indiana University Press in 2024. This book is a result of John Sallis' long time engagement with the Continental thought which was significantly determined by Martin Heidegger. He was perfectly aware of the challenges of confronting Heidegger's way of thinking — highly unusual in formulating even in its own language, barely translatable into any other languages already famous in his breakthrough book *Being and Time* (1927), starting from the basic notion of *Dasein*. That is why along with the available translation of the text by Macquarrie and Robinson from 1962, the translation by Joan Stambaugh of 1996 and its revised edition under the direction of Dennis J. Schmidt, published in 2010, John Sallis extensively uses the original German text with his numerous commentaries which could be helpful to anybody who confronts this text and deals with the challenge of its understanding. However, he was well aware of the nature of the challenges in this particular case, firstly because we are dealing with a thinker who resists any attempt to render his thought in interpretations in any other languages.

In this context, it is worth recalling the experience of one of Heidegger's students, Leo Strauss, who belonged to the generation

of the most prominent scholars of political theory around the middle of the last century. Leo Strauss who, along with Hans-Georg Gadamer, Hannah Arendt, Karl Löwith, and many others, is one of the most prominent thinkers of the twentieth century, writes in his letter to Franz Rosenzweig about the importance of Heidegger's thought, when comparing his impressions of Heidegger's lectures with Max Weber and his passionate devotion to science, says: "in comparison with Heidegger, Weber appeared to me as an "orphan child" in regard to precision and probing and competence" (Strauss 1989: 28), "Heidegger alone brought about such a radical change in philosophical thought as is revolutionizing all thought in Germany and continental Europe and is beginning to effect even Anglo-Saxony" (1989: 27).

At the same time, Strauss was aware of his strong statement: "The only question of importance, of course, is the question whether Heidegger's teaching is true or not." And he raises this issue pertinent to any sort of interpretation: "But the very question is deceptive because it is silent about the question of competence — of who is competent to judge. Perhaps only great thinkers are really competent to judge the thought of great thinkers. Heidegger made a distinction between ... the thinker and the scholar" (1989: 29). The conclusion to which Strauss arrives is extremely relevant to any attempt to interpret the main persons who constitute the tradition of thought and might even become disruptive to it. In this context, I believe John Sallis belongs to those rare personalities who demonstrated his ability to cope with such a challenge.

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After conducting a seminar at EHU in Minsk, John Sallis expressed to me on several occasions his vivid memory of his first time lecturing in a country of the post-Soviet space. In one of his letters he wrote: "I have often thought of my stay at the EHU in Minsk, which for me was extremely enlightening as regards the social and political problems that we all must try to confront today. I remember, for instance, having long discussions with students from remote areas such as Siberia and realizing how difficult life could be under an authoritarian regime. But I also remember the joy of seeing many of the students experience an intellectual awakening. Without your leadership and sacrifice these

experiences would not have been possible. For what you have done, you deserve the utmost respect." My attempts to engage him in one of our conferences when we were already in Vilnius failed because of the spread of the Covid but he responded immediately to the invitation to our recent conference. All of us who met him should be grateful for his presence in our lives.

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Jeremy Adelman

Between Displacement and Renewal

— 1 —

The European Humanities University is an exceptional university, a beacon in dark times. Its fate can be viewed in two ways. Exceptional can mean unique, reflecting an experience that cannot be replicated. It can also mean extreme — living at an edge condition that reveals features of the system as a whole because it is dramatic. I am not well positioned to probe a narrative of EHU as a unique, stand-alone, university. But after several years of working with colleagues at EHU teaching world history together across borders, and having worked for years in the United States and the United Kingdom, I do have some sense of what EHU represents at the extreme, what it reveals about conditions at the limits of liberal education under assault as part of a larger saga about the generalized decline of authority in Western societies.

The European Humanities University faces a triple threat. It is committed to teaching *humanities* education when the humanities have been besieged by self-doubt for years, when citadel *universities* are under assault, and when the very definition and ethics of *Europe* is in doubt. How to stand behind a university committed to cosmopolitan values when nativism is on the rise? How to validate a small university with roots in one country when it is forced to relocate to another and compete for survival in non-native soils? What is the fate of a university in exile, when its forced displacement was only one, perhaps the most, dramatic blow in a context of multiplying challenges in Belarus, across Central Europe, and beyond?

These are basic questions. None have easy answers. But at their core is a fundamental paradox: universities committed to freedom of thought and expression make them welcoming institutions — but welcoming institutions are vulnerable to the exclusionary pressures of states that make them legally viable and sustainable. In this sense, EHU is an extreme example of "edge" conditions that reveals wider facets of higher education in liberal societies. Expelled from Belarus for

its scholarly commitments, it represents an extreme, not an unusual, condition of what is afflicting universities elsewhere.

This paradox is not absolute. Modern states have known that pure exclusion and repression of universities cripples their economic dynamism, so there are limits. The repression is selective and strategic; it is misleading to see hostile and intolerant states as having "declared war" against universities (as one hears now, all too often, in the United States in the Trump 2.0 era). Hostile states target some universities extolling some values in some locations — which is one reason why the hostility is effective; it drives wedges into a loosely joined system and inhibits any collective action.

By the same token, universities are not above their own tribalist habits that exclude. One can think of two sources that universities have been uniquely responsible for. The first is what has been lumped as part of the "woke" turn, the affection for critique as dogma, even repudiating claims to produce insights by testing theories in favour of moralizing and crusading. One anthropologist has recently argued that the "embrace of activism over science" is a perilous spiral. She calls it "normativity creep," in which performing activism takes the place of theory or masquerades as theory (Rubin 2025: 392). This issue has received so much attention that we needn't dwell on it here. The second has a deeper taproots in history of the disciplines when the modern university took shape in the nineteenth century. After 1945, the rush to professionalize produced decades of pursuing disciplinary habits of methodological purisms, which inhibit what Albert O. Hirschman called "trespassing." Disciplines like economics and anthropology got caught up in internalist debates about method; even more open disciplines like history and literature developed their privates codes. This too has been the subject of so much debate that it needn't be rehearsed here. What is important to note is that the scholars themselves played a part in raising barriers to entry and exit to be an economist or a historian, and this had the effect of splintering the value of professional disciplinary pursuit from their social significance.

So: we needn't idealize universities as intrinsically open institutions; they too are prone to internalize their own modes of closure. Nonetheless, the tension holds true that universities, especially in a world of relatively free-flowing knowledge, default to openness while states are more bounded structures committed to the welfare of relatively bordered communities.

This paradox is highlighted in dark times. Envisioning a cosmopolitan, open EHU in light of its past begs wider questions about the purpose of the modern university in dark times, how to imagine a narrative for the future when the future is bereft of light. Consider these compounding challenges inscribed in the very name European Humanities University; all three words point to deep schisms and contested meanings. First, consider a university committed to the idea of a humanistic canon when canon-sceptics prevail in humanities departments while canon-champions take sanctuary in "civilizational" and nationalist outposts to expunge the cosmopolitan heritage of the Enlightenment (without even acknowledging the sleight of hand in the warp speed of social mediatized "debate"). Next comes the idea of "Europe" itself, contested as either pathologically imperialist and racist or doomed. Then there are the more prosaic but seemingly intractable problems of sustaining a university—so prosaic they never make headlines, but they do induce ulcers among administrators worrying about payroll, departments, and students as resources shrink or grow more precarious.

What is one to do with learning committed to fostering critical thinking, creativity, appreciation of "intangibles" like beauty or a well-turned phrase — faced with a headlong stampede to offer training in marketable skills, when universities and disciplines are evaluated and ranked by their ability to promote individual returns measured in personal income and not long-term social improvement or wisdom?

In this sense, the crisis provoked by being forced into exile unfolds against a backdrop of pressures and slow-burning crises of intellectual and institutional survival. The crises have only been augmented by rising authoritarianism. There is not a word in the name of the European Humanities University that is not troubled, contested, in doubt. But perhaps from doubt can emerge new rays of light and a renewed sense of purpose.

— II —

First, consider the trouble of the humanities in the context of changes and choices facing higher education. An epochal change is upon higher education, one which requires a willingness to probe fundamental purposes. The drama of EHU represents a kind of extreme case that illuminates a wider set of challenges because it is so dramatic. As a Canadian

educated in Britain and having spent many years in South America before moving to the United States and lately returning to Britain, I was part of, without being aware of it, the rise of the open university concept, one that promoted ever more cross-border mobility, cultural exchange, and expanded international learning of "foreign" languages and an expanded repertoire of a global canon — one which assigned Plato and John Stuart Mill while adding Mary Wollstonecraft, Gabriel García Márquez, and Edward Said to the idea of a core syllabus.

What was once taken for granted eventually came under assault. Recent years, especially since the global financial crisis of 2008 and spreading malaise about globalism, brought more anxiety about dwindling student interest in the humanities. The canon came under assault for presuming an "authoritative" corpus, led above all by humanists who challenged the verticalist script for being singular, prescribed, and exclusive. And yet, the more that "critical" humanities sidelined old-fashioned "canonic" humanities, the more students voted with their feet, slowly choosing courses on computer coding over comparative literature, financial economics over art history. It became harder and harder for university administrators to justify allocating resources to the humanities as students defected from them.

Nor was this just a problem facing public institutions that are forced to operate on tighter margins. Even the high-end universities for the global selectorate faced the problem. As Chair of Princeton's History Department, a well-endowed, sheltered, world-ranked unit, I watched the numbers of enrolments and majors start to sag. My successors had no better luck turning around the trend. Within fifteen years, the student:faculty ration dropped from 3:1 to 1:1, though we were buffered by the University's endowment — which is now being threatened by a White House wanting to wield tax hikes on the rich institutions. Nor was Princeton humanities unique. Yale's famous archaeology department currently has two majors (Geldzahler 2025). Any appeal to a dean or provost to grow in a new direction to keep up with novel fields, was bound to fall upon deaf ears. In 2023, Nathan Heller profiled the plight of English literature in *The New Yorker*. It begins with a shocker: in 2012 Arizona State University boasted 953 English majors; a decade later, the number had fallen to 578 (Heller 2023). The numbers and downward sloping curves repeat themselves across the American landscape.

The downward trend is especially perilous when juxtaposed with rising costs. There is no need here to rehearse the well-known "cost

disease" inherent in higher education; like orchestral music, universities defy the rules of economies of scale (because marginal costs rise faster than inflation in labour-intensive sectors). Over the past half-century, tuition in American universities has risen fourfold . The result is that, from 2003 to the eve of Covid-19, student loans have soared from 10% to 33% of all non-mortgage debt in the United States. They represent the largest single slice of private debt after homeownership; the average borrower balance tops $40,000. They also represent the largest single cause of debt delinquency and courts are now flooded with debt default cases — and the American taxpayer de facto holds the bag for bailouts (The Economist 2025).

Qualifiers are in order. The cost disease afflicts STEM fields above all, but it does force administrators to hunt for easy cuts; the humanities are a bit like open prey in a savannah populated with hungry, carnivorous, provosts and deans. The American fiscal nightmare is extreme but not singular. For a private institution in the public service, like EHU, dependence on a mixture of fees, public subvention, and ever-more insecure philanthropy for survival means that it is relentlessly pressed to justify its value just as humanities' value is in doubt.

And nor is this an especially American phenomenon. Costs in Europe have not risen by quite as much, in large part thanks to under-investment and compressed salaries. But they have been rising and are born directly by tax-payers (as opposed to the indirect, privatised, American mode) — which poses its own perils of dwindling public support, tighter budgets, excruciating trade-offs with other cost-disease afflicted sectors, especially health care. Britain, where margins are much tighter than the US and up to a third of its universities are near the edge of bankruptcy (which means that serious cuts are coming — and you can guess where), has something called a Department of Education (unlike the US, where the Education Department got thrown into the wood-chipper by President Donald J. Tump and his billionaire-aide, Elon Musk, two champions of subtlety, in the name of "government efficiency"). This British Department issued a Report in 2023 that estimates the "value" of higher education Bachelors' degrees measured in earnings premiums over a lifespan of a graduate. The data are revealing — and sobering. Thankfully, they suggest that getting a BA is at least rewarding. Students who go to university are better off in the long-run than those who don't. That's a relief: at least going to university if worthwhile.

But the reveal for the humanities is dispiriting. The personal returns on education in the creative arts, humanities, and social care are not just lower than all other fields, but they are negative for men. Young male students actually earn *less* over their lifetimes by studying philosophy than if they had gone to work in an Amazon warehouse at eighteen. At least for women, the "net discounted lifetime returns" are *only* zero if they study languages or creative pursuits; it's a toss-up whether to study Classics or do shifts for Amazon (Britton et al. 2023). As universities are compelled to adopt the rhetoric of flexibility, technically-focused provision, responsiveness to employer needs, and "price competition among providers," (among the ingredients of the word salad that has come to dominate how we think about universities), what's a "European Humanities University" to do when the urge to teach applicable knowledge replaces creation, when marketable skills are the index of success?

Before despondent readers turn to their smartphones for some relief from this doomism, it is worth considering some caveats. How one measures decline in the humanities depends on one's benchmarks. One well-known dismal report revealed that from the 1960s to 2020s the "the proportion of UK students studying Humanities subjects fell from around 28 per cent to around 8 per cent of all students." It echoed similar apocalyptic news in North America. But it turns out that Chemistry, Physics, and Biology also slumped from around 55 to 25 per cent of all students. The fact is, that absolute numbers in legacy disciplines like Physics or History remained fairly constant; the great surge in students flocking to universities meant entry into new subject areas that did not exist before the great legacy disciplines were formed: health and human services like Nursing over Biology, Finance over Physics, Communications over Literature. Is this a "crisis" or an evolution and diversification in the knowledge landscape as more students entered the system and the system responded to the increasing complexity of society?[3]

The one area where we know for sure that the Anglo-spheric universities have watched a flight from Humanities is in "Modern Languages," the learning of non-English languages and literatures. The reasons for this are complex, but are generally attributed to the rise

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[3] For a good analysis, see Mandler, P. (2021), September 28). (Yet another) crisis of the humanities. *HEPI*. https://www.hepi.ac.uk/2021/09/28/yet-another-crisis-of-the-humanities/

of Globish-English as the new global tongue thanks to the power of globalization, the internet, and American social media technologies.

It may well be that humanities fields are returning to an equilibrium they once had in the mid-1970s. After modest absolute growth in numbers in the 1980s and 1990s, universities allowed their capacities to expand incrementally, but when absolute numbers dropped back down to the 1970s — and relative numbers in other, more "applied" fields, soared — higher education institutions were faced with an excess capacity in the humanities and pressed to develop more capacity in non-humanities. The result was a distributional struggle within the university sector. And universities as relatively horizontal, relatively self-governed, institutions have enormous difficulty self-engineering a transformation.

Now, add to the drama a long-term secular demographic trend of a slowly, but gathering, shrinkage in the traditionally university-aged population. Where this is most alarming is Japan, the proverbial canary in the coal mine. Often called the "super-ageing crisis," it points to a decisive inflexion point, which in the case of Japan happens to be 2025. In the next four decades, Japan's population will fall by one quarter. Already, a third of its population is over 65. In five years' time, the number of university-age students will dip under 800,000 (compared to 1.2 million in 2013). That represents an almost 40 per cent drop; some of the country's many private universities are now shuttering. All universities are scrambling to make up with foreign students, a big challenge for a country where few outside Japan learn even basic Japanese (Ismailov 2024). And who will pay for this, Japanese citizens or learners from Indonesia who enter the system with lower incomes to start?

And if 2025 is Japan's cliff, 2033 is the United States'. That is the year that demographers predict (and this was before Trump's embargo on immigrants began) that the number of 18-year olds graduating from high schools begins to shrink so that by 2038, there will be 650,000 fewer students entering universities than there are now. In just five years, that dip will represent the entire cohort of all of Japan's university population. In the US, there are already 2.7 million fewer students in universities now than there were when Covid-19 struck (Marcus 2025). Europe's trends are similar, except that there was a boost in enrolment because women lagged for so long entering universities before the 1990s; now that that surge has levelled

up, it is expected that Europe's trends will follow Japan's, only to be made up with foreign students.

Simply put, there are too many classrooms in the wrong corners of the globe and not enough in the areas where they are in demand. And this mis-match in capacities especially afflicts the humanities.

In this setting, where does one begin to think about renewal of such an important humanities university, a shining lamppost of learning as the skies darken — even before considering the challenge of displacement and legal and financial survival? From within and without, doubt has spread, now compounded by uncertainties about what "artificial" intelligence bodes for the future of the meaning of human.

One way out of the doomist loop is to reframe the crisis of the humanities as a moment of growing pains, a long, difficult, transition. Indeed, we might add that the current storm around the boundaries separating artificial from human intelligence is an opportunity to probe questions that humanists themselves are well-positioned to lead. Not least because the humanities are human-centred in their subjects and questions they pose.

We might thereby see that a once-heroic self-image of the humanities as a foundation for critical thinking, interpretative skills, and ability to be perspectival (which includes an ability to learn about and from strangers), needs some retooling and rethinking — not abandonment.

How to start this conversation about humanities in dark times might start by questioning the old containers of the "History" or "Literature" department or major, those familiar silos of professionalization that took shape in the late nineteenth century. The challenge then is to think the integration of the humanities into the general curriculum rather than defend their separable, disciplinary, identities. Here, the creativity, openness, and experimental style of the EHU needs to be underscored as a model for the rest to learn from. Not least because this style has been honed under very tough conditions, which brings me to a second source of crisis: the place of the university.

— III —

Now, consider the problem of displacement. If the challenge of the humanities cannot be reduced simply to a depreciation of their

value, the threats they face are, however, an index of the ways in which university autonomy and authority are menaced. What is the place and fate of a university positioned in the jaws of a crisis of *the* university as an institution? It would be convenient if we could pose the crisis of liberal, European, humanism as the result of an authoritarian revival. Alas, we can't. Indeed, one might say that the authoritarian revival is equally an effect of a longer-term process of authority. Hannah Arendt once argued that liberals sacrificed to radicals the principle that social progress required the demise of undemocratic forms of authority — like parents at home, or teachers in the classroom. When it came to learning, she worried that "education without authority" in the name of progressive change would lead "to a re-evaluation of the very concept of authority." This would drain learning outcomes and spur a neo-conservative reactions that called for restored hierarchy as a social crusade. She was in this regard, as in so many others, prophetic (Arendt 1968a).

The performative battle over "free speech" has degenerated into a war between protestors on the Left who disrupt speakers and classes exploring ideas they disapprove of and conservatives who crack down on speech-acts they see as Trojan horses of wokism, Marxism, and a motley of treasonous isms. Ironically, both activist sides — hyper-powered by normativity creep — agree on one thing: the university cannot be entrusted to safeguard its own principles of free thought and expression and requires the crusaders to sweep in and restore the university's moral (not scientific) purpose.

Authority and authoritarianism, however, are separate things that illiberals of the Left and Right have deliberately blurred in order to attack the university as the seedbed of complicity or sedition, depending on which end of the spectrum is your tribe. To be clear: authority is neither the exercise of coercion or persuasion, but the practice of a hierarchy (which is why it is at odds with egalitarianism and democracy) in which those on top have a legitimate claim to obedience. In the case of education it is because a teacher or scholar has access to knowledge and skills that pupils do not (yet).

Scholarly authority is what is now being torn down. Authoritarians claim obedience but dispense with the legitimacy and, as we are seeing ever more glaringly in the United States nowadays, wave away even the pretence that knowledge and evidence are preconditions for hierarchy in the classroom, lab, or educational governance.

Though Arendt had her eye on the pressures on modern universities to be change-agents in the Cold War, she was of course well aware that pressures on universities in inter-War Europe had led to persecutions, exile, and mass disappearances. This brings us to the problem of exile. In this respect, the EHU experience as a reminder to the forgetful of a deeper and more profound heritage of the place of universities in the making of the modern world as homes for scholarly authority. They represent institutions that are frequently at odds with other sources of authority that, when pressed, seek control over and submission of scholars.

As a gathering point for scholars and students committed to the formation of knowledge and pursuit of learning, often in defiance of rulers, universities have always figured among the first institutions to be targeted by autocrats and purveyors of normative orthodoxy, whether it was the Inquisition, Nazis, Politburos, or McCarthyism — or latter-day fundamentalists like Viktor Orbán or J.D. Vance. Because they have been habitually open to fellow scholars no matter their creed or passport, universities have always been vulnerable institutions.

Indeed, universities have been on the run since they came into being. Students and scholars at the University of Paris were caught in the cross-hairs of struggles between bishops, the Pope, the French king, and drunken crowds — until the Bishop of Paris finally excommunicated students and their masters. I currently work in a university founded by scholars fleeing persecution from Oxford 800 years ago, which was in turn founded by scholars who took flight from Paris. Flight and recreation have been a constant cycle in the longue durée of the university — as long there was always a more open society ready to receive the intellectual fugitives.

This heritage has grown, if anything, in the modern day, as the capacities for state control and repression and the machinery of intolerance have grown more lethal.

The current incarnation of the "western" university has, to a large extent, presumed mobility, committed to the freedom of flow of ideas as well as the freedom of scholars and students to seek discoveries in places where they are most welcome to pose basic questions and challenge verities. One might say that *displacement*, the movement from one spot to another, has been a condition for open learning. Certainly, it was the constraints on intellectual mobility and exchange

during the Cold War that hampered intellectual life in authoritarian countries and sowed seeds for a growing dissent movement.

By the same token, because they were open institutions, they also were more receptive and welcoming to scholar-strangers. From their origins, they took in scholars from other parts, often from homes where they were persecuted and hounded. One might say that they were designed as sanctuaries — if not always for free thinkers at least for those who found their thinking discordant with political or religious authorities. By the twentieth century, the practice of creating institutions designed to welcome strangers, took root. Two standouts are the New School in New York and the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, while formally not a university (though it has close connections to Princeton University) created in the 1930s to welcome scholars fleeing fascism. After the Second World War, Munich became the improbable home the UNRRA University specifically for displaced peoples in order to restore the values of internationalism and humanism in the wake of nationalist inhumanism. Born in the Deutsches Museum of Science and Technology and funded by the UN Relief and Rehabilitation Administration, it had over 2,000 students at its height enrolled in an institution designed as (in the words of one of its advocates) "a training ground for cosmopolitanism" (Holian 2008: 167–195) Ahead of its time, UNRRA University lasted only two years as funding dissipated and refugee-students found new homes. In the 1970s, the Ford Foundation invested in fellowships and think tanks for social scientists and humanists expelled from universities under the dictatorships in Latin America; when democracies were eventually restored, many of those scholars returned to the university to rebuild it (Adelman & Fajardo 2016: 3–22). In recent decades, that identity of shelters for the displaced faded as an institutional identity, but networks filled some of the gaps, like the Scholars-at-Risk program.

Lately, however, the logic of authoritarian purging and control has changed. Nowadays, it is not just individual scholars that are at-risk, but increasingly institutions are at-risk. It's not just scholars and students that are forced to flee — but entire institutions. In this sense, the fate of EHU over twenty years ago was a harbinger. In recent years, entire university systems have been suppressed, or forced underground in Russian and Myanmar, or evicted, like EHU, as in the case of Orbán's expelling of the Central European University. No longer are individuals persecuted or administrations swapped out to make

them more compliant (though that does occur). States' exclusionary habits and assertions of authority over scholarly authority have fastened on the territorial existence of the university *tout cour*. Even under the darkest days of the Latin American dictatorships, universities were "intervened," but for the most part left functioning. Under President Donald J. Trump, the assault on Harvard and Columbia's autonomy follows the same script. But what is clear is that suppressing scholarly authority is the condition for, and often the first act of, displacement of whole institutions.

If the EHU was a harbinger and an extreme, does displacement offer an opportunity to rethink the humanities and for renewal of the purpose of authority of scholarship? Is it possible to imagine the assault on the institution of the university as a moment to revitalize its scientific mission, to reverse the normativity creep and storms of symbolic exchange that parade as knowledge?

— IV —

Finally, a *European* humanities university. In a sense, this adjective encapsulates the two previous sections: the humanities were, after all, a European invention and to some extent an academic export. (Japanese universities, for instance, have "humanities" divisions that echo the forms they took first in Europe). And the displacement of EHU and the production of academic exile has been an especially European phenomenon that has diffused. What is European about EHU? Here, as well, my suggestion is that this be posed as an open question as an invitation to think about the region's cosmopolitan and contested heritage.

Seen from Minsk (or Prague, or Budapest, or Vilnius), to pose the question of what is European about a humanities university is situate both as part of a long arc of a historical experiment in cross-border exchange since Roman Christianity. But with a difference: it is to be witness and participant in the experiment from its margins, to engage in making of a synonym of Europe, the "West," from its fringes or its borderlands while still self-identified as a part of Europe. As Milan Kundera once noted, "the moment Hungary is no longer European — that is, no longer Western — it is driven from its own destiny, beyond its own history." (Kundera 2023: 37) Of course, this begs the question

about the contours of this Europe/West. Does it start at the Atlantic seaboard and end at the Urals (Kundera's imaginary), or reach westward to include the heartland of America, minus, tellingly, Mexico, or Chile (this being the imaginary of figures like J.D. Vance or the sinister "civilizationist" White House deputy chief of staff, Stephen Miller)? Or is the West the meme for something more universal, an aspiration that all too often became the means to draw a line between societies that were civilized and those that were not — the famous nineteenth century precept of international law known as "the civilizational standard." Those who met the criteria were expected to abide by its laws and norms, while those who did not were both exempt from the expectation that they might behave like civilized people and were therefore eligible for humanitarian governance. This was the justification for conquest in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The West/Europe has therefore always been a mixed bag. It would not help to invoke it as a flag for a (restored) superiority, especially when the same rhetoric of civilization and Westerness is used to justify new forms of exclusion at the hands of scribes who fret about great replacements and Christian cultural suicide. Rather, to speak about Europe/West means to ask questions about the fabric of modern society as interrogable, questionable. Not natural, divinely inspired, or rooted in some mystical tradition of peoplehood. Europe with a question mark appears in its cores of Paris or Rome mainly in moments of crisis. The West" gained currency just as its prophets predicted its demise. Declinism has been a central trope of European narration since Gibbon's epic of the decline and fall of the Roman empire as a warning against the corrupting powers of commercial society in the eighteenth century. The same gained traction after the First World War with Oswald Spengler and any number of doomsayers. The same came back in the 1970s — and the predictions of demise have been rekindled since 2015. The boundaries of this Europe/West have been notoriously fluid. From its edges, however, it always appears as a question because the boundaries have shifted. This is why Kundera sought to spotlight the place of Central Europe as a place that defined the condition of Europe as a whole. It was in that ever-shifting borderline across Central Europe that the demarcation between West and Rest moved around.

To claim a European humanities university in Minsk was to assert the place of Belarus in Europe; to retreat to Vilnius pushes the frontier west and cede the encroachment of the rest. And so it is that EHU

symbolically carries the burden to defining the frontier and meaning of Europe and what constitutes the cultural memory of that space. The positionality reveals features of the whole that are easy to miss from the vantage point of conventional cores, like Paris or Rome.

To ask what is European now is also to pose a question about the darkness of our times. Bertolt Brecht once wrote a poem called "To Posterity." Composed in the mid-1930s, in the shadow of the Great War and Nazi conquest, the poem talks about fear, slaughter, and anger "that makes the voice grow harsh." Here are the opening lines, for those who've not read it:

Indeed I live in dark ages!

A guileless word in an absurdity. A smooth forehead betokens

A hard heart. He who laughs

Has not yet heard

The terrible tidings.

Ah, what an age it is

When to speak of trees is almost a crime

For it is a kind of silence about injustice!

And he who walks calmly across the street,

Is he not out of reach of his friends

In trouble?

When to speak of trees is almost a crime. Or if not a crime, not a source of net discounted lifetime returns. Nowadays, it seems nearly incomprehensible that the debate about the university is reduced to personal lifetimes earnings of its consumer-client-students while the principles of freedom and authority are being routinely torn from the solar plexus of culture and science.

Many years after Brecht wrote this poem, Hannah Arendt returned to the theme of dark times in the late 1960s when she examined a set of writers from Karl Jaspers to Randall Jarrell, who also wrote against the backdrop of dark times. She made an important point about how to think about dark times, one that is often overlooked. There are the familiar dark times: when free-thinkers get arrested, when magazines

are forced underground, when censors screen the vocabulary of public and personal discourse. But there was also the period that preceded the calamity, when as she noted "catastrophe overtook everything and everybody." Then there's the twilight, which hasn't received as much attention, before the realities or arrest or torture, a moment in which "the highly efficient talk and double-talk of nearly all official representatives who, without interruption and in many ingenious variations, explained away unpleasant facts and justified concerns." She wanted her readers to think about this moment too, this "camouflage" spread by authorities Arendt, H. (1968b).

Darkness comes when the public realm loses its ability to reveal, to discuss, to provide space for debate, about "the affairs of men" in "deed and word" who they are and what they do. Darkness comes when the light — the illuminations — get crowded out by speech and jargon that narrows the meaning of "value" in the pretext of upholding truths while, as she noted, degrading "all truth to meaningless triviality."

This is the dark times we might consider now, when the light dims and flickers, when it weakens and it becomes harder to see, to think. When that light extinguishes at the margins, at the extremes, that is when the question of Europe becomes a question for all who prize the ability to ask questions. In this sense, the fate of the European Humanities University, a small university from a relatively small country in a big world has an outsized place in how to think about the future of the university and its meaning for humanity.

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Jeffrey Andrew Barash

The Vocation of the Humanities in an Uncertain World: The EHU seen from an Extramural Point of View

The significance of the theme of this monograph, "*Quo Vadis* European Humanities University?", as I interpret it, comes to light when it is set in relation to a more general question that has been a topic of intense debate in recent years in Europe and beyond Europe's borders: "*Quo vadis* studies in the humanities?" It is to this latter question that I will turn in this talk before dealing in the conclusion with what I take to be the more specific role of the European Humanities University.

In regard to the contemporary vocation of the humanities, it is tempting to focus on the problem of a general decline in student enrollment in all the humanities disciplines in the countries where they have traditionally been strongest. This has fueled the so-called "crisis in the humanities" to which the press has devoted a good deal of attention in recent years. Over the past three years alone, there have been a topic of many excellent analyses concerning the plight of the humanities in the United States in publications such as the *New York Times* or the *Atlantic Monthly*.[4] I will touch on this phenomenon, however, only to the extent that it relates to what I take to be the deeper issue at stake in regard to the humanities themselves in the contemporary world.

If we consider the whole range of disciplines that are generally included in humanities programs, from literature, history, philosophy,

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[4] I will cite only a few notable examples in recent publications: Ross Douthat, «Oh, the Humanities! New data on college majors confirms an old trend. Technocracy is crushing the life out of humanism,» *New York Times*, August 8, 2018; Tyler Austin Harper, «The Humanities have sown the Seeds of Their Own Destruction. If the humanities have become more political over the past decade, it is the result of pressure to prove that they are 'useful'», *The Atlantic*, December 19, 2023; Jeffrey Selingo, «As Humanities Majors Decline, Colleges Try to Hype Up Their Programs,» *The Atlantic*, November 1, 2018.

classical studies, to theology and aesthetics, it is immediately evident that the different contexts in which these disciplines emerged and were later elaborated as fields of study were very different from the context in which we live today. The question concerning the ongoing significance of the *studia humanitatis* thus involves the difficult matter of deciding how past ways of interpreting the world, as distant as they may seem from us, might retain their relevance for the attempt to comprehend the reality of the present.

The immediate difficulty of responding to this question is suggested by the radical changes themselves that have intervened over the past decades. It would reach beyond this brief paper to evoke in any detail the influence of population growth and population migration on an unprecedented scale and of the ongoing industrial and technological revolutions that have modified our modes of existence and co-existence in a common world. Among these changes, the modifications that most immediately concern the humanities may be traced to the shift from a primarily literary culture shared by small elites to the large-scale educational format of today's universities situated in a public space configured on a global scale by the new technologies of information and communication. In what follows, I will not attempt to deal with the whole range of disciplines in the humanities, but I will narrow my focus down to the examples offered by such key disciplines as historical theory, political philosophy, and literature. In this new global context, in what way might the *studia humanitatis*, however great the influence of the new technologies might be, retain a vital role?

I will begin from the observation that mass communications, if they operate on a level that is quite different from that of the literary culture of the humanities, have direct effects that are not limited to the level at which they are diffused. Their ubiquitous operation in daily life imposes a logic that assumes a generalized contemporary role due to the ways in which the *format* of information and communication configures the public sphere and predisposes specific attitudes toward the interpretation of the past. The identification of two aspects of this logic will suffice to illustrate its specific character. The first concerns the quest for immediacy in mass communication through images and figures, condensed texts, and tweets that appear on the screens of computers, smart phones, and other new forms of mass communication deployed by electronic mail, social

media, blogs, and other associated matrices of information and communication. They are in large measure geared toward transmission of the most recent present events, "breaking news" which, in its brevity, privileges the immediacy of reception among the largest possible audience. This precludes in-depth analysis of contextual details.

The format of mass communication is complemented, as a second aspect, by the algorithmic methods of artificial intelligence that propel search engines, and which have been adopted as widely-used tools in such different fields as consumer profiling, polls for the prediction of election results, battles strategies in war, or medical prognostication. The use of algorithms applies a specific logic that draws on vast reservoirs of "big data" to attain its results. Big data constantly undergo revision to adapt to the most minute variations among billions of elements that constitute its ever-growing total fund. Algorithmic methods permit prognosticators to dispense with analysis of the *content* of the data — its intrinsic *meaning* — to record myriad variations in the user data that may be correlated to infer future results. Algorithms do not *interpret* the contents of what they infer — its intrinsic *meaning* — but, on the basis of correlations, they *predict* the future evolution of a present situation (Esposito 2022: IX–XIV, 80–87).

The predominant orientation of our contemporary mass cultures, as we may readily conclude from these brief comments, highlights the immediacy of the present as it is communicated in the mass media format of images, text messages, tweets, or blogs. The past is useful in this format as a source of big data for algorithmic calculation in a process of selection, profiling, and prediction. The results of this algorithmic focus on correlations indicated by variations in the overall fund of big-data may be readily configured for transmission to the largest possible mass public. The compatibility of these two principle aspects of our contemporary information and communication systems bears witness to a common characteristic: the de-emphasis of deep-level contextual analysis.

Be this as it may, the ubiquitous contemporary modes of information and communication, however much they may dominate our everyday preoccupations, have by no means effaced the deep levels of the historical past which have lost nothing of their symbolic force as a source of contemporary group identities. Group identities, even among apparently homogeneous national groups, never

congeal in the form of monolithic entities; in accord with linguistic, religious, economic, or other distinctions, they are charged with symbolic significance sedimented in the long-term memories of successive generations. At deeper levels of the historical past, group identities are, so to speak, *fragmented*; and, to decipher the symbolic significance of their plurality, contextual analysis proves indispensible.

The specific power of the humanities, as I interpret it, lies in the ability to sound the contextual depths of linguistic and symbolic nuances that illuminate the deep levels of human interaction embracing in their complexity a plurality of points of view. As different as they may be from one another, such disciplines as historical interpretation, political philosophy, and literary creation draw their evocative force from the *contextual logic* they deploy. From Tolstoy to Marcel Proust and Vassily Grossman, from Ranke to Lucien Fevre or Reinhart Koselleck, from Tocqueville to the political writings of Max Weber, Georg Jellinek, Helmuth Plessner, or Hannah Arendt, to cite only from among the best known examples, contextual logic has provided a paradigmatic method of analysis.

Over the past half century, in the wake of the demise of the Soviet Union, the breakup of the eastern bloc, and the apparent end of the cold war, coupled with the continuing and ever increasing influence of developing countries in global politics, the political universe in which we interact has changed in ways that underscore its unforeseeable contingency. On the basis of information that was available in earlier decades, the contours of our present reality were hardly predictable. The radical changes that intervened were not limited to events and circumstances, shifting national borders, political alliances, or economic capacities; at the most fundamental level the last half century records what in German is aptly termed an "Evidenzwandel," a shift in what different collectivities, in the context of a shared world, take to be self-evident and true.

The enormous changes brought by the new technologies of information and communication are themselves among the primary movers in this change, and have brought in their wake a remarkable discontinuity between past and present. Nevertheless, the *presence* of the historical past has by no means been obliterated even where its vital potency resides in vaguely acknowledged passive undercurrents that animate fragmented group identities.

As recent events have increasingly underscored, the symbolic potency associated with the deep layers of the historical past is of particular contemporary importance in Eastern Europe. Attempts to affirm or deny the legitimacy of national sovereignty in the present conflict mobilize highly charged symbolic references to the distant historical past in which national identities are firmly anchored.

This brings me to the crux of the matter. Where deep levels of the historical past retain and revitalize a potent symbolic charge animating fragmented group perspectives over the course of many generations, they are in constant danger of falling prey to what has become all too familiar in the political landscape of the past century: the use of isolated, de-contextualized fragments drawn from the past to feed virulent political mythologies that are mobilized, alongside tanks and machine guns, as ideological arms in battle. In the face of such political mythologies, I would argue, the new technologies of information and communication, due to their distance from the contextual complexity comprising the thick layers of the historical past, provide little means for resistance to the temptations of political myth and, indeed, may be all too readily adapted to purely polemical aims. As I interpret it, the prerequisite for possible resistance to a pervasive tendency toward the over-simplification of complex realities lies first and foremost in the will to restitute the complex plurality of fragmented group perspectives through comprehensive contextual analysis. Without entertaining the illusion that such analysis might resurrect the past as it was lived by its contemporaries, contextual logic and the analysis it directs may, in my view, lay claim to a measure of *Sachlichkeit*; a certain proximity to the reality of the historical past against the backdrop of which the simplifications of political mythologies may be exposed.

It is here that the European Humanities University fulfills a singular role. Professor Mikhalov has aptly characterized its mission since 1992, following what he terms its exodus from a "sterile and ideologically isolated intellectual reality" to favor such disciplines as philosophy, theology, or art, however distant they might seem from "practically oriented professions", in promoting the "core values of a culture of democracy" (Mikhailov 2009). By adopting this role the EHU, in its intermediary position at the border of the Nato-pact countries, between the cultures of Belarus and Lithuania, casting an eye on Russia from its standpoint in the West, fulfills its unique mission.

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Natalya Mikhailova, Mariia Laktionkina

Humanities Under Siege: Rethinking Education in the Age of Technology

Background and Context

In her diary entry from December 1968, Hannah Arendt aptly described the situation with education: "Universities [as] institutions of mass society. The great number of jobs is available because of the growing number of students. This means that the student-teacher community of knowledge and truth has ceased to exist. People are hired not because they are capable of adding to knowledge but because they are needed as teachers. The "research" is hypocrisy, superfluous, and utterly irrelevant to knowledge and job alike. The masses of papers suffocate scholarship and originality. The "publish or perish" device was firstly only comical and vulgar; today it is a clear danger to all serious effort" (Arendt 2002: 703). Undoubtedly, her surgically sharp assessment of the situation more than 60 years ago applies even more to the current state of the humanities, for this plight has only worsened in the ensuing decades and has now reached global proportions. It is fair to speak of a critical decline in humanities education, under siege from commodification and technological simplification.

Fortunately, it is the crisis that provokes us to think creatively, and it is the failure that leads us to the urgent need to rethink. Thus, the binary of "crisis" and "the normal" should be transposed into every process of, first, understanding the reality we live in and, second, building up the new one that would be adequate to the way the world is at this very moment. It is exactly this process of building the new that is urgently needed nowadays since traditional concepts and approaches applied to the present and the future can no longer be based solely on the past. The transformation the education system is currently undergoing requires us to think *into* (and not merely *about*) the crisis in order to create new models for answering the most pressing challenges.

Thinking into the problem should begin with questioning. Thinking into the question of the crisis of the humanities, one is immersed into contemplating the deeper predicament of the human condition. Humanities education emphasizes that to concern oneself with the issue of education is one of the ways to concern oneself with the question of what it means to be human. Undoubtedly, being "human" does not exist in all of us merely by the fact of our birth, it has to be cultivated in the process of education which alone allows for formation and transformation of a human in us. Returning to Arendt may further illuminate what it means to be human. According to her, the fullest and most human manifestation of the world is its political realm (Arendt 1993: 263). The definitive feature of this political realm is, according to Arendt, is its space of plurality, which is defined by conflicting interests, opinions, and meanings that lead to disagreement and differences. Thus, we find it necessary to conclude that this political realm calls for deliberation, dialogue and debate in order to reach decisions. Being able to settle these disagreements and differences is one of the constitutive features of what it means to be human and is one of the primary qualities one attains via education. What complicates the situation is the problem that these actions cannot be guided by pragmatism, individualism, hedonism and cynicism — all of which, according to André Geske, dominate the modern spiritual landscape (Geske 2024: 59). According to him, we face new ethical challenges because we have lost the sense of community and responsibility. Humanities education fosters exactly these necessary aspects which can lead us towards new, more human, beginnings.

However, this potential of humanities education is significantly endangered by the domination of a technological and calculative attitude towards it. When education is not a culture of becoming human but an economic factor, it turns into pragmatic acquisition of skills, training and credentials. It teaches having to say something rather than having something to say. It teaches what to think rather than how to think. Its technology-dominated content is generic and answers questions in a preformatted template, instead of posing questions and thinking *through*. Its methodology is interested in what is common and typical, while human experience is always extraordinary, atypical. Technology readily offers answers and simplifies the world, instead of revealing its complexity. As Geske rightfully emphasizes, the problem is not the technology but the way we use it. This shows

how humanities education under the siege of commodification and technological simplification misses its purpose.

Both students and teachers before entering the space of education, have to answer for themselves first and foremost the important questions of "why am I here? what are my urgent questions? what is our common purpose?" before moving on to providing answers and content. This is what humanities education does: it does not transmit content for passive reception, but it triggers the individual transformation that is essential to re-creating meaning and re-establishing our relationship with the contemporary world.

In what follows, we would like to place the emphasis on the humanities which do not produce trained specialists, but help in forming individuals who understand how to think across the disciplines, how to apply critical judgment, how to navigate complex and conflicting worlds and how to adapt to new and unpredictable environments in the future. It means that we are concerned with the totality of man's existence, not only or primarily with some of its aspects. Such a concept can be used as a starting point for seeing the humanities as the cultivation of the human to be in us, in the process of individual efforts to meet the challenges of the media and technological age.

Why Is Interdisciplinarity More Important Than Narrow Specialization in Contemporary Conditions?

Narrow specialization often leads to a limited perspective on a given problem, depriving individuals of the ability to consider it within the context of a broader system. In contrast, an interdisciplinary approach allows for the integration of diverse fields of knowledge, uncovering hidden connections and generating innovative solutions. In an era where breakthroughs emerge at the intersection of disciplines, the ability to think broadly and flexibly becomes critically important.

Martin Heidegger, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, emphasized that technological thinking, being narrowly focused, can obscure fundamental questions of existence. He warned against a purely utilitarian approach to knowledge, arguing that understanding should encompass not only technical aspects

but also existential reflection. Thus, narrow specialization can lead to the instrumentalization of knowledge, whereas interdisciplinarity opens up deeper meanings.

In the age of technological advancement, we are increasingly confronted with depersonalization and the loss of individuality.

Edmund Husserl, in *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, highlighted the need for a broad philosophical reflection on the methods and aims of science. He argued that the division of disciplines results in the loss of a holistic understanding of the world. Phenomenology, in his view, serves as a bridge between different domains of knowledge, enabling the recognition of interconnections that remain unnoticed within narrowly focused analyses.

In today's world, where scientific, ethical, and technological challenges are increasingly intertwined, the ability to transcend disciplinary boundaries is not merely desirable but essential. Phenomenology and existentialism underscore the significance of a multidimensional approach to reality, emphasizing the formation of an individual perspective through interdisciplinarity and its methodological tools.

A Historical Precedent: The Renaissance Ideal of the Universal Human and Its Philosophical Interpretation

The concept of *homo universalis*, which emerged during the Renaissance, emphasizes the ideal of comprehensive personal development. The Renaissance individual aspired to holistic knowledge, integrating art, science, philosophy, and practical skills. Leonardo da Vinci epitomized this ideal — not only as a painter but also as an engineer, architect, anatomist, and thinker. However, the modern interpretation of this ideal takes on a new dimension, particularly in the context of twentieth-century philosophy, including phenomenology and existentialism.

A Phenomenological Perspective: The Integrity of Experience

Phenomenology, as a philosophical movement founded by Edmund Husserl, focuses on subjective experience and the intentionality

of consciousness. In this context, *homo universalis* can be viewed as an attempt to grasp the wholeness of human experience. For Husserl, consciousness does not merely passively perceive the world but actively constitutes it, structuring it into meaningful objects. The Renaissance ideal of universality can thus be interpreted as the human striving for the fullest possible disclosure of meanings, which can only be achieved through the synthesis of diverse forms of knowledge.

Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, shows in his concept of *Dasein* (being-in-the-world) that human existence is always interwoven with a multiplicity of meanings. He criticizes the Cartesian tradition, in which humans are seen as thinking subjects separate from the world. In the spirit of Renaissance universalism, true knowledge is attainable only through full engagement with the world and practical interaction with it. This stands in opposition to a narrowly specialized view of humanity in which knowledge becomes fragmented and loses its holistic nature.

The Existentialist Aspect: Freedom and Self-Realization

Existentialist philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus addressed the question of freedom and personal self-realization. According to Sartre, humans are condemned to freedom, and their essence is formed through choices and actions. In this sense, the *homo universalis* of the Renaissance embodies the ideal of a self-creating subject who does not confine themselves to a single field but seeks to open up multiple possibilities.

Albert Camus, in his exploration of the problem of the absurd, emphasized that humans cannot find ultimate meanings in the world but can create them themselves. In this context, the Renaissance individual, mastering various domains of knowledge, can be seen as defying the absurd by giving life meaning through creativity and inquiry. Camus might have interpreted universality as a means of resisting mechanistic, technological thinking that suppresses individuality and human initiative.

Humanities and Technical Knowledge: An Integrative Approach

Today's world demands the ability to combine humanities and technical knowledge, integrating analytical and creative approaches. In this regard, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's philosophy, which underscores

the significance of embodied experience and perception, highlights that knowledge does not exist in abstraction but is rooted in practice. Modern universality is not merely encyclopedic knowledge but the ability to act in various contexts, merging logical reasoning with intuition.

Even though technology dominates almost every aspect spheres of human life, the essential skills for navigating the twenty-first century stem from an interdisciplinary approach to education: communication, collaboration, critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and innovation.

Thus, the idea of *homo universalis* remains relevant today but requires philosophical reassessment. On the one hand, phenomenology helps us understand universality as a striving for holistic experience and meaningful unity. On the other hand, existentialism emphasizes the need for freedom of choice and active self-creation. In an era of hyperspecialization and technological development, the Renaissance ideal can serve as a means of overcoming knowledge fragmentation and affirming human dignity through diverse experiences.

Critical Thinking: The Human Ability to Navigate Complex Worlds

In the age of post-truth, misinformation, and digital algorithms, critical thinking is an essential skill for navigating an increasingly complex reality. Social media and digital platforms create personalized information bubbles, reinforcing users' biases. In such conditions, the ability to distinguish facts from interpretations, identify hidden assumptions, and analyze information within a broader context becomes particularly crucial.

Phenomenology and existentialist philosophy offer powerful tools for developing critical thinking, as their methodological principles and conceptual frameworks foster the analysis of perception mechanisms, interpretation, and the structuring of reality.

Phenomenology: Reduction as the Basis of Critical Analysis

Edmund Husserl viewed consciousness as a field in which reality is always given from the subject's perspective. He proposed the method of phenomenological reduction (*epoché*), which involves suspending

all preconceived assumptions and cultural or social interpretations. This method allows not only the reception of information but also the critical examination of the structures of experience that shape our understanding of the world.

In the context of critical thinking, phenomenology teaches us to question a priori beliefs and to examine phenomena in their original evidence. This approach is particularly relevant in the digital age, where information flows are shaped by algorithms designed not for truth but for user engagement.

Martin Heidegger criticized traditional forms of rationality, arguing that thinking is often based on hidden assumptions that need to be uncovered and analyzed. In *Being and Time*, he introduces the concept of *In-der-Welt-sein* (being-in-the-world), demonstrating that all knowledge is embedded in everyday practices. Recognizing this helps us critically engage with information, understanding not only its content but also the conditions of its production.

Existential Philosophy: Critical Thinking as Choice and Responsibility

The existentialist tradition places particular emphasis on personal responsibility and freedom, making it particularly valuable for the development of critical thinking.

Karl Jaspers introduced the concept of "limit situations" — moments of crisis that require a break with conventional thought patterns. In today's world of constant information flow and social conflict, the ability to transcend habitual frameworks and question one's beliefs is central to critical thinking. Moreover, questioning the responses of AI-generated content is essential to avoid drowning in imposed and often erroneous judgements.

The Human Being in the Digital Society

Modern technologies amplify phenomenological and existential challenges: individuals must navigate an informational landscape saturated with cognitive traps and algorithmic filters.

Phenomenological analysis teaches us to recognize the hidden structures of perception and to deconstruct automated patterns of thought. The existential approach emphasizes the need for personal responsibility for one's own beliefs and choices. Together, these

perspectives form a comprehensive method for critical navigation in complex realities — a method that requires constant doubt, attention to detail, and a willingness to transcend intellectual boundaries.

The future does not belong to narrow specialists but to individuals who are able to think broadly, adapt to change and make complex decisions based on critical reflection on reality. In this process, humanities education plays a crucial role in fostering intellectual flexibility, interdisciplinary thinking, and ethical awareness. Amid technological transformation and global challenges, these qualities are becoming indispensable for shaping a new generation of responsible citizens.

The Human Being in the Age of AI and the Digital Society

Modern technologies, particularly artificial intelligence, pose profound phenomenological and existential challenges. As AI surpasses human cognitive abilities in various domains, individuals must confront an emerging crisis of meaning, value, and purpose. No longer the sole bearers of intelligence, creativity, and problem-solving, humans are increasingly overshadowed by machines that process information faster, optimize decisions more efficiently, and even simulate artistic and intellectual production.

Phenomenological analysis teaches us to recognize the hidden structures of perception and to deconstruct automated patterns of thought. Yet, in an era where AI is reshaping cognitive landscapes, the very foundations of human understanding and autonomy are at stake. The existential approach, which emphasizes personal responsibility in shaping one's beliefs and choices, is now more critical than ever. If machines can outperform humans in fields once thought uniquely ours — medicine, law, art, and even philosophy — what does it mean to be human?

This reflection is closely linked to the themes explored in EHU course Digital Society where we put under close scrutiny the concept of a digital society as a solution to pressing societal challenges.

In this context, we critically examine the emergence of the digital society. Without a profound reconsideration of the fundamental principles that have historically guided human thought — many

of which have contributed to the current crisis — the digital transformation may exacerbate the existential dilemmas we face today. The themes covered in our course reflect these concerns. We explore the crisis of contemporary civilization, the impact of globalization, and the role of digital technologies in reshaping human existence. Drawing from thinkers such as Nietzsche, Weil, Musil, and Agamben, we analyze how digitalization alters the conditions of human identity and knowledge. The course also addresses the philosophical implications of language in the digital era, referencing works from Orwell, Zamjatin, and Steiner to examine the limits of translation and the transformation of linguistic meaning.

One of the central questions in our discussions is whether the digital society represents a new phase of human flourishing or merely another iteration of utopian optimism leading to unforeseen consequences. Indeed, as artificial intelligence advances, it forces us to ask further fundamental questions: Is human cognition replaceable? What aspects of our experience will remain uniquely human? And most importantly, how do we redefine meaning and purpose in a world where machines exceed our capabilities? The survival of human meaning depends not on competing with AI but on embracing the qualities that make us distinctly human — our ability to question, to create, and to imagine beyond the limits of computation.

This challenge necessitates a rethinking of education, ethics, and identity. The future belongs not only to those who master technical skills, but also to those who cultivate intellectual flexibility, interdisciplinary thinking, and ethical awareness. Humanities education plays a crucial role in this process, fostering the ability to critically engage with AI, to resist passive reliance on algorithmic decision-making, and to redefine human relevance in an era of machine intelligence.

As we have laid out, the challenges facing humanities education in the digital age require a critical rethinking of its purpose and methods. As Hannah Arendt foresaw, the commodification and technologization of education risks suffocating genuine inquiry and spiritual, social and intellectual growth. Ultimately, humanities education must persist as a foundation for human dignity and meaning in an era increasingly dominated by artificial intelligence and technological simplification.

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Vittorio Hösle[5]

What Are the Humanities and to What End Does One Study Them?[6]

Introduction

The sundering of English-language scholarship from the international community has strangled our hope. The widespread sense of crisis in the humanities, confirmed it seems by daily headlines reporting new closures of humanities departments, is symptomatic of this sundering, and the false despair it induces.

There is no really rigorous or convincing defense of the humanities in the Englishspeaking world, one that acknowledges why they are in crisis, explains the crisis, and then gives an account of what humanities really do, and thus what they ought to aim at, and how they relate to the natural sciences. Without good reasons for them, why fund the humanities? Why study them?

The German response to the crisis of the *Geisteswissenschaften* — the sciences of the human, of the mind, or the "humanities" in English — is different from the English response because the humanities are recognized as *sciences* (*Wissenschaften*) and there is a long German tradition of rigorous scholarship studying them. We are pleased to present in English for the first time a clear and profound articulation of the humanities and their value in this essay by the philosopher and historian Vittorio Hösle, who has written a book on this subject, *Kritik der verstehenden Vernunft*, which develops in depth the themes of this essay, originally published in

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6 I would like to thank my friend and colleague Carsten Dutt for his critical reading of the manuscript and numerous suggestions that were incorporated into the final version.

Hans Joas and Jörg Noller, eds., *Geisteswissenschaft — was bleibt? Zwischen Theorie, Tradition und Transformation*.

What Are the Humanities?

Today, the humanities play a role that they never had in any previous epoch of mankind: they are active in book reviews and broadcasting, i.e. in the opinion industry, and thus exert influence, among other things, on the formation of political moods. The courses of study, such as that of a cultural economist, aim right from the start at the integration of those thus educated in cultural industry and tourism; and if the well-known thesis of Odo Marquard is correct, that the humanities compensate for the damages of modernization by telling stories,[7] we may predict a bright future for them — because the damages of modernization will, of that at least we can be sure, increase considerably in this century, the more our nonuniversalizable lifestyle spreads over the whole planet and causes more and more ecosystems and traditional cultural forms to collapse. The risk, of course, is that this collapse will ultimately reach a dimension that threatens all kinds of luxuries, including, for example, those of the humanities. For their triumph, it can be argued from a sociological point of view, is first of all connected with the fact that the unheard-of growth in prosperity of the last two centuries, made possible by the scientific and especially the industrial revolution, has freed more and more people from agricultural work and enabled them to live long lives that must somehow be filled; and even if this probably most important change of course in the history of mankind is mainly due to mathematical, scientific, engineering and medical thinking, it has to be acknowledged that not all people are sufficiently educated in mathematics and science to make their own contributions to them, even though we all benefit from them. Since the Enlightenment took place at the same time as the above-mentioned revolution, which largely undermined the authority of the monotheistic religions and later of metaphysics, it was convenient that the humanities offered themselves as an alternative (and why not say compensatory) intellectual sphere of action

7 On the inevitability of the humanities, see Marquard (1986).

to theology and first philosophy as well as to mathematics and the natural sciences. *Those who do not like theology and do not know mathematics, but nevertheless want to find a place in the scientific system, may find their livelihood in the humanities.*

The perspective on the rise of the humanities just sketched is cynical and would thus actually be in line with the current postmodern orientation of many currents in the humanities, if even postmodernists, astonishing as it may be, did not enjoy their own ironization less than that of others. Yet that does not make it wrong. Nevertheless, it is profoundly one-sided. What I will try to do in the following is therefore, first, to sketch a telegraphic history of the humanities, which, unlike Marquard, does not simply interpret them as a compensatory event, but seeks to understand them in their own right (*I*). I will secondly pursue the factual question of what is the actual distinguishing feature of the humanities as they have emerged within the system of knowledge since the late 19th century (*II*). Third, I will show what the humanities, understood in this way, can accomplish — and explore their scholarly achievements in terms of both their positive and negative social consequences (*III*). Finally, I will examine what the humanities cannot accomplish and, in this context, criticize some aberrations in the current humanities (*IV*). Although this may initially be tantamount to a rejection of a certain form of the humanities' hubris, I will suggest how collaboration with disciplines that are not humanities-oriented by nature might lead the humanities out of their current limitations (*V*).

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Twenty years ago, the world was a differentWith a partial thesis, which he takes over from his teacher Joachim Ritter (1974), Marquard (1986: 99f) is completely right: The humanities, or to be more precise: the modern humanities, emerged later than the (modern) natural sciences — Vico follows Descartes, Dilthey follows Kant, each with a delay of about one century. It is true that some of the activities that today belong to the sphere of the humanities, especially historiography and the interpretation of classics, were cultivated quite early by some advanced civilizations; it is also indisputable that, for example, Indian linguistics since Pāṇini and Alexandrian philology have achieved highly

significant scientific achievements. But this does not change the fact that in the classification of the sciences undertaken by the philosophers, the humanities appear very late.[8] One thinks of the five sciences which in Plato prepare the ascent to dialectics, which itself is obviously not an interpretive science, but deals with ideal entities — namely arithmetic, geometry, stereometry, astronomy and harmonics.[9] The first three are sub-areas of pure mathematics, the other two subareas of mathematics applied to nature; for harmonics belongs to acoustics and has nothing to do with the interpretation of musical works, as it constitutes an important part of modern musicology. Aristotle's division of the sciences is much richer, but even here one looks for the humanities in vain. For according to him the three theoretical sciences are mathematics, physics and first philosophy or theology.[10] But do not at least his practical and poietic disciplines treat humanities topics, such as the state or poetry? Certainly, one can find insights in them that captivate even a modern humanist extraordinarily; but it is crucial to keep the difference in mind. In Ethics and Politics, Aristotle wants to pursue the questions what the good life and the good state are. Certainly, descriptive statements, even whole theories can be found in this context — think of the fifth book of the Politics about revolutions. But even these political science researches, which at times become independent, apply to a practical purpose — the avoidance of revolutions, because Aristotle is particularly concerned about the stability of a constitution. The point of the modern humanities, however, is that they see themselves as theoretical sciences, not at all as auxiliary sciences of practical philosophy. The same is true for Aristotle's Poetics and Rhetoric, which seek to instruct the poet and the orator how to proceed: "Instructions are to be given to the poet [...]" (Söffing 1981: 29). Certainly, one can distinguish descriptive and normative propositions in, say, the Poetics, but the former serve the latter. What modern literary scholar, however, would want to conceive of his task in analogous terms? The alternative ancient threefold division of the sciences, which goes back to Xenocrates, was taken up by the Stoics and still has

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8 For the following, see the detailed analyses (with precise references) in my essay: Hösle (2014).

9 *Politeia* 528a f., 530c f.

10 *Metaphysics* 1025b25, 1063b35 ff.

an effect on Kant, namely in logic, physics and ethics, obviously has no place for the humanities.

The Middle Ages — for which Bonaventura may stand here with his division of science in *De reductione artium ad theologiam* — had more room for the understanding sciences than antiquity, for two reasons. On the one hand, after the quadrivium, which we found in Plato[11] and which apparently goes back already to the Sophistic,[12] the trivium of grammar (which studies only its own language), logic and rhetoric had formed.[13] Bonaventura, in the fourth chapter of the work, integrates it into the first stage of philosophy, into rational philosophy, which is marked off from natural and moral philosophy. But he does not see that logic on the one hand and grammar and rhetoric on the other hand are completely heterogeneous disciplines, even though at one point he groups them all under the term "interpretativa." On the other hand, philosophical knowledge is followed, as by a cognitive summit, by the light of Scripture, which must be interpreted according to the fourfold sense of Scripture. But even if Bonaventure considers biblical hermeneutics to be the culmination of all sciences, it is crucial to understand that this form of hermeneutics not only methodologically contradicts all standards of modern hermeneutics that were to be developed since the Reformation, but also that it can hardly be counted among the humanities in terms of content. For the latter are concerned with the human spirit, whereas Bonaventure wants to understand or, even better, appropriate the word of God. In his system of knowledge, theological hermeneutics is certainly not a science of the human spirit.

In contrast, Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* can be said to do justice to the reorientation of knowledge that took place in humanism thanks to its interest in the philologically reliable study of antiquity.

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11 Because of Plato's distinction of the still very young stereometry from the twodimensional geometry it is actually a *quinquivium*.

12 Thus Hippias of Elis seems to have divided his lessons accordingly (Plato, *Protagoras* 318e).

13 The canon of the seven *artes liberales*, however, is not generally recognized until late antiquity, e.g., in Martianus Capella; the term "trivium" for the three non-scientific disciplines is even Carolingian. But already in Varros' *Disciplinae* we find these seven sciences, but also medicine and architecture. Sextus Empiricus' *Adversus mathematicos* deals with six of the *artes liberales*, but not with logic, because that is criticized with ethics and physics in *Adversus dogmatico*s.

It is true that Bacon's first subdivision of the sciences, unlike in d'Alembert's introductory "Discourse" to the *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers*, which was inspired by Bacon, is still that of human and divine, i.e., theological, knowledge. But Bacon's primary interest is in the former. And he divides both forms of knowledge according to the triad of memory, imagination, and reason into history, poetry, and philosophy, which, while leading to an unsatisfactory entanglement of the psychology of mental faculties and the structure of being, nevertheless valorizes history and poetry. The opposition between history and philosophy does not correspond at all to that of humanities and natural sciences, but is orthogonal to it: For according to Bacon, there is, besides that of state, church and literature, a history also of nature as well as, vice versa, a philosophy of man, which follows rational theology and the philosophy of nature (with First Philosophy as general foundation). This philosophy of man is further divided into the doctrine of man as an individual and the doctrine of man as a social being. To the first belongs the doctrine of the human body and the human mind and its functions, for example cognition and volition, to which the rational and the moral philosophy correspond. Political philosophy includes *inter alia* jurisprudence.

Thematically, thanks to his interest in history and poetry, Bacon covers more of the humanities than any philosopher before him. But the specific methodological problem of the humanities is something he cannot even begin to address, and that is because he is a pre-Cartesian author. Descartes' intellectual revolution, as is well known, consists in a sharp distinction between the spatially extended and measurable physical and the mental, which is accessible in introspection and which, unlike the physical, I cannot doubt, because such an act of doubting would itself be something mental. Descartes' arguments are, in my opinion, compelling, but they have made philosophy a much more complicated enterprise than it had been in antiquity and the Middle Ages. In particular, his discovery leads to a split between epistemic and ontological inquiry. For introspection takes place only in the first person. But if I don't want to be a solipsist, I have to attribute mentality (as well as from a certain level of mentality the ability of introspection) to other beings, at least to my fellow human beings, even if it is accessible to me only mediated by something physical — from facial expressions to sound waves to artifacts. In the dichotomy of the physical on the one hand and the mental given in introspection on the other

hand, the mind of another is not easy to classify, and this explains why even Kant in his heroic attempt to clarify the transcendental conditions of the possibility of modern science concentrates on the natural sciences and a psychology based on introspection and thereby ignores the humanities, although they had experienced a great development especially in Germany during his lifetime. In addition, significant foundations of the humanities can be found in the 18th century in the Scottish Enlightenment, for example with Hume, and already before that in Italy with Vico. The world-historical significance of his main work *Principj di scienza nuova* of 1725/1744 consists in having found for the first time a place of its own for the new science of the common nature of the nations — it is considered as the third science besides the science of God (which is connected with the science of the individual spirit) and the science of nature. Vico even gives an explanation why the new science could only develop after the science of nature: Self-perception is more difficult than the perception of an external object. What is decisive here is that Vico, quite like tradition, links science, unlike history, to the presence of general structures. It is a new science only because Vico believes to have discovered general laws of development that repeat themselves. The interest in the particular, contrary to Marquard's suggestion, was not the godparent for the baptism of traditional humanism as a science.[14]

Where does the enthusiasm of the 18th century for the humanities come from? Humanity has been performing operations of understanding, phylogenetically as well as ontogenetically, since its beginnings, and interpreting from foreign languages must have occurred early. But the interest in the other language is purely instrumental — it is not considered a legitimate object of research, certainly mostly because the foreign culture is considered inferior to one's own. Even a culture like the Greek one, to which we owe top achievements in mathematics and some natural sciences, has never written down, at least in the texts preserved to us, the simple insight that Greek, Latin and Persian are more similar to each other than any of them is to Phoenician. I say "written down" because I do not want to exclude that such remarks may have been made at an ancient dinner party; but if this was the case,

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[14] Cf. the following paragraphs in the canonical numbering of Fausto Nicolini's edition of the third edition: 2, 331, 349.

no one has considered this observation worth recording.[15] *For science presupposes not only observations, but also the conviction of the dignity of the observed*, and it is precisely this consciousness which, with reference to foreign cultures, does not arise in the West until the early modern period.[16] At the same time, central was the humanist conviction that the achievements of antiquity were an exemplary standard to which we should orient ourselves. In order to approach the ancient, especially Greek culture, special hermeneutical efforts are necessary, and philological auxiliary sciences begin to form. These gain further importance through the Reformation pathos of precise recourse to the original text of the Bible in order to cancel the errors of Christianity that had taken place in scholasticism. The goal is to find the actual literal sense. Spinoza will develop this method to perfection in the first part of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*; however, unlike the Reformers, he will detach the search for the meaning of a text from the question of its truth. In this context, he discovers that many theological ideas were later only read into the Bible — Spinoza criticizes Maimonides in particular because he knows him especially well and because this was less dangerous in a Christian country, but it goes without saying that his criticism also applies to Christian theology. Since he further teaches that every event must have an inner-worldly secondary cause, beside which also general laws are required for a causal explanation,[17] inevitably also what was considered as revelation is drawn into the stream of causally connected human events. This conviction, in addition to the transfer to theology of certain methods of classical philology, such as the differentiation of layers of a text, and finally the realization that many of the biblical statements about nature and history are factually wrong, let the naive belief in the literal truth of the Bible collapse among the historically educated in the eighteenth century.[18]

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15 In *De lingua Latina* V 96 Varro casually points out similarities between Greek and Latin animal names, but wants to explain them onomatopoetically. V 103 and VI 96 are about supposed loan words from Greek.

16 One could cite Herodotus' *Histories* as an exception. But one should not forget that the goal and focus of the book is the representation of the Greek victory over the Persians (I 1). Egypt also belonged to the Persian Empire, which is therefore also depicted.

17 Cf. *Ethica* I 21 ff, especially I 28.

18 See Frei (1974).

Also with regard to one's own tradition, it now becomes possible to adopt an external rather than an internal perspective. By this is meant that one fades out the claim to truth of traditions and explains causally how they came to be, i.e. one practices, for example, religious studies instead of theology. The analysis of religion in David Hume's *The Natural History of Religion* and of early Christianity in the fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Edward Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* are perhaps the most striking examples of this new intellectual attitude, which presupposes a cartesian capacity for abstraction, even if it is now no longer nature out of which the ego reflects itself, but its own history of origin. Arnold Gehlen has brilliantly described the extraordinary nature of this change of perspective: "Only with this step did the religions and worldviews of exotic or primitive peoples become possible *objects* at all, whereas they had to appear as heresies, pagan superstition, or at best as curious nonsense to the consciousness that had not been seized by the Enlightenment, which did not 'believe in religious ideas' but lived in the medium of the word of God and from there found everything encountered already *predetermined,* and were repelled before they had even reached the limit of theoretical interest" (Gehlen 1986: 386).

Joachim Ritter is probably right in his thesis that the acceleration of the course of history through industrialization has increased the ability to objectify one's own history; in any case, the latter is of the same spirit as the Cartesian separation of *res extensa* and *res cogitans*[19]. The specifically Marquardian point, according to which we need the humanities in order to preserve, for example, in costume museums the folk costumes that have been lost in reality, is, in contrast, a strong limitation of Ritter's thesis,[20] even if it cannot be denied

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19 This was already correctly seen by Martin Heidegger (2003).

20 Carsten Dutt has very competently pointed out the important differences between Ritter's compensation theories and those of his students Marquand and Hermann Lübbe: Cf. Dutt (2008). Ritter recognizes much more clearly than his students the theoretical, indeed, end-in-itself character of the modern humanities. But his historical reconstruction suffers from skipping the period between Aristotle and Hegel; this gap was to be filled here. The father of compensation theory is Gehlen (cf. 1986: 392), who interprets historical-psychological consciousness as a "compensatory movement" against institutional decay and social disintegration, which it simultaneously accelerates.

a partial truth.[21] But both compensation theories, I think, underestimate the ultimately moral root of the modern humanities. The belief that one's own religion or one's own culture is the right one, simply for the reason that it is one's own, collapses in the instant I realize that members of other cultures can make the same argument for themselves. The intrinsic interest in other cultures — not, as with the early missionaries, exclusively for the purpose of finding entry points for their own missionary efforts — arose where morally sensitive people found the doctrine of damnation for those of other faiths increasingly intolerable. And religious people who held on to the presence of God in reality increasingly had to come to the realization that God could not only be present in the traditional salvation history of the Jews and Christians.

The great theological revolution connected with the names of Lessing and Herder consists, first, in renouncing the justification of Christianity by supposedly reliable historical texts, and, second, in taking the leap forward, as it were, and seeing the work of God in the unfolding of human history as a whole. Since the spirit stands higher than nature, more of God is to be recognized in its unfolding than in nature. In human history, however, Christianity continues to be given a significant place, and thus Herder, Goethe, and Hegel, who elaborate this program philosophically and poetically, are thoroughly attached to Christianity, albeit in varying degrees. In German culture, they gave the humanities a religious consecration, as it were. As for the author of the Gospel of John (4: 24), for Hegel God in his highest determination is spirit,[22] and therefore philosophical theology culminates in a conceptual development of the categories of spirit as well as in an exploration of the realization of these concepts in the history of the human spirit. When in the middle of the 19th century German idealism collapsed, among other reasons because its logical foundations were not sufficient and it was not able to integrate the rapid development of the natural sciences into its natural philosophy,

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21 Something analogous to the emergence of modern historical sciences also applies to nineteenth-century nationalism, of which E. Gellner aptly writes that it preaches continuity but owes its existence to one of the greatest ruptures in human history (cf. Gellner 1983: 125).

22 See § 384 of the third edition of the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften*.

the humanities were deprived of their foundation in a metaphysics of the spirit. For Auguste Comte, the hierarchy of sciences culminates in sociology; theology and metaphysics belong only to earlier stages of intellectual development. In this process, the humanities and social sciences increasingly become value-free sciences, comparable, for instance, to zoology.[23] But the positivistic pathos, which became a hot commodity for a while, to find out all possible facts about the human cultures, a pathos, to which a man like Plato would have only turned up his nose as vulgar and anti-philosophical, cannot be understood at all in the sense of a mere *subtraction story*.[24] It is not that this pathos would be something natural and it only had to get rid of the absurd theological-metaphysical foundation. Without this foundation, positivism in the humanities would never have come about, indeed, without it, in the end, it hardly makes sense. In any case, what is needed is, first, a justification of the meaning of the activity of the humanities and, second, a justification of their ability to fulfill their task. *The tension between the enormous growth of knowledge in the humanities since the 19th century and the difficulty of grounding this new type of science since Descartes' challenge still weighs on us.*

For even though Dilthey sought to extend Kant's program to the humanities, he failed to do so, mainly because the transcendental question is not easy to reconcile with the radical historicism that seemed to arise as a natural consequence from the process of understanding, once it became comprehensive. If the historical humanities demonstrate to us how the theoretical beliefs and moral values of mankind change over the centuries, why should a timeless justification of the humanities be possible? Yes, why should we feel bound by the principles of the Enlightenment to which the modern humanities owe their existence? Gadamer's *Truth and Method* owes its resounding success to the historicization of historicism. On the one hand, this has had the positive consequence of a renewed opening to a non-positivist understanding of the humanities, but on the other hand, it has led to an undermining of the standards of historical understanding that the 18th and 19th centuries had elaborated. The humanities are then no

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23 For the development of value-free social sciences see my essay: Hösle (1999).

24 I take the term from Taylor (2007).

longer merely value-free, but even renounce the claim of an "objective," methodically comprehensible understanding of the *interpretandum*.

— II —

It has already become clear from what has been said that the humanities must be understood as sciences in which the operation of understanding (or of interpreting as the methodically equipped understanding of complex *interpretanda*) is central. This is how they were already conceived by Wilhelm Dilthey, who rightly points out that they are not simply sciences of man. "After all, physiology also deals with one side of the human being, and it is a natural science. In the facts in and for themselves, therefore, cannot lie the reason for the division of the two classes. The humanities must relate differently to the physical side of man than to the mental." (Dilthey 1968: 81f). The essence of the humanities consists in understanding physical objects and events as expressions of certain mental processes. Since we have every reason to attribute subjective experience to higher animals as well, certain subfields of biology such as ethology could also be called "humanities" (*Geisteswissenschaften*) in the broader sense of the word, but since, at least as far as we know today, mental acts above a certain level of complexity are confined to humans, the humanities may be regarded as a genuine subset of the human sciences. Not all mental acts, but nevertheless those that are particularly dear to the humanities, are intentional in nature, i.e. they refer to an object — real or imagined. With Edmund Husserl I will speak of the noetic and noematic (noetic, referring to the act of thinking; noematic, referring to the object of thought) component of an intentional act. *While I take noeseis to be something inner-worldly, presumably supervening on a physical event in the brain, it is out of the question to assume* the *same of noemata* — and this, among other reasons, because also non-existent or timeless things can become noemata. The study of a mental act can be directed either to the noetic or to the noematic moment, i.e. primarily to reconstruct the mental act from its utterance and to explain it in its causal connection with other mental acts (e.g. the interpretation of utterances of other persons) or to try to fathom the noema. Whoever seeks to understand Euclid, for example, may either pursue the question what Euclid actually meant and how he was enabled to discover and prove his theorems,

or concentrate on the question where in the *Elements* there are gaps in the proof. The second question is no longer of an understanding nature, even though human nature implies that we arrive at factual questions of this kind only on the basis of a long process of understanding. Nevertheless, it is hopeless to answer even the first question if one has no factual familiarity with the noematic sphere. *For the at first sight unsolvable circle, that we can infer mental acts of others only by utterances, but can understand the corresponding physical entities as utterances of mental acts only if we already have an access to the mind of the other, this circle can be overcome only if we assume that the intentional acts of the other are true, if not always, in the majority of cases.* This is not an empirical assumption, but a transcendental presupposition; among all alternative interpretations we have to choose the one that ascribes the least errors.[25]

How do we distinguish the humanities from other sciences? Something is not a matter of the humanities if there is nothing mental, or better, nothing intentional, in their subject area, i.e. if there is no understanding in the methods used. (In the acquisition of these sciences, too, processes of understanding are indispensable — but the subject area of a science is not identical with it). This is true for ideal sciences like logic and mathematics as well as for the sciences of inanimate nature like physics and chemistry and for large parts of biology. Surprisingly, this is also true for philosophy, which is not a discipline of the humanities, even if it is institutionally lumped in with them for reasons of convenience, because it is difficult to create a separate place in a university or academy that would do justice to its special position. Certainly, the history of philosophy is a humanity — but this is also true for the history of natural sciences. But as the latter does not coincide with natural science, so can philosophy not be identified with its history. It goes without saying that mathematics and natural philosophy are not humanities, but even the philosophy of mind is not part of the humanities; for its being consists in an analysis of concepts, not in understanding utterances. The philosopher wants to know what belongs to the essence of the mind, not what others have meant about its essence. Ethics, too, unlike the history of ethics, is self-evidently not a part of humanities. But aren't the humanities about values? Well, they

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25 See Davidson (2001).

describe the value attitudes that people and cultures have, obviously highly complex intentional acts. But if the brief outline of the history of the humanities that I have given was correct, the sharp separation between the external description of values and the humanities' own valuation was central to the emancipation of the humanities from theology and philosophy. After this emancipation, one may or may not believe in an independent science called ethics; what one certainly can no longer do is subsume this science under the humanities.[26]

Misleading, on the other hand, are the demarcations which, for example, oppose the humanities as understanding sciences to the explanatory sciences. This opposition, which has been defended by important theoreticians of the humanities,[27] points to something correct when it emphasizes that understanding is peculiar to the humanities; but it errs when it either denies explanations to the humanities at all or wants to grasp them according to a completely different pattern than the deductive-nomological one. To me at least, Carl Gustav Hempel's subsumption also of the historical humanities under the same explanatory model as that of the natural sciences seems correct in principle,[28] even if the laws that determine human behavior are incomparably more complex than even those that govern weather events, and even if humans can react to laws that describe their previous behavior, which is precluded to non-intentional beings.[29] But also this reaction will probably be able to be explained causally once, even if not by those who just act according to it — because the acting person directs his intention according to reasons, not according to causes. Wilhelm Windelband's famous demarcation that the historical sciences are idiographic, i.e. they describe individual things, while the natural sciences are nomothetic, i.e. they establish laws,[30] seems to me to under-

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26 This is implicit in Max Weber's classic treatises "Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntis" ("The 'Objectivity' of the Sociological and Social-Political Knowledge") from 1904 and "Der Sinn der 'Wertfreiheit' der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften" ("The Meaning of 'Value Freedom' in the Sociological and Economic Sciences") from 1917.

27 See von Wright (1971); Apel (1979).

28 Cf. Hempel (1965).

29 See my comments in Hösle (1997: 208 ff, especially 226 ff).

30 Windelband (1911: 136–160).

cut Bacon's and Vico's philosophy of science. For, of course, there are also idiographic works on natural entities — think of the history of the earth — and at least the search for general laws, for instance in political science (an example would be Duverger's law), even if in these laws cause and effect are usually linked by some kind of logical relationship. Even a biographical study, e.g. on Napoleon, is only possible because it presupposes certain individual psychological and social laws — and always where it uses the word "because." Social sciences and historical sciences do not deal with different subject areas, but take a look at general structures or individual events or persons belonging to the same ontological layer; their difference is thus of a completely different kind than that of physics and biology, for example. Nevertheless, one may admit that the dignity of idiographic studies increases with the importance of their subject; and since nothing is more complex than the human mind and in no other entity is more concentrated mind to be found than in the great scientific theories and works of art, it makes sense that scientific studies apply to these concrete entities, which one would not devote to a single bug.

Analogously, I cannot follow the thesis that the natural sciences are the mathematized sciences, the humanities the non-mathematizable sciences. First, the natural sciences have been mathematized only late — biology only in the 20th century — without having been humanities earlier. Secondly, some social sciences, for example the theory of economics as well as the theory of inter- national relations have been successfully mathematized in the 20th century thanks, among other things, to a mathematical theory for which the reference to intentions is essential — naturally, I mean game theory. Since we cannot foresee the further development of mathematics and the modeling of human behavior, it seems to me that the demarcation with respect to the degree of mathematization only fixes the present state of affairs.

One will object here that I have constantly slipped in the social sciences instead of the humanities. I confess that I have followed the example of Dilthey and have always subsumed the social sciences under the humanities, namely because I do not see how one can strictly distinguish both groups of disciplines from each other. For a human becomes an intentional being only through social processes such as education; in this respect, any analysis of one's intentions will have to take social aspects into account. With the best will in the world, I do not know whether church history or the social

history of art are to be considered social sciences or humanities. However, it can be conceded that the social sciences become particularly pertinent where it is a matter of the unintended consequences of human behavior, which sometimes gain a momentum of their own that baffles everyone. The systemic character of such consequences was first discovered in the 18th century; that explains the fact, astonishing in itself, that Isaac Newton precedes Adam Smith, although the mathematics of the former is truly more complex than that of the latter. It is this momentum of the social that seems to lead out of the realm of the humanities into that of the natural; but it can only be approached by going back to its origin, which cannot be grasped at all without processes of understanding. I have to understand *homo economicus* before I can explain why markets again and again lead to non-pareto-optimal results.

— III —

The most significant achievement of the modern humanities — to begin with a triviality — is that we know much more about the human mind than all previous cultures, both about its manifold functions and about their development in human history. There has never been a culture that knew anywhere near as much about its own history, and especially about the present and past of other cultures, as Western Europe has known since the 19th century. The ability to decipher lost writings and languages, to understand the different value and category systems of foreign cultures, and even to enjoy aesthetically works of art from past epochs and distant continents is one of the most impressive achievements of the modern humanities.

I have just referred to the idiographic side of the humanities, their interpretation of individual products of the human mind; but this is, as I have indicated, only possible against the horizon of general, ideally nomothetic theories. Kant's sentence "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind,"[31] which was coined for the natural scientific experience, applies analogously also to the humanities, even if the act of interpretation itself is much more

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31 Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 75/A 48.

complex than that of perception, be it external, be it internal, both of which are involved in it. But once I understand what, say, "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?" the opening of Shakespeare's eighteenth sonnet, means, the task of the interpreter has only begun — I have to formally subsume the poem under a genre, determine its role within the whole sonnet cycle, relate that cycle to earlier ones, discuss the role of homoerotic love in the Renaissance, and so on. So I can only do justice to the individual poem if I have a comprehensive system of categories at my disposal. How do we get at these categories? For reasons I cannot discuss in detail here,[32] I consider conceptual empiricism to be futile, normatively anyway — there is no conclusive way from intuitions or interpretations to concepts — but also descriptively: interesting category formations often come precisely not from those familiar with the facts, to whom, conversely, we by no means always owe original insights into new concepts. Fortunately, there are also figures in the humanities who were first-rate empiricists as well as theoreticians; but one does not do justice to the phenomenon of concept formation if one does not recognize that abstract philosophical concepts are again and again behind innovative category formations in the humanities — Hegel's dialectical logic, for example, behind Ferdinand Tönnies' *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*. One of the most interesting periods in the history of the humanities has been, in my opinion, the second decade of the twentieth century, when there was a reaction against the mere accumulation of facts by nineteenth-century positivism, which at the end knew everything, only not what for. Instead of mere agglomeration, it was now a matter of searching for new categories. Between 1915 and 1922, four books appeared that revolutionized art history, linguistics, religious studies and sociology forever: Heinrich Wölfflin's *Kunstgeschichtliche Grundbegriffe* of 1915, Ferdinand de Saussure's posthumous *Cours de linguistique générale* of 1916, Rudolf Otto's *Das Heilige* of 1917 and Max Weber's also posthumous magnum opus *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1921/ 22). What distinguishes these works and raises them so far above most of what was presented later in the humanities, is the perfect balance of "hermeneutic intuition" and concept, of almost incomprehensible detailed knowledge in the respective sphere of the human spirit and categorical

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32 See von Kutschera (1982: 438 ff).

penetration of the material; the latter leads in Otto and Weber to a comprehensive perspective on the development of intellectual history, which is interpreted as a moralizing transformation of the numinous into the sacred and as rationalization respectively. It is this balance between a wealth of detail and a view of the whole that makes the works mentioned above classics of the humanities — to introduce a term that will be discussed later.

Comprehensive humanities education is not only admirable in itself because it reveals an interest in, and ideally a respect for, other ways of being human; it also has practical relevance. (By "practical" here I do not mean "moral," for hermeneutic skills can be used both to benefit someone and to harm them). Without a doubt, the humanities have spurred intercultural exchange, which has always existed, but which since the 19th century has enabled the new phenomenon of globalization. Of course, economic and technical factors played at least as important a role; and Ritter is certainly right when he claims (Ritter 1974: 128ff) that the modern humanities were, among other things, a nostalgic reaction to the emergence of a global bourgeois society that largely ignores cultural differences and focuses on humans as beings with economic needs.[33] But Ritter overlooks the flipside: The humanities also facilitated this development, because at least in the beginning the new world society presupposed the order of the British Empire and other colonial empires, and it is well known how much British and French Oriental Studies of the 19th century were interwoven with imperial power interests (the German one was more theoretically oriented, because Germany had no colonies until unification in 1871, and only a few afterwards; presumably this explains the one-sidedness of Ritter's analysis).[34] "Education is the safeguarding of the ability to emigrate," Marquard rightly writes (1986: 110); and the education involved is not only technical, but also humanistic; for one must not only be able to navigate across oceans, but also learn to deal with

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33 In addition, the acceleration of the course of history gives the historical humanities a special role; cf. Koselleck/Dutt (2013: 66f), where Koselleck refers to ch. XXXIV of Henry Adams' autobiography, in which perhaps for the first time the "law of acceleration" is enunciated.

34 Cf. Said (1978). On specifically German Oriental studies, see my essay: Hösle (2013).

the natives if one wishes to settle in another part of the world, or even to trade with it in the long term.

Now this ability to emigrate does not only apply to those who emigrate from their own country. Those who become familiar with the enormous variety of expressions of the human spirit broaden their horizons and inevitably become involved in alternatives to the status quo and to unquestioned but questionable assumptions of their own culture. This does not at all imply that they have to consider these alternatives as equal to the fundamental convictions of their own culture. For mere existence does not mean validity. If the alternative value convictions are felt to be morally inferior and if one has mechanisms of self-assurance, for instance within the framework of a homogeneous social group which considers itself to be of divine origin, i.e. a religious community, one may avoid questioning one's own intuitions. One may reassure oneself with an intuitionistic epistemology to the effect that without intuitions there are no insights, and one's own intuitions are just evidently correct. Even more than the encounter with foreign cultures, the study of one's own history is a factor of uncertainty. Not only does one recognize in one's own tradition, if one researches without prejudice, many human-all-too-human things that one indignantly points one's finger at when one sees them in other cultures; one finds that many of the historical justifications of one's own religious or political convictions do not stand up to a critical historiography. Since the 18th century one knows, or can know, that the biblical texts originate from different authors with very different conceptions of God, some of them incompatible with each other, and that, for example, the Christology of the councils is not that of even one of the gospels, which in any case differ greatly from each other in their understanding of Jesus. In *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (*On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*) Friedrich Nietzsche famously distinguished three types of history: the monumental, the antiquarian and the critical. Certainly the latter is the type most likely to stand up to scholarly scrutiny, even if the political need for monumental history is still great, especially in a country like the United States that continues to consider itself called upon to exercise a hegemonic role.[35] But in an era that has witnessed the horrific

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35 This explains why certain facts of American history are still taboo: Consider the mass shootings of Japanese prisoners of war in World War II. On this, see Dower (1986).

abuse of heroism in the 20th century, it is increasingly difficult to do monumental history, even in literary works. Probably the ironic refraction with which Thomas Mann treats the characters Jaakob and Joseph, equally dear to the three monotheistic religions, in the Joseph novels is the highest form of intellectually responsible idealization of the past that we can still taste; for irony toward Joseph's weaknesses and sincere admiration of the intellectual and moral achievement of monotheism balance each other perfectly in the tetralogy (*Joseph and His Brothers*).

An important consequence of the humanities is thus the historistic relativism that began to spread in the 19th century. It has contributed much more to the corrosion of religion than the emergence of the modern natural sciences. For while the latter only raise doubts about individual miracle stories, but are quite compatible with a monotheism — indeed, genetically probably even presuppose it — the discovery that certain rites or value convictions that claimed a sacred founding are actually of much more recent origin undermines their claims to validity, according to the criteria of religions that legitimize themselves historically. Nietzsche's success shows that the analogous truth holds also for ethics — *On the Genealogy of Morals* has undoubtedly damaged ethical universalism. But is it not easy to object that Nietzsche confuses genesis and validity? Do not Vico and Hegel show that even a historical consciousness corresponding to modern standards can be made compatible with a rational theology? Certainly. But the problem is that the whole pathos of modern humanities consists in concentrating on meaning instead of truth, thus bracketing validity claims and explaining their occurrence in a causalscientific way. Especially those who consider it their task to get a comprehensive overview of all that has ever been put forward on a certain topic will seldom have the time to get involved in the factual questions connected with the topic; the interest in the abundance of noeseis displaces that in the noemata. The highly learned historian of philosophy, who has no more interest in the systematic questions of philosophy, is a result of this emancipation of the "noetic" side of the humanities from the "noematic." Those who have grown up in this form of thinking often have enormous difficulties in understanding questions of validity as such. The abandonment of the discussion of the truth content of the *interpretandum*, if it generally leads to shrugging shoulders towards the question of truth, can in the last instance even endanger the truth claim of one's own interpretation: For this, too, is a claim

to validity, albeit a reduced one. The abandonment of this last claim to validity, namely the correctness of one's own interpretation, is often promoted by a fallacy, such as one finds in Marquard, who derives the ambiguity of the humanities from the ambiguity of the reality of life (1986: 107ff). Certainly, any hermeneutics must do justice to the phenomenon of irony, for example, and certainly the literary scholar will discover various forms of ambiguity in many significant texts.[36] Since humanities scholars are finite beings, no one will be able completely to exhaust great texts, just as no biologist can have said everything about a single species. But for the humanities as well as for the natural sciences it is true that different interpretations can only be true at the same time if they are logically compatible with each other. To abandon this principle would mean nothing less than to deprive the humanities of their status as science and to isolate them completely from mathematics and the natural sciences, in which the distinctions between true and false and between guessed and proved enjoy obvious evidence.

— IV —

The humanities have provided an understanding and, in cooperation with the social sciences, even an explanation of human behavior and the manifold products of the human mind. Thus they have overcome the provinciality that characterizes those who ascribe the self-evident beliefs of their own culture to all mankind or condemn the rest of mankind as ignorant, malicious or possessed by demons. What the humanities are not able to do, however, especially after their emancipation from German Idealism, is to decide the factual questions that are at stake in these intellectual products on very different levels. This also applies to ethical questions, in which the humanist qua humanist has no special competence. In this respect, the designation of the humanities as "moral sciences," which was common in the English-speaking world in the 19th century (e.g., with John Stuart Mill), was misleading:[37]

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36 See, for example, Empson (1949).

37 According to E. Rothacker (1947: 6), perhaps in I. Schiel's 1849 translation of Mill's *A System of Logic, Ratiocinative and Inductive* the term *Geisteswissenschaften* first appears in the plural.

It made sense as long as one defended a division of knowledge trained on Aristotle and, for example, conceived of political science ultimately as part of practical philosophy or at least still of jurisprudence; under the presupposition of the value-free nature of the modern social sciences and humanities, it is downright absurd. Mind you: I do not in the least claim that modern humanities scholars are immoral people. That would be just as absurd as saying that engineers, doctors or carpenters are immoral people. But the moral insights of doctors, engineers, carpenters and even humanities scholars do not originate from their specific scientific or craft training. Even the ethical competence, which is to be distinguished from the moral competence, i.e. the ability to analyze moral claims rationally, is not peculiar to humanities scholars to a special degree. Since a study of general methodology enhances analytical skills, humanists will presumably be better at argument analysis than people without such an education; but there is not the slightest reason to assume that they are better at it than, say, mathematicians or physicists. For neither morality nor ethics can be traced back to processes of understanding, even though there is certainly a moral imperative to strive to understand other people. But this commandment itself cannot be justified by processes of understanding.

But don't many humanities scholars — from sociologists of religion to literary scholars — describe value attitudes? Certainly. But that is quite different from doing ethics. Kant was probably the greatest ethicist of all time; but he was incompetent as a historian of value attitudes because he took the universalist ethics of the 18th century for an anthropological constant. Conversely, someone may have extraordinary skill in reconstructing the moral convictions of the Germanic peoples in the last two centuries before Christ from ancient accounts, archaeological finds, and the peculiarities of their language; but that does not make him an ethicist. (However, he must at least be able to distinguish the moral from the non-moral). But, it will be further asked, does not every historian who wants to describe a whole epoch or even longer historical courses need values to guide her selection from the material? Of course. We have already seen that fact-hoarding without categories does not produce good humanities — just as little as so-called theoretical work that is done neither before broad background knowledge in the field in question nor on the basis of familiarity with a consistent system of basic philosophic categories. But the values according to which one sifts the material are of an epistemic,

not moral, nature and depend on the subjective epistemic interest that the corresponding author has. Anyone who wants to write a history of genocide in the 20th century will not be able to avoid discussing the mass murders of Armenians, Jews, the population of Cambodia and the Tutsis. This does not mean that he evaluates them positively.

But what legitimizes the epistemological interest of humanities scholars? Are certain questions more valuable than others? In my opinion, questions of this kind can hardly be answered by means of the humanities — the humanities scholars can only clarify whether the answers given to these questions have been obtained according to the usual methods of the humanities. However, in view of the turn from noema to noesis, it is tempting to pass off as especially relevant those questions which causally link as many noetic acts as possible. Thus, it is no longer the inner content of a mental entity, but its effect that counts. The turn from the internal to the external history of knowledge as well as from the aesthetics of works of art to the aesthetics of reception belongs to this context, as does the genesis of culture studies. It is presumably true that in the last two months of 2013 more people in Germany saw *Fack ju Göhte* than even read *Faust I*; for I gather from Wikipedia that there were more than six million viewers, and I am not quite as optimistic about the second figure. Thus, it stands to reason that one should enliven German studies with conferences about this film instead of boring it with more books about *Faust*.

As obvious as this may be, it is, of course, wrong to say that specifically humanistic arguments are used in this case. For the implicit argument is that factual interest is the real criterion of quality, and that the present has priority over the past. These statements may be right or wrong (I consider them both wrong); but they are by no means statements that can be justified by the methods of the humanities. Also, the meta-statement that these questions are nothing but subjective opinions cannot be validated by means of the humanities; it is again a philosophical statement, whose determination requires comprehensive considerations of questions concerning theoretical legitimacy, which are not the subject of this text. What matters to me here alone is that such expressions in the humanities are inevitably based on philosophical orientations external to the humanities, which do not disappear simply because they are not explicitly considered, but are absorbed from the spirit of the times. Humanities scholars commit label fraud when they extend the legitimate assertion "Questions of value cannot be

solved with the methods of the humanities" to the statement "Questions of value are completely subjective." And they confuse all standards of rationality when they, out of the only too human need for normativity that ultimately honors them, read their subjective value convictions into texts that they no longer even interpret carefully because they have lost faith in the fact that there are correct and incorrect interpretations. The literary scholar, for example, should be competent in mastering the specific techniques with which literature manages to make fictional worlds appear before us. He does not need to tell us how he thinks about economic policy, not because he has no right to economic policy opinions, but because his opinions on these questions, unlike those of the economist and business ethicist, enjoy no more authority than those of any non-academic. He can express them, of course, but not with the authority of the professor, which he is entitled to in another field. He even endangers his authority in this other field if, in order to catch the attention of the mass media, he reads into the *interpretanda* things that are not found there but find general approval as politically correct today, and in the end even loses interest in the specific categories of his discipline. If one plays the role of a would-be political scientist for too long, one risks forfeiting the specific literary competence that one had once acquired.

— V —

Those who have followed me so far may be confused. On the one hand, I seem to criticize the modern humanities because they no longer know how to answer normative questions and lead to paralysis: One can imagine oneself into all sorts of things, but no longer knows the one that is needed; one believes in a thousand cultural products at a thousandth each, but in none entirely. On the other hand, I reject the tendencies of actualization, in which contemporary scholars of the humanities misuse products of the past spirit in order to curry favor with the hegemonic powers of a culture by posing as a megaphone of what is seasonable morally-politically or with regard to entertainment needs. However, there is no contradiction between the two positions. Indeed, I believe that the humanities can only be rescued from their increasing insignificance if they engage in normative questions — but it is not the humanities' methods by which this can be

done. The humanities need a normative foundation that does not come from within themselves; only in connection with this can they escape the self-dissolution that otherwise threatens them.

In fact, in some disciplines of the humanities it is immediately obvious that one cannot be successful in them with humanistic methods alone. I do not want to discuss here the entry of methods from the natural sciences into the humanities, which are often useful and sometimes indispensable, because the *interpretandum* is always a physical object: One thinks, among other things, of the radiocarbon method for dating in archeology or also of Luigi Luca Cavalli-Sforza's discovery of the parallels between the genetic degree of relationship of different peoples and the degree of relationship of the languages spoken by them.[38] Nor am I concerned here with the fact that man is an organism and thus a result of the evolution of life, so that presumably some of his behavior has biological roots, or with the fact, strictly distinguishable from this, that the principle of natural selection overlaps nature and culture and thus also applies to cultural evolution, which thus shows parallels to biological evolution. No, what I want to draw attention to is not the basis of intention in the *res extensa*, but rather its noematic moment. Certainly the noema of an *interpretandum* can itself be accessible to the method of understanding. Whoever writes a history of hermeneutics, for instance, must interpret on two levels: He must read the texts that are his direct *interpretanda*, and in order to evaluate their hermeneutic quality, he must himself set about interpreting the *interpretanda* of his direct *interpretanda*. (Interpretation is obviously a multilevel business.) That, however, is quite different in the case of the history of mathematics: Whoever wants to do research on Apollonius of Perga must master two quite different methods: he must have hermeneutic competences in order to interpret the Greek text correctly, and he must have mathematical intelligence in order to understand what Apollonius is about. The one who cannot think mathematically stands before the *Conica* as before an encoded book — no different from the one who has not learned Greek.

Thus, the humanities must have more than humanities competencies in order to do justice to their task, at least for many of their

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38 E. J. M. Witzel's great attempt to reconstruct the oldest human myths draws on linguistics, physical anthropology, genetics, and archaeology, among others (cf. Witzel 2012: 187 ff.).

interpretanda. They blatantly fail in their task if they focus only on the act of saying and ignore what is said. For most people who express themselves want to express something that transcends them, and the very person who is interested only in their subjective activity, and not its object, does not really take them seriously. But does this mean that one must share Aristotle's natural philosophy in order to understand it? Certainly not. For to take an author seriously does not mean to follow him; whoever takes his claim to truth seriously has rather the duty to contradict him where his arguments do not hold. But even the one who considers the *Physics* to be outdated by the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century can and must acknowledge its inner conclusiveness, the enormous achievement in the formation of categories, and the often stringent criticism of earlier natural philosophical conceptions. This is true even for fictional texts, at least if their author claims to tell the truth precisely by transcending the factual. Whoever approaches Dante only as a literary scholar, for example, will not have been affected by the work in the way that was Dante's real objective. Of course, one does not need to believe in Dante's geography of the Inferno or in the Ptolemaic world view in order to understand Dante's *Commedia*. But the interpreter of Dante must have a sense for a moral interpretation of the universe; if he also lacks this sense, the work will have only historical interest for him and thus lose its classic status. For classical are those texts which, in a sense, always remain our contemporaries, from which, and not about which, we wish to learn. Nothing is more ridiculous than, in order to remain au courant, to chase after the latest publications, the majority of which in ten or five years' time (the time periods themselves are becoming shorter and shorter) will be replaced by equally short-winded products, and this at the price of ignoring even those texts which will remain classics for millennia to come. In the natural sciences such a behavior may be acceptable, because in them a relatively continuous progress takes place; but in art and philosophy such a progress is not to be found with the best will.

But what makes a classic a classic? One should not define classics primarily by their long-term impact, which is itself subject to the question of whether or not it was legitimate; someone is a classic because of the quality of his or her contribution to solving a problem.[39]

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[39] Cf. my essay: Hösle (2004).

Nevertheless, it remains true that the likelihood of a work having high value increases if this is consistently ascribed to it over a long period of time; for even if the majority is not right as such, since many people simply follow the opinions they perceive as prevailing, fashions are short-lived and revolts against them natural. Therefore, if an author has survived many such revolts, it is probably due to some intrinsic value. However, this must always be concretely demonstrated. Since classics thus often originate from the past, their adequate understanding requires not only factual competence but also the specific hermeneutic competence that is the very specific feature of the humanities.

What, then, is the future of the humanities dependent on? First of all, they must not give up their hermeneutic competence; they must maintain the standards that have been developed since the 17th century in order to make the *mens auctoris* [mind of the author] accessible. To abandon them in order to follow fashionable theories is nothing less than suicidal. It is to the honor of the human mind that it is able to open up mental products even from completely different times and cultures, including such great ones as the Gilgamesh epic. Even if the contents of these products may be disappointing, as at first sight those of the clay tablets in Linear B, which are linguistically highly significant and tell us something about the economic structure of the Mycenaean world, but noematically do not come close to what the later Greek world produced, the formal act of recognizing in a foreign artefact mind related to one's own mind is always worthy of respect, especially since the careful interpreter can also make at least parts of a mental world emerge from those tablets, by developing what is implied in them. Secondly, the humanist should have an expertise in the question with which his *interpretandum* is concerned. For this he often enough has to master another discipline outside of her discipline; but this can only be good for the humanities, whose increasing self-indulgence in the end betrays the essence of the mind, which as intentional always refers to something and always deals with something. Certainly, it is essential for the mind to thematize itself as well; but it can do so only because it has initially directed itself to something external. The first understandable utterances must have inevitably referred to something physical. Thirdly, humanities scholars should devote special attention to those texts that manifest and train greater factual competence, i.e. they should make the classics their preferred objects of study. This is true even if the selection of *interpretanda* leads

to unequal treatment of cultures or of one sex; for only by studying internally significant *interpretanda* do those who have hitherto been unjustly disadvantaged in history have a chance of achieving intellectual equality. Fourthly and finally, the humanist should have a sufficiently elaborated concept of the mind. The humanities are not the same as philosophy of mind; but humanities scholars should have some familiarity with issues such as the mindbody problem, the question of meaning, the nature of developmental laws of the mind. And they must know that mind is not mind if it does not recognize a moral order in confrontation with which its historical unfolding takes place. Certainly, philosophers do not agree on these questions; but this does not relieve one of the responsibility to get an overview of the main solutions. It may even be that preoccupation with the metaphysics of mind leads the humanities scholar to find also in the meaning of pre-Enlightenment religions something that, despite all circularity of arguments, contradictoriness in the conception of God and scientifically untenable hermeneutics, is related in essence to the noema, to which he knows himself to be bound, provided he wants to take his own activity seriously: the idea that the ultimate ground of reality is a mind, which transcends nature and the finite minds that develop within it and which somehow catches up with itself in the self-awareness of the finite mind that occurs within the world.*

Translated by R. Bradley Holden, Ph.D. and Samuel J. Loncar. Ph.D.

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* After the completion of this essay (2014), my comprehensive study *Kritik der verstehenden Vernunft* [Critique of the Understanding Reason] appeared in 2018, in which many reasons were explained that could only be sketched here.

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Povilas Aleksandravičius

The Crisis of Rationality and the Expansion of Consciousness

Universities are the place of rationality. They claim to be the source of rational thinking in all areas of social and even personal life. It is in the universities that the sciences, rationally created and structured, have offered and continue to offer theories on the basis of which our societies could be organized. This is the case, at least, of European civilization, the historical course and even the very definition of which are inextricably linked to the two concepts of rationality and the university.

I have just asserted that rational thinking is the source of theories in both social and personal life. And I have just uttered a special word: "Life". When we pay attention to this word and when we confront it with the concept of rationality, we get into a real problem. Our personal and social theories may shine with impeccable theoretical rationality, but life flows differently and even in the opposite direction. Life does not fit into the framework of theoretical rationality and pulsates with energy, light or dark, which often obeys neither logic nor concepts. Here we begin to formulate the problem of the crisis of rationality: this is the gap between our theoretical thinking and real life.

What is "real life"? Is it the image we send to each other to appear serious, intelligent, and moral? Or the actions we take to conform to the social system and earn a salary? Yes, these things are also real life, but perhaps much more real is our inner disapproval, or rather disgust, with such a life, and the grief, usually hidden, that we cannot escape. This sadness is much more real to our life, because it develops in the deeper layers of our personal consciousness. "Real life" are the processes that take place in human consciousness. Life is all the more real, deeper, and more personal the deeper layers of consciousness it is able to reveal to my or our sensations and thinking. It remains to ask what is happening in our consciousness. Or, as they used to say in earlier times, what happens in our *psyche*, in our soul.

Anyone familiar with philosophy knows how difficult this question is. Philosophers have always raised it, and perhaps those who have expressed it best have concluded with Socrates' old statement: "I know that I know nothing." Indeed, we know very little about what goes on in our minds. Perhaps the many texts written on the subject give the impression that at least philosophers know a lot. In my opinion, this impression is part of a crisis of rationality; it contributes to our disconnection from real life. To think that the accumulated knowledge of what goes on in our minds somehow covers everything, or almost everything, that goes on in them is an illusion. People tend to think that they know everything. This stops them at once, and it takes a major shock, a crisis, in their personal or social lives to wake them up from their complacent slumber. And indeed, what goes on in consciousness should arouse our wonder and interest precisely because we know so little about it. Interest in what goes on in our consciousness should be the source of philosophy and rationality.

The representatives of the Kantian school (I am not saying Kant himself) have accustomed us to the idea that rationality is an autonomous, self-sufficient process. Kant's view that our mind cannot know reality as it really is has become ingrained in our philosophy. Since reality is unknowable, reason can only know what it himself has put into reality. Isn't this idea that rationality is the only source of itself at the root of the crisis of rationality? Shouldn't the question of a rational way of thinking also include the question of a source of rationality that transcends rationality? We could examine this question in the light of the most diverse paradigms of contemporary philosophy. I will mention three of them, recognized as classical. All of them had Kant as their main interlocutor, and all of them sought to correct Kant by talking about the possibility of knowing reality beyond reason. First of all, Bergson's distinction between reason and intuition. Contrary to what some historiography claims, Bergson was not an irrationalist. He merely spoke of the necessity, when asking questions about reality, to root rationality in an intuition that is capable of grasping duration (*durée*), and thus reality itself (Bergson 1907). The second paradigm is Heidegger's concept of truth*, aletheia,* according to which the real emerges from the hidden (Heidegger 1954). Finally, I would like to mention Jung's analytical psychoanalysis and its characteristic distinction between unconsciousness and unconsciousness: a person becomes himself only when some contents of the unconscious

become conscious (Jung 2006). I will not comment on any of these paradigms, their differences and points of contact. All of them, each in its own way, emphasize on the one hand the mystery of reality and consciousness, i.e. the idea of how little we know, but on the other hand the knowability of reality and consciousness, i.e. the incentive to know them.

Today's tradition of thought is unimaginable without Bergson, Heidegger, Jung. We could mention hundreds of other thinkers. Shouldn't we include Wittgenstein, who spoke of silence as the source of thought? (Wittgenstein 2002). Many thinkers belonging to different trends continue the authentic and rational tradition of thinking in our universities. Nevertheless, the gap between thinking and life remains a constant not only in our societies, but also in our universities. Why is it? Is there a lack of Heideggerians, Bergsonians, Jungians or Wittgensteinians in the universities? Absolutely not.

We could answer this question pointing to another tendency in human nature. This is the inexorable tendency to imitate. Perhaps this tendency is socially, or, as Bergson would say, biologically necessary for the creation of a group, a community, a society. It is undoubtedly one of the modalities of being and we should analyze it ontologically. Heidegger taught us to look at all the modalities of human being through the prism of ontological authenticity/inauthenticity (Heidegger 1927). There is a natural tendency within us to be like others. Thus, next to Heidegger there is a crowd of Heideggerians, next to Bergson — a crowd of Bergsonians, etc. Who in the crowd thinks for themselves, who merely imitates? It seems to me that here we are naming one of the reasons why in our universities, in our society, in our personal lives, there is a gap between thinking and reality. In order to think authentically, one must think by oneself, that is to say, to engage oneself in the unique processes of one's own consciousness. The intuition of duration, the listening to being, individuation are wonderful concepts coined by Bergson, Heidegger, and Jung, the analysis of which is necessary to understand our lives. However, each of them becomes a reality of life only when it becomes an element in the transformation of a specific consciousness that is truly mine, that is authentically ours.

One characteristic of rationality that has lost its source is repetition. The phenomenon of repetition perfectly characterizes the life of our universities, our societies, and even our personal lives. We repeat

each other, and especially our geniuses, and we become the same. In our reports, articles, and lectures, we usually rearrange in different ways what has already been said by others or otherwise. But this is not real life, because in repeating others, we lose ourselves. Real life does not repeat itself. Every moment it is new and different — Heidegger's facticity, Bergson's duration, or Jung's process of individuation reveal uniqueness, the discovery of something that was not there before. Rationality that has regained its source, that is, has grasped the life of consciousness, is an act of creation. Our universities lack creativity rooted in the processes of consciousness.

Can we resist natural inclinations? Some of us can, and they no longer repeat, but create. But the social system is based on repetition, not creation. The university is designed precisely to break the established norms of the social system based on repetition and to propose something new through the act of creation. But the university is also part of the social system, its members are people, not superhumans, and the same natural tendencies easily turn the university's mission into nothing. Today, a certain canon and a certain paradigm prevail in our universities again. We are told how we should write articles and books, how many of them we should write, and on what topics. Most often, when a scientist proposes a truly new and original topic, he is considered a freak, and his project is denied funding. As always, the scientific community itself is permeated by a certain paradigm that predetermines the object of research, the methods, and the nature of the expected results.

The established paradigm of science corresponds to a certain state of consciousness. If we want to adjust this paradigm, if we want to stop repeating ourselves for a moment and realize the act of creation, we have to discover something new in our consciousness. Should we discover something that is already there, but has not been known before? Should we create something in consciousness that does not yet exist? I will leave this radical philosophical question aside for now. In any case, we will be able to discover or create if we learn to accept the fundamental creative impulse that pulsates ceaselessly in the depths of each of our consciousness. In any case, we are talking about the expansion of consciousness.

We will only be able to bring rationality out of the crisis and enable the university to fulfil its mission (which means bringing our democracy, our economic model, and the psychological state

of society out of the crisis) if we gain some radically new experience, that is, if we discover something new in our consciousness, or perhaps expand it, create it.

Some believe that the program of consciousness expansion is being implemented by the transhumanist movement. The goal of this movement is to create artificial intelligence worthy of the name. This means an attempt to create a technology that could be treated as the equivalent of consciousness. This transhumanist philosophy is based on two ideas that prevail in modern science. The first of them postulates that human consciousness is causally dependent on his brain. The second is that the activity of the brain can be fully explained by the principles of a series of mathematical equations: the brain is a computer. This reiterates De La Mettrie's old ideas about the man-machine: "The mind is secreted by the brain, just as bile is secreted by the liver. [...] Let us then conclude boldly that man is a machine" (La Mettrie 2011: 107). It is therefore possible to create or extend consciousness by creating a computer that replicates the activity of the human brain, but not at the biological level, but at the electronic level. Unlike the biological brain, artificial intelligence could be infinitely improved, thus extending consciousness to unprecedented levels. Ray Kurzweil, the most prominent proponent of transhumanism, sees the beginning of this fantastic leap forward for humanity in the singularity event and gives specific dates: artificial intelligence would reach human intelligence by 2029 and merge with humans by 2045 (Kurzweil 2005).

Another strand of transhumanism remains at the level of human biology: its proponents claim that the expansion of consciousness can be realized by experimenting with biological brains. By applying the methods of physics and chemistry, it is possible to extend brain functions to a hitherto unimaginable intensity, thus fundamentally transforming human consciousness and extending its field of possibilities to infinity, for example biological immortality.

However, the relationship between the brain and consciousness seems to be much more complex than transhumanists would have us believe. In 2005, the journal *Science* published a list of the most important unsolved problems in science: the problem of the origin of consciousness came second (Miller 2005: 79). The claim that the brain and consciousness are *causally* correlated, that consciousness arises from the brain, is a scientifically unfounded philosophical statement that countless scientists and philosophers repeat as obvious and which has

become a constant in the content of Western thought. Transhumanists will experiment with the human brain, and we can be sure that this will affect the state of consciousness: it is obvious that the brain and consciousness are correlated. But if this correlation is not causal, if the existence and functioning of consciousness is based on other principles than those of brain, then a completely different perspective opens up for its research and its changes. It seems that we, representatives of humanities, have not thought about this enough.

Let us take a closer look at how we think and how we are. In reality, we think and we are as if our consciousness depends on the brain. We are materialists to the core. Heidegger showed perfectly how our way of being depends on the fact of the inevitable death and how we interpret it (Heidegger 1927: 236–266). And we interpret it as the absolute end of consciousness, which inevitably awaits us when the nervous system stops functioning. Hence the fear and anxiety that determine every thought and action of our lives. Religious belief in the "immortality of the soul" is usually nothing more than an anxious reaction to the inevitable death, a form of running away from it. Our state of consciousness is determined by the belief that with brain death nothing remains of consciousness itself.

So wouldn't it be worthwhile, in raising the question of a change in consciousness, to introduce the problem of death into the scientific horizon, which neurobiology and philosophy would study together from the perspective of the question of the connection between the brain and consciousness? I understand how such proposals offend the current paradigm of the scientific world and how difficult, practically impossible, it is to listen to them without immediately reacting with denial. It was similarly difficult to listen to statements that the earth revolves around the sun, and not *vice versa*, as our senses and Aristotle's cosmology show. But the shift in consciousness and paradigm depends on our relationship to death. The exact sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities could raise the problem of death, formulated in terms of the relationship between the brain and consciousness, and that progress in the analysis of this very problem could enable a change in the paradigm of thinking.

This example is, of course, radical and may provoke a wave of criticism. But it is valuable at least in that it forces us to ask the question about the limits of university knowledge. What do I mean by that? I mean the old question about the behavior of the scientist in relation

to what exceeds his paradigm. The university of modern times, the product of the Enlightenment, has defined its possible field of knowledge according to the methods it uses. And what about the reality that lies outside this field? Does it not exist? Is it not rational? Is it a mystery? Should it be respected? Can we hope to know it one day, by expanding the methods of research?

The pre-modern university assigned to the realm of the divine sciences and mysticism what was not covered by the scientific methods it used. The recognition of the non-cognitive realm and conceptual cognition formed a kind of fruitful alliance. Historically and systematically, the results of this alliance have been studied by more than one thinker. In addition to the aforementioned Bergson, we can recall the research of Michel de Certeau (1982), Reiner Schürmann (1972) or Philippe Capelle-Dumont (2013). They all lead to the conclusion that opening up to what goes beyond paradigmatic knowledge offers the possibility of extending the boundaries of cognition and reforminf the paradigm. In short, rationality must open up to mystery in order to take root and develop its possibilities.

The modern university, at least the majority of them, has lost this capacity: if not theoretically, then at least *de facto*, that which is considered unknowable from a methodological and conceptual standpoint is effectively rendered non-existent. Sometimes this disposition has developed into bullying or disrespect for everything that intrudes into the field of experience and consciousness, but which is not suitable for investigation by established methods and concepts. In any case, the unknowable field has acquired such a status in the eyes of the modern university that it is impossible to take any position on it at all without risking the loss of scientific prestige.

It is precisely this attitude that has led our universities to a crisis of rationality. Knowledge has lost its great partner — unknowledge — which could, at the moment of *kairos*, expand its limits and give it a new life — the ability to create, not just repeat. The French philosopher Emile Poulat, concludes in his book *The University in the Face of Mysticism*: " The university had to discover that these limits were also a limitation, and that beyond that, it was not only the void or the unknowable, but a strange, confusing human mode, escaping the rules and norms that were in force in enlightened minds [...] It was no longer a question of education or civilization, but of *otherness*" (1999: 9).

When we break the relationship with our *other*, with *alterity*, we inevitably fall into stasis or what we have here called repetition. But nature is not static. It moves on, even if our categories of thought refuse to contact certain of its dimensions. Consciousness lives, even if reason represses part of it into the field of the unconscious. And repressed life also has its expressions. Thinking about the problems of the modern university, Emile Poulat emphasized that when reason and nature repress the sphere of the unknowable, "its extinguished light revealed obscure, anomic realities that theory did not foresee" (1999: 9). Jung spoke of the fact that the loss of a positive relationship with certain subconscious forces, which historically most often manifested themselves in the form of religious gods, and the denial of them, led to the invasion of the darkest *-isms* into human history, such as fascism or communism. The rationalization and bureaucratism that has taken over the university today should be viewed from a psychoanalytic perspective. In our universities, the same things are repeated so furiously, articles and books are so intensively reproduced, and criteria for evaluating scientific activity are so meticulously invented that it resembles a neurosis.

Rationality is a critical thinking. The problem of the modern university is that criticism is confined exclusively within the paradigm itself, amongst the theories, philosophies and opinions that represent the same paradigm. Scientific thought, however, requires that its paradigm be criticized from outside — by that which does not enter it, that which belongs to that sphere of being that is inaccessible to the methods of the paradigm. If we want the university to fulfil its mission, our paradigm needs a partner, its *other*, its critic, someone to pull it out of its own rotation and awaken new possibilities. If we wish to transcend rationalization, repetition and bureaucracy, if we hope for a revival of the university, we need to open ourselves to mystery.

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— Part 3 —

Life and Destiny of a University

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Anatoli Mikhailov

Quo Vadis EHU? The Possibility of the Impossible

The question *Quo Vadis EHU?* is far from being a question for a mere academic reflection on the ways to continue this unusual initiative. Behind this project there lie more than three decades of existence of a unique university, full of dramatic existential experience and paid by a very high price of human efforts and expectations in which we could now, while being in a new reality, try to realize the ideas proclaimed at the very beginning of the project.

But it is impossible to respond to this question ignoring the present reality we live in.

As we approach the end of the first quarter of the twenty-first century, we need to recognize that the prevailing expectations of imaginable social developments in the world at the beginning of this century stand in sharp contrast to the current state of affairs. It is true that these expectations were inevitably exaggerated, especially because of the end of the Cold War and reemergence, once again, of the "principle of hope" (as formulated by Ernst Bloch), which is natural to all humans and deeply rooted in all of us. This hope has always been accompanied by a certain confidence in the inevitability of social progress that has dominated the Western intellectual tradition especially since the time of the Enlightenment. This state of affairs of our minds is intrinsically related to the situation in the field of the humanities.

We are faced with the existence of an enormous number of universities, most of which claim the importance of conducting research and teaching in the humanities as a way of addressing the reality of our lives. Unfortunately, the pride and self-confidence of this kind of knowledge and of those who represent it do not involve the recent highly troublesome societal developments and, as a result, the attractiveness and prestige of the humanities is drastically diminishing worldwide, including even those intellectual landscapes where have enjoyed their privileged status for centuries since antiquity.

The situation is particularly grave where we see the efforts of those who are entrapped in traditions which so far, due to historic circumstances, have hitherto been outside of the mainstream of thought which for centuries has determined the situation in the world. In too many cases the quality of research and teaching at the universities in such areas is reduced to the imitation of what already by the end of the nineteenth century became justifiably questionable within this tradition itself and which, particularly since the last quarter of this century, has witnessed the emergence of radical reflection *of the way how* our thought is approaching this sort of specific reality which is *being constituted* by the humans.

This issue is not new. That was Aristotle who raised the problem. He distinguished between genuine science which, according to him, can only be about the universal, the general and necessary features of reality, and history, which records and investigates the individual, i.e. the passing, unique and non-repeatable events. The question arises: How can we seriously talk about *a science* of history? For Aristotle, the main task of history was to determine how particular events really occurred and to set them forth objectively in chronological order. The search for deeper relationships and meanings of events, as well as the more elaborate articulation of their content, therefore, belong not to history but to epic and dramatic poetry. He therefore concludes that poetry is more important and "more philosophic" than history (Aristotle 1952: 451b, 7–11).

The very nature of humanities education is ignored, when we address it as the provision of a kind of knowledge which is reduced to science. Behind this deeply rooted prejudice is understanding of human beings in a Cartesian way as *res cogitance* which, similar to natural beings — *res extensa*, *already* possess all necessary qualities needed for being in the world. Apparently, all we need to do is provide humans with some specialized professional skills. In such a case, we are avoid herewith the vital necessity of contributing through the process of education, in a form of *Bildung*, e.g., transformation of ourselves into a different state of being that is able to adapt and to respond to the unexpected challenges of life. Reflections on this issue have been constantly growing in the course of the past centuries and present education as a means of confrontation with "ignorance and stupidity of the people" (D. Hume), addressing "radical evil that beset all human being" (I. Kant), acknowledgement of humans as "deficient

creatures" (*Mängelwesen*) (J. G.Herder), and "a not yet determined animal" (F. Nietzsche). It culminated in A. Koestler's identification of *Homo sapiens* as a "biological freak, the result of some remarkable mistake in the evolutionary process". Among the voices of those who were not inclined to share the idealized perception of human beings in their factual situation was also Albert Einstein. In a letter to Hannah Arendt dated 24 July 1950, Hermann Broch wrote about his visit to Princeton and the conversation with Albert Einstein in which Einstein comes to a somber conclusion in his remarks about the nature of human being: "Mankind was and remains always stupid and there is no pity of it. The only pity is that there would not remain those who could play Bach and Mozart" (Arendt-Broch 1996: 142).

However, there was a clear tendency to ignore these formulations of the factual situation of human beings who accept the misery of their natural condition. We forget that it is precisely here that the possibility of their becoming *human* through the process of education lies. The very idea of the traditional concept of *essentia* as opposed to *existentia* becomes in this case questionable as it implies the availability of something in human beings that only needs to be developed. That is why Martin Heidegger insists in "Being and Time*"* that the distinctive ontological character of *Dasein* "lies in its existence" (Heidegger 1986: 42). It means that particularly in this *deficiency* as a lack of our genetic pre-determined development lies the *potential* of human self-creativity which can be fostered through the process of education.

The tendency to ignore this crucial factor of human development and to replace it with providing a specialized knowledge in the form of information betrays the very idea of humanities education. It inevitably results in a continued reliance on the (already discredited) neo-Kantian orientation to the sciences that presupposed the essentially situationless, non-historical subject which ignores the factual historicity and relativity of every human expression.

Although, as José Ortega y Gasset insists, "Man is always in danger of being but a pseudo-self" (1963: 109), it becomes especially clear in the twentieth century, that humans tend to appear in a form of "mass-men", void of the qualities traditionally prescribed to them, but in reality with their degradation towards "man without qualities" (R. Musil), "man without content" (G. Agamben), "The Hollow Man" (M. Lilla), etc.

The Masks of Education

The dramatic formulation by Hannah Arendt that "reality became opaque for the light of the thought" seems to be presently even more justifiable than it was in the middle of the last century. To this highly dramatic declaration of the deep intellectual crisis, which is a sober summary of the intellectual crisis of the Western culture in the twentieth century, she also adds a painful acknowledgment, in the *Preface* to her book *Between Past and Future,* that we have discovered that we live in the desperate situation "when the old metaphysical questions were shown as meaningless; that is, when it began to dawn upon modern man that he had come to live in a world which his mind and his tradition of thought were even not capable of asking meaningful questions, let alone of giving answers to its own perplexities" (2006: 8).

Unfortunately, the lack of criticism toward our own state of mind, addressed to reality we live in, has been since then not only continued to be ignored but even reinforced by the growth of an illusionary way of thought accompanied by the implementation of the various forms of wishful thinking and its corresponding attractive phraseology, which rather contributes to the "eclipse of reality" (Eric Voegelin) than to its revealing. Typical case of this is the intensive weaponization of the almost magic formula — "critical thinking", which has recently become an instrument of heavy use and abuse, and which only overshadows our present inability to cope with the increasing challenges of our lifes. The real crucial issue of this allegedly "critical" thinking is whether it is thinking at all in its particular factual situation.

José Ortega y Gasset, who has been called by Albert Camus as the "perhaps the greatest European writer" after Nietzsche, while addressing the issue of the present "crisis of the intellectual and crisis of intellect", uses in this context the term "the masks of thinking": " When we look for the phenomenon of thinking — thinking in its authentic form — where we have good reasons to expect it, we find ourselves beset by a swarm of things that pretend to be thinking but are not" (1963: 59). We need to acknowledge that we are deal here with a deeply rooted perception of our understanding of the nature of thinking, the main principles of which were initiated in the Greek tradition and which experienced various studies of its evolution in the course of the European intellectual tradition.

The main feature of this evolution, however, consists in its growing estrangement from being and the separation of intellectual activities into the sphere of sterility and the increasingly pretentious thinking in the form of the *vita contemplativa*. The very roots of this perception of thinking lie in the positioning of humans and ascribing them an innate capacity, this found its culmination during Renaissance which proclaimed unlimited power of human's knowledge over reality. Leon Battista Alberti (1404–1472) epitomized this concept of the "Renaissance man" as a multi-talented and broadly educated individual. He was fond of saying that "men can do all things if they will" and was known for his boundless energy, was a master of archery, an excellent rider, and an intellectual who could juggle with equal ability a conversation about literature, law, linguistics, mathematics, astronomy, music, and geometry" (For more, see Rosselini 2018: 349). The development of European thought, starting from the time of Plato, through Aristotle's *Organon* and Francis Bacon's *Novum Organum,* has found its culmination in Descartes' *Discours de la* Méthode which proclaims that thinking not only represents an innate trait of human beings but would be able to provide knowledge that is constantly and steadily progressing.

Behind this deeply rooted prejudice is the Cartesian understanding of human beings as *res cogitance* which, similar to natural beings — *res extensa*, already *possesses* all necessary qualities needed for its being in the world. According to Ortega y Gasset, this Cartesian principle appears, however, as a deeply rooted prejudice: "Nothing is more unfair than to credit human "nature" — our "nature", the sum and substance of what is given to us and which we possess congenitally — with all those intellectual procedures the poor being called "man" has to work with out with toil and trouble in order to extract himself from the pit into which he fell by coming into existence" (1963: 65).

Bureaucracy on the March

There is a well-known statement in the Bologna Declaration of 1999: "A Europe of Knowledge is now widely recognized as an irreplaceable factor for social and human growth and as an indispensable component to consolidate and enrich the European citizenship, capable of giving its citizens the necessary competences to face the challenges

of the new millennium, together with an awareness of shared values and belonging to a common and cultural space." Further we read: "We must in particular look at the objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education. The vitality and efficiency of any civilization can be measured by the appeal that its culture has for other countries. We need to ensure that the European higher education system acquires a world-wide attraction equal to our extraordinary cultural and scientific tradition" (http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/bologna/bologna).

Such optimism in the context of which education becomes a powerful instrument, shared on both sides of the Atlantic, was dominant at the end of the twentieth century to such extent that when I was asked the question during an interview given to *The Providence Journal,* (Rhode Island, US), in September 1998, "What has happened in Russia?", with an implication for the situation of the whole former Soviet Union, the summary of this interview was published under the title "I do not belong to those who are very optimistic." This interview has been published with the conclusion: "Dr. Anatoli Mikhailov of the European Humanities University in Belarus, during a visit to Bryant College last week gave a gloomy assessment of conditions in Belarus, Russia and the rest of the defunct USSR". Unfortunately, it has taken more than a quarter of a century to come to the conclusion that without availability of the critical mass of a properly educated generation, all these expectations of possible positive societal changes remain highly unrealistic.

In his book *The End of the West. The Once and Future Europe,* David Marquand, a former member of the British Parliament and a former official of the European Commission, offers a sober analysis of the reasons for the failure of well-intentioned initiatives, including those in the sphere of education, that have been implemented during recent decades: "Like all important EU initiatives, the enlargement process was driven by a confused medley of forces — some rooted in the perceived national interests of powerful member states, some in the institutional interests of the Brussels technocracy, some reflection the attractions of a pool of cheap labor for "Old" European and particularly German capital, and some stemming from a generous idealism that echoed the Monnet vision of the early days" (2011: 147–148). However, the author adds, "The Commission officials who drove it forward viewed their interlocutors in East Central Europe much

as the British-dominated Indian Civil Service had viewed the native Indians under the Ray. One day they would be ready for membership. But that day has not yet come. In the meantime, they had to be brought up from scratch. They had to be taught democracy and market economics. They have to incorporate the thirty-five chapters and eighty thousand pages of existing Community law into their own laws. To do this, they had to submit to a meticulous program of reeducation, minutely monitored by emissaries from Brussels" (2011: 149). He goes on to describe the expected changes: "They had to unlearn their habits that they had learned under Communism, in some cases, that they had inherited from their authoritarian, pre-Communist pasts. They had to learn new ones instead, and they had to convince persnickety examiners that they are doing so. They had to recast their institutions and construct a new economic and legal architecture. In some ways, the project was the most ambitious ever seen on the European continent" (2011: 150).

We now have enough reasons to admit that all these nicely formulated ideas did not bring the expected results. However, there are no signs indicating that proper lessons have so far been learned from this experience. One of the most crucial lessons is the failure to understand that in the case of the humanities we are dealing with a *different* experience that cannot be reduced to the scientific knowledge — the problem that has dominated the European intellectual tradition since the end of the nineteenth century and which has finally resulted in the re-establishment of the Neo-Kantian paradigm of knowledge being applied to the humanities.

It was already in the middle of the twentieth century when the validity of the famous dictum of Wilhelm von Humboldt — "education trough science" ("Bildung durch Wissenschaft") — proclaimed at the establishment of the University of Berlin in 1810, was questioned by Helmut Schelsky in his article "*Man in the Time of the Scientific Civilization*". He raised the issue of the need for a "de-coupling" ("Entkopplung") of education and science in a new reality when science had become technically instrumental in its nature and incapable to contribute to education as the provision of spiritual sovereignty of a person who is able to resists to the constraints of life.

Simon Critchley indicates that "the real experience of education... is not accountable in accordance with any calculative way of thinking" and further speaks about the danger of situation when

"a middle management takeover of higher education in Britain and people with no competence and capacity for intellectual judgment force academics to conform to some sort of state administrated straightjacket" (2010: 12). He speaks in this context of the situation when "the autonomy of teachers, departments, schools and universities is being undermined by an obsession with regulation, quality assessment, transparency and all other elements of the middle management takeover of higher education." This results in "colonization of the academic lifeworld by systems of administration and a cadre of administrators who seemed suspicious and sometimes even contemptuous of the work of academics and who implemented new government initiatives with a strongly Sadistic delight. It is particularly beautiful Sadism because no one is responsible" (2010: 14). We know well that "However, academics conspire willingly with their own powerlessness and positively enjoy their depression and misery. They wouldn't want it any other way" (2010: 15).

But what is becoming a real threat to education in a very powerful British tradition, or in other educational institutions of the Western world, takes sometimes grotesque forms when we face the functioning of the internationally organized bureaucratic system applied to different cultural traditions while ignoring the availability of intellectual resources. As a result, we participate, willingly or unwillingly, in the promotion, under the name of "science", of a plethora of second-hand publications that tend to obscure rather than clarify the issues at stake. This situation was sarcastically described by Eugène Ionesco: "one writes ... more literature about literature and literature about the literature of literature" (1971: 173). As a result, by our own efforts, we are still contributing to the deterioration of an already grave enough situation in the humanities.

It means that the future of EHU should not be simply proclaimed but implemented with full the self-critical energy of what we are still doing in our practice. To do this, however, we must, in the first stage of our transformation, abandon the ambition to be part of the mass educational institutions trying to convince others and ourselves that we are producing and disseminating knowledge of high quality. We must once again go throughthe process of rethinking and creating anew, similar to the times of our emergence in Belarus in 1992. Only in this case we could try to avoid the Franz Kafka's famous saying: "There is a hope, but not for us!"

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Aliaksandr Kalbaska

An Impossible Dream? E.H.U. International Between Closure and Recovery (2004 — 2006)

Of no less importance is also learning lessons from this dramatic experience of preserving the lives and professional careers of those whose only guilt was free thinking.

—Anatoli Mikhailov

Instead of a prologue

Over the course of its 30+ year journey, the European Humanities University (EHU) in exile has been shaped by the leadership of five Rectors, each with notable human and managerial experience. Varying in the amount of time spent in rectorial positions, distinct personal perspectives, and moral qualities, these Rectors have left unique imprints on the institution. Professor Anatoli Mikhailov, the founder and first president of EHU, possessed the longest tenure and entered this role entirely unprepared. Nonetheless, he made a significant contribution to both the establishment and the renaissance of the university in exile. A Belarusian, destined to represent two countries — Belarus and Lithuania; an American, Professor David Pollick, who sought to transplant American experience and methods of university leadership onto European soil; a Dane, Mr. Jorgen Joergensen, with over 40 years of experience as a civil servant in Western Europe; a Bulgarian, Professor Sergei Ignatov, with experience as Minister of Education and university rector; and a Pole, Professor Krzysztof Rybiński, with economic expertise and two previous rectorates.

The diverse perspectives on the existence of the university in exile posed a significant challenge in obtaining responses from each of them to three questions:

Are universities in exile necessary?

Can a university in exile achieve or influence a change in power in its homeland?

Why are authoritarian authorities afraid of education?

The endeavor nearly ended in success. Four former Rectors responded to each of the posed questions, offering what one might call the "requested fish." However, the founder of EHU, Anatoli Mikhailov, in his usual and effective management style, instead of providing the "fish," gave the "fishing rod". He referred me to one of his recent articles (Mikhailov, 2023). Accepting the challenge and the results, I will attempt to synthesize the received responses, keeping in mind the somewhat gender-incorrect adage "As many men as many minds." The responses of the four former Rectors of the European Humanities University to the first question, "Are universities in exile necessary?" coincide. They agree on the vital role institutions play in promoting academic freedom and intellectual discourse in environments where such freedoms are suppressed (Joergensen, 2023; Pollik, 2023; Ignatov, 2024; Rybinski, 2024). They also emphasize that the necessity of universities in exile depends on their ability to remain faithful to their mission (Pollik, 2023). While colleagues agree on the importance of universities in exile as bastions of freedom of thought and sanctuaries for academic activities, their responses differ in emphasizing the specific functions of these institutions. Some underline the need for the universities in exile to uphold principles of autonomy and elite education, while others highlight the direct countermeasure these universities represent against stifled academic environments (Rybinski, 2024). All four Rectors advocate for the significant role of universities in exile in preserving academic integrity, fostering critical thinking, and ensuring the continuity of scientific research in complex political conditions. Anatoly Mikhailov's response is substantiated by life — precisely because he believed in it, he invested an incredible amount of effort, nerves, soul, and years of life into reviving the university abroad. He departed from Belarus forever.

When comparing the responses of the Rectors of the European Humanities University to the question "Can a university in exile bring about or influence a change of power in its home country?" it becomes evident that various perspectives were brought to the fore. Some respondents emphasize the pivotal role of education in fostering critical thinking and civic engagement for the purposes of democratic transformations (Joergensen, 2023). Others cast doubt on the degree of autonomy of the university and its capacity to influence political history (Pollik, 2023). Additionally, there is recognition of the potential of universities in exile to cultivate an elite capable of challenging existing power structures (Ignatov, 2024), alongside acknowledgment of the long-term impact of educating future generations of leaders and intellectuals (Rybinski, 2024). Taken together, these viewpoints highlight the multifaceted nature of the relationship between universities in exile and political change, underscoring both their transformative potential and the limitations imposed by external factors. Essentially, the responses reflect the complex interplay between education, politics, and societal evolution in the context of universities that have operated previously and are currently operating in exile. Anatoli Mikhailov, in his reflections on the crisis of humanities knowledge using philosophy as an example, which has lost its authenticity and direction, draws upon prophetic statements from Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, Ortega y Gasset, Gianni Vattimo, Edmund Husserl, Peter Sloterdijk, and other luminaries of thought. The text is imbued with merciless self-criticism of the humanities, which primarily considers itself, the philosopher, responsible for what is happening around: "It means ... that the present situation ... does not allow us to avoid addressing these crucial issues with our utmost responsibility" (Mikhailov 2023: 25).

The responses of the Rectors of the European Humanities University to the third question shed light on the reasons why authoritarian authorities fear education, highlighting both similarities and differences in their views. Collectively, they underscore the role of education in developing critical thinking, civic awareness, and resistance to manipulation (Ignatov, 2024). Despite differences in their specific orientations, such as the creation of educated individuals (Joergensen, 2023), the immutable character of education (Pollik, 2023), or the transformative power of knowledge (Rybinski, 2024), the Rectors' views converge on the idea that education is a powerful force that authoritarian authorities fear due to its potential to expand

rights and opportunities for individuals and serve as a catalyst for societal transformations.

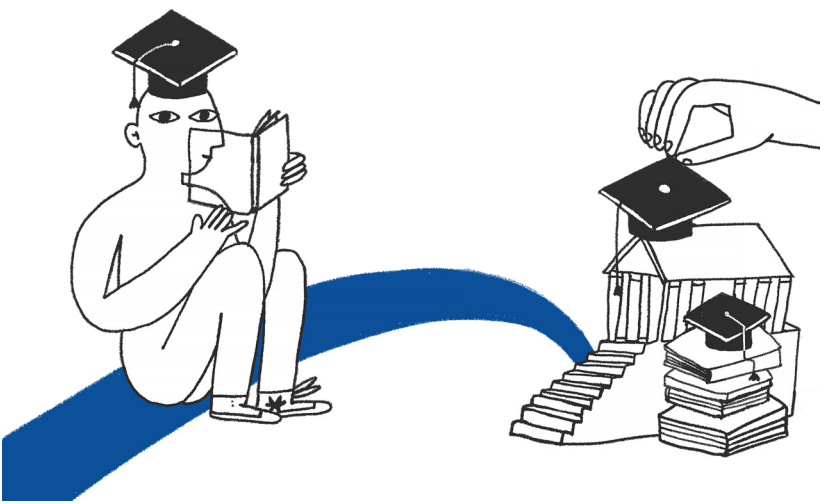
Summarizing all responses, it is evident that colleagues share the belief in the necessity of the existence of a university in exile as sometimes the only suitable place to maintain/preserve academic freedom and conduct research, especially in the humanitarian field. There is a sense of personal responsibility for the outcome of anyone involved in the project. However, universities in exile can also significantly and indirectly influence democratic processes occurring in the home country. They are unified in understanding that the prolonged pressure from authoritarian authorities on universities in exile is the best evidence of their effectiveness.

External contexts

The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the 20th century was triggered by a series of factors, some of which were external: the arms race; regional religious, ethnic and national divisions; cultural and communication revolutions; democratic movements in Eastern Europe; and the formation of the European Union. Internal reasons include the USSR's inability to adapt to changing global economic

trends and technological progress, tensions between different ethnic groups, political and ideological crises, Mikhail Gorbachev's attempt to renew the Soviet system through "perestroika" and "glasnost," and the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster in 1986. The complete picture includes bloody conflicts from the genocide in Rwanda (1994), the Yugoslav Wars (1991–2001), the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York in September 2001, to explosions in Madrid (2004) and London (2005) (Tignor et al., 2018).

The dissolution of the Soviet Union significantly impacted various aspects of life in the successor states. Belarus' independence in 1991 marked the end of a unified political space, prompting the country's leadership to implement certain political changes and to seek its own (national) identity. This search also affected the higher education system in Belarus. The Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Education" of October 29, 1991 played a crucial role in the transformation of the education system (Law of the Republic of Belarus, 2024). It emphasized the development of national identity, influencing some educational programs and the language of instruction at universities. A more diverse and open approach replaced the Marxist-Leninist ideology that dominated education during the Soviet era. Attempts were made to implement market reforms in the country and the higher education system, leading to some movement towards



university autonomy. There were broader opportunities for international cooperation and exchange at the university level. Economic problems accompanying the transition to a market economy placed universities under financial constraints, leading to the creation of private higher education institutions. By the 1996/97 academic year, there were already twenty such institutions in the country (Gille 2015: 85).

Formation, growth and closure

It is within this context that the emergence and development of the European Humanities University (EHU) in Minsk should be considered. It was founded in 1992 in Minsk, Belarus, as a symbol of Belarus' belonging to Europe and sharing its values for centuries. Shortly after it was founded by a group of intellectuals, the university quickly gained fame, recognition and interest from applicants. The ambitious university was given the official right to issue diplomas. The team of like-minded individuals grew in number; many were attracted by the existing atmosphere of experimentation, where it was possible to create, invent, and offer unique educational programs and author courses. This atmosphere of difference multiplied. In less than 10 years, EHU was recognized as one of the best private universities in the country. Thus, at the turn of the millennium, together with the Belarusian State University, EHU obtained the right to experiment with the implementation of the European (Bologna) model of education in Belarus.

As an experiment, EHU had already begun enrolling students in its bachelor's and master's programs by 2000. The university successfully underwent another accreditation process. In April 2004, the Minister of Education, Aleksander Radkov, signed a license for the educational activities of EHU for the next five years. Nevertheless, the Belarusian authorities did not have clear ambitions to create a radically new model of higher education. Instead, they attempted to adapt the former Soviet model inherited from the Soviet period. In the 2000s, the government's policy began to change demonstratively. The attitude of Ministry of Education officials shifted from overseeing a predominantly spontaneous diversification of the higher education system to tighter control over it. The main reason for these changes was political and related to the logic of consolidating

an authoritarian political regime, which sought to strengthen its ideological control over higher education and prevent any political involvement of students (Gille-Belova, 2015).

EHU, being at the forefront of changes, teetered on the brink of closure. A complex of various reasons accelerated this inevitable perspective. The university demonstrated its commitment to humanitarian education. Programs that fostered critical thinking and respect for human rights were implemented, increasing internationalization through new international connections. Traditionally maintaining strict control over educational institutions, the Belarusian government saw this as propaganda of values incompatible with state ideology, which lead to tensions in relations. There were claims in ministerial offices that the university was a thoroughfare with too many foreign lecturers. The Belarusian authorities accused EHU of engaging in political activities, suggesting that its educational programs were fostering opposition sentiments. The decade-long practice that allowed EHU to approve educational programs in an experimental order, bypassing accepted practices, did not improve relations. The clouds over the university darkened. On January 21, 2004, the Minister of Education A. Radkov proposed to the Rector, academic Anatoli Mikhailov, to resign without any arguments. In early February 2004, one of the defining rallies of the collective took place, supporting Mikhailov's intention to remain in office and not to cancel his planned trip to the United States.

In July 2004, literally two and a half months after the license was officially granted, Minister A. Radkov signed a decision to revoke the license and close the university, citing the lack of necessary educational space. The same building at 3A, Brovka Street in Minsk, where the main educational corpus of EHU was located, was needed by the Ministry of Forestry. Since all the property in the center of Minsk was under the control of the Presidential Administration, the lease agreement was terminated unilaterally. Was it that simple? Not quite. In September 2004, during a pre-election meeting at Brest University, the country's leader announced the official reason for the closure, which was to stop the intrigues of Western enemies in the country: "But there was also an implicit, main idea — to prepare here, in Belarus, at the European Humanities University, primarily a new Belarusian elite that would eventually bring Belarus to the West. As a result, the authorities were forced to revoke the license of the European Humanities University"

(Lukashenko, 2004). Another reason for the closure of EHU could be the hidden "cleansing of the electoral field," which regularly took place before each presidential election. A Rector of a university without a university cannot even become a plausible presidential candidate. From today's perspective, the chosen method of "liquidation" of A. Mikhailov as a potential candidate for the presidency of the country might even seem "humane," as other means were used and available. Thus, in the 21st century, for political reasons, EHU joined the small family of universities in exile.

The international community, concerned about the pressure being exerted on EHU Rector, Professor Anatoli Mikhailov, tried to protect him by all possible means. Ambassadors and heads of diplomatic missions accredited in Minsk from EU countries (France, Lithuania, Poland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Sweden), and the ambassador of the United States of America met with the Minister of Education A. Radkov and appealed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Martynov. All efforts were in vain. The Chairman of the European Union and the US Ambassador

made loud statements about the situation in Belarus. The EHU Governing Board held urgent meetings in Washington with representatives of donor institutions, who declared their intention to continue supporting EHU, giving priority to socially vulnerable students. Heads of European and American foundations, representatives of the international academic community, and senates of more than 70 universities expressed their willingness to support the closed EHU. The OSCE Ambassador and students from Campus Europa sent letters of support to the university corporation, the Rector, and the students. Jonathan Fanton, president of the MacArthur Foundation, wrote to the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, asking him to instruct the Belarusian government to withdraw its decision and expressing his intention "to maintain his commitment to supporting the important mission of EHU in any form that may be necessary or appropriate." Resolutions were adopted by the European Parliament (10 March 2005)

МАТЕРИНСКАЯ БОЛЬ

«Родина гусеницами проехала по молодым судьбам»

В понедельник вечером Ольга Андреева узнала о том, что ее сын Никита уже не студент Европейского гуманитарного университета

— Меня не было в Минске всего две недели, — рассказывает Ольга Яковлевна. — Уезжая в отпуск, я оставила своего сына сдающим сессию. Ему оставался последний экзамен. Когда я получила сообщение о том, что он сдал его на "5", спокойно отдыхала.

Как только мой мобильный телефон заработал на территории Беларуси, раздался звонок коллеги, который сообщил о том, что ЕГУ больше не существует. Несмотря на то, что последние полгода судьба ЕГУ была неопределенной, новость ударила очень больно.

Мой сын оказался в ЕГУ не случайно. Когда в 1992 году создавался этот университет, Никите было 8 лет. Я, как и любая мать, мечтала, чтобы мой ребенок рос здоровым, умным, честным и высокообразованным. Хотелось также, чтобы он обладал высоким уровнем самоуважения и уважения к другим людям, чтобы он мог быть уверен в своем завтрашнем дне и имел основание гордиться своей страной.

ЕГУ соответствовал моей материнской мечте. Его целью было дать молодежи то образование, за которое им не будет стыдно не только в содержательном плане, но и в отношении тех ценностей, которые лежат в основе миссии университета. По сути, ЕГУ был для меня Университетом Мечты.

Я сама закончила БГУ в 1981 году. Время юности — это время интенсивного развития личности. Так вот нашу личность развивали, заставляя конспектировать не только труды классиков марксизма-ленинизма и материалов всех съездов КПСС. Особое значение в воспитании моих сверстников имело изучение и конспектирование основополагающих работ Леонида Ильича Брежнева "Малая земля", "Возрождение" и "Целина". Конспекты этих работ не требовали разве только на уроках физкультуры. Все это так называемое идеологическое воспитание сожрало немало часов нашей молодой жизни, тех часов, которые могли быть потрачены на изучение чего-то действительно нужного, например, иностранных языков. *Время жизни невосполнимо, поэтому с ним нужно обращаться особенно бережно.* Во время моей юности этим драгоценным временем распоряжалась КПСС. Тем не менее я хочу отдать должное тем людям, которые даже в то время стремились дать студентам действительно глубокие знания и сформировать основы гуманистического мировоззрения. Я глубоко благодарна профессору В.С. Степину — выдающемуся философу, который мог бы сделать честь любой стране, но который оказался не нужен Беларуси и был вынужден уехать в Москву. Там он возглавил Институт философии Академии наук России.

Ректор ЕГУ Анатолий Михайлов, создавая университет, стремился воплотить ценности классического университетского образования, за которыми стоят усилия многих поколений европейских гуманистов. И, может быть, главной ценностью является ценность человеческой жизни и человеческого достоинства. И эти идеи объединили команду единомышленников, которым ректор мог доверить жизнь университета даже в период его отсутствия.

— Ольга Яковлевна, Вы смотрите на ЕГУ с позиции вашего жизненного опыта. Чем ценен университет для Вашего сына?

— Моему сыну не хватало 24 часов в сутках для того, чтобы реализовать все возможности, которые предоставлял университет. Для того, чтобы успеть как можно больше, Никита отрывал время от сна. Помимо блестящего учебного плана, в котором нет ни одного "мусорного" предмета, университет предоставлял возможность студентам изучать дополнительно третий, четвертый, пятый и т.д. иностранные языки, не говоря уже о том, что знание немецкого и английского языков обеспечивало способность студентов слушать лекции зарубежных профессоров без перевода. Межфакультетские образовательные программы давали возможность существенно углублять знания студентов в сфере американистики. Особое значение мой сын придавал программе "Немецкие и европейские штудии", *ориентированной на бакалаврскую учебную программу в области социальных наук в Германии.*

Может быть, не менее ценной, чем содержание образования, являлась сама атмосфера университета, где к студентам относились с большим уважением, следуя традициям классических европейских университетов. На мой взгляд, вырастить человека с глубоким чувством собственного достоинства можно только одним способом — уважая его, невзирая на возраст и социальный статус.

— Однако власти обвиняют ЕГУ в недостаточно высоком уровне подготовки студентов. Министр образования Александр Радьков в одном из своих интервью заявил, что студенты ЕГУ будут элементарно не готовы к высоким требования и критериям государственных вузов. Может быть, преувеличена репутация образования, получаемого в ЕГУ?

— *Я имею разнообразный профессиональный опыт не только психолога-консультанта,* но и преподавателя вуза. Я могу оценивать знания, полученные моим сыном, исходя как из академических, так и из практических требований. Содержание обучения в ЕГУ является глубокой академической основой для любой последующей специализации, а знание иностранных языков предоставляет возможность получать профессиональную информацию непосредственно на языке оригинала, а не в каких-либо пересказах. Студентам давались серьезные навыки в методологии научных исследований. Сам университет был включен в европейский образовательный процесс.

Давать обесценивающие характеристики ЕГУ может только тот человек, который сам плохо понимает, что такое хорошее образование или для которого хорошее образование не является ценностью.

В современном обществе важной является способность к сотрудничеству и диалогу. ЕГУ своей миссией видел посредничество между культурами Запада и Востока. Если недостатком университета считать ориентацию на европейские гуманистические ценности, то тогда больше оснований придираться, например, к Академии музыки, где студентов обучают исполнять большое количество произведений, написанных европейскими композиторами.

— Сегодня звучит много обвинений в адрес руководства ЕГУ, преподавателей, студентов в том, что они недостаточно отстаивают свой университет...

— Те способы, которыми коллектив университета пытается сохранить вуз, полностью соответствуют его названию. Руководство вуза стремится это сделать цивилизованно, избегая жлобской агрессии и показывая пример гражданского мужества и достоинства. Кстати, господин министр не продемонстрировал этого гражданского мужества и не встретился со студентами, их родителями и сотрудниками университета, чтобы, глядя им в глаза, внятно объяснить причины закрытия университета. Студенты каждый день приходят в свой университет, с ними рядом их преподаватели. Я думаю, что борьба за ЕГУ будет продолжена.

— Студентам предложили переход в другие вузы. Может ли это быть решением проблемы?

— Наши дети выбирали ЕГУ осознанно. Любой другой вуз для них подобен браку с нелюбимым человеком: жить можно, но любви нет. Вряд ли можно требовать от них в знак протеста проигнорировать этот вариант. Дети должны быть защищены хоть как-нибудь от того зла, которое творят люди, наделенные властью. Родина гусеницами проехала по молодым судьбам.

— Какой урок, на Ваш взгляд, вынесут студенты ЕГУ из этого события?

— Психологические последствия этой травмы сопоставимы с переживаниями жертвы изнасилования. Известно, что жертва сексуального насилия утрачивает способность доверять людям и прогнозировать свою жизнь. Наших детей трахнуло государство, причем в извращенной форме. Дети стали участниками реального исторического события, которое можно определить как гуманитарную катастрофу. После этого дня их детство закончилось. Это просто блестящий урок антипатриотического воспитания. Вряд ли после этого сохранится способность доверять родине, планировать свою жизнь и чувствовать свою человеческую ценность. Это событие потрясло не только тысячу студентов ЕГУ, но также их родителей, преподавателей и сотрудников, вложивших в учебный процесс не только свой профессионализм, но и душу. Реальный смысл события выходит за пределы университетского сообщества. Это мощное послание системы каждому из нас — это "колокол, который звонит по тебе".

Мария ЭЙСМОНТ.
Фото photo.bymedia.net

and the UN Commission on Human Rights (14 April 2005). However, as Rector A. Mikhailov noted in his address to the university community: "The outrageous violation by the Belarusian authorities of the law in relation to EHU caused unprecedented solidarity of the world academic community, which in turn supported the creation of 'EHU in exile'" (Mikhailov 2009: 866).

Relocation

Under the leadership of the first Vice-Rector Professor Vladimir Dounaev, the evacuation of the of the four-storey educational building took place over two weeks. During the summer holidays, there were daily rallies of the community in defence of EHU, the distribution of nearly a thousand students to state universities (some of whom had spent the summer abroad on exchange programs), the dismantling and "storage" of educational equipment, and the rescue of a library containing more than 60,000 books and educational aids. Against the backdrop of bleak personal life trajectories for teachers and administrative staff, there was constant (24/7) personal and telephone pressure from parents, who were extremely concerned about the fate of their children. At the time of the closure of EHU, the Faculty of Arts was the largest in the university. It consisted of three departments — Museum Studies and Tourism, Art Studies and Design — and employed almost half of the university's teaching and administrative staff.

By September, all the students of the Faculty of Arts who were in Belarus at the time of the university's closure had been transferred to Minsk's Higher Educational Institutions: students of the design and art history departments to the Academy of Arts, museology and tourism to the History Faculty of BSU, with compulsory elimination of academic differences. For example, at the History Faculty of BSU, the difference in curricula was 11 historical disciplines! Part of the EHU students, who were at partner universities in Germany, Sweden, the USA on exchange programs during this scorching summer, had the opportunity to continue and complete their studies there. Nearly 60 people were accepted into the Smolny Faculty of Liberal Arts at St. Petersburg University. The freshmen who had just been recruited to the Faculty of Arts were enrolled in the specially created BSU Faculty of Humanities.

The problem of choosing and finding employment for the teachers and administrative staff of the closed university turned out to be far from simple. Deciding not to tempt fate, five out of eight faculty deans and a significant part of the staff returned to state universities. At the same time, the first Vice-Rector Vladimir Dounaev, the Vice-Rector for educational work Tatsiana Halko, Ala Sakalova, the Dean of the Faculty of Law, Ryhor Miniankou from the Faculty of Philosophy, Aliaksandr Kalbaska from the Faculty of Arts, along with several dozen professors and methodological staff of the university, followed in the footsteps of the former Rector of EHU, Anatoli Mikhaylov into the unknown...

As for EHU's graduate students, they were proposed an option to complete their studies at the EHU at a distance. However, this required the teachers themselves to learn and master distance learning methods. Quickly disillusioned with the very unfriendly situation of E-learning 3000, they turned to MOODLE and became practicing it under the supervision of Mrs. Maria Davydovskaya. At the same time, an intensive search was made for a city/country that could host the expelled university.

E.H.U. International

Of the possible relocation options (Poland, Russia, and Lithuania), the most convincing offer came from the Prime Minister of the Republic of Lithuania, Algirdas Brazauskas. Anatoli Mikhailov and Vladimir Dounaev moved to Vilnius with their families. To address organizational, logistical, and procedural aspects of university preparation and opening in exile, the non-governmental public institution "E.H.U. International" was registered on October 28, 2004. It had its own headquartered in Kražu 25; the statutes were signed by President Anatoli Mikhaylov, his deputy Vladimir Dounaev and Executive Director Alina Juskiene, a former student of Minsk's EHU Faculty of Arts. Work continued to find real donors willing to support the new organisation financially. The Lithuanian government was joined by the European Commission, the Open Society Institute, the Nordic Council of Ministers and the embassies of several European countries. Work began on developing the concept of the University in Exile, forming working teams on both sides of the border, managing the distance

learning process during the current 2004–2005 academic year, and preparing to defend the diplomas of those graduates who remained in Belarus or found themselves beyond its borders. Development and accreditation of new educational programs in accordance with the requirements of the Quality Control Center of the Republic of Lithuania. Legal documents for the registration of the university were prepared. The admission campaign was conducted. The dormitories for students were found as well as the accommodation for the temporary residence of lecturers. Even the most sceptical organizers did not believe that all this could be done and that classes would start in the autumn.

From March 15 to 18, 2005, "E.H.U. International" held a conference in Druskininkai, Lithuania, on "Experience and Perspectives of Development of Educational Programs in Belarus." For three days, 57 colleagues discussed the status and limits of possibilities for "E.H.U. International", the state of the existing process of distance learning for graduate students, improvement of communication mechanisms with students and among themselves; technical support for programs, defense of theses in Belarus and abroad, preparation and issuing of diplomas; features of advertising new EHU programs in new conditions; qualification enhancement and creation of an information base for lecturers; possible relocation of part of the Minsk library abroad and the creation of a reading room in Minsk.

During the trial winter of the academic year 2004–2005, one of the parallel activities was the communication and guidance to diplomas for graduate students abroad. Thanks to the proactive and very humanitarian attitude of the former employees of the closed Center for

German studies at EHU, P. Liezigang and F. Knodler, several dozen students from the Faculties of Design, Museology and Tourism, as well as "orphaned" students from the Faculty of Informatics, managed to study in Germany. Students were accepted at the Free University in Berlin, the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt-on-Oder, and the Fachhochschule (University of Applied Sciences) in Saarbrücken. At the end of the winter, several colleagues traveled to Frankfurt and Saarbrücken to check on progress, implement the curriculum and conduct classes. In June, the graduation committee accepted the defense of the diplomas in Berlin. And this would be nothing extraordinary if it weren't for the fact that at the same time(!) work had to be done at a distance to rebuild the closed art faculty. In different parts of Europe, colleagues worked tirelessly to write new descriptions and collect sets of documents for the registration of programs in design, contemporary art, cultural heritage and tourism of the restored Faculty of Arts in Lithuania. The intensity of communication sometimes reached such a level that during our stay in Berlin we had to share a single "migrating" laptop among several people. We left it under the bedclothes in the rooms of the student hostel where our colleagues were staying. So that the "owls" could use it in the first half of the night and the "larks" from the early morning. On it they "polished" the drafts of the programme descriptions and sent them in parts for translation into Lithuanian.

On June 9–10, 2005, a significant event in the history of EHU took place in Vilnius. An international conference publicly inaugurated "E.H.U. International". The conference was welcomed by the President of Lithuania Valdas Adamkus and the President of the MacArthur Foundation Jonathan Fanton, the member of the European Parliament Rolandas Pavilionis, the President of the Lithuanian Rectors' Conference V. Kaminskas. Greetings were read from the world-famous philanthropist George Soros and the Chairwoman of the European Commission Benita Ferrero-Waldner. The participants were congratulated by the representatives of the embassies of the USA, Sweden, the Netherlands, and other European countries. The presentation of the project "EHU in exile" was carried out by the president of "E.H.U. International" Anatoly Mikhailov. The inaugural conference empowered "E.H.U. International" to prepare for the opening of a full-fledged university. The celebration was adorned with the awarding of diplomas from "E.H.U. International". On the same day, a donors' meeting was held, chaired by Dan Davidson, President of the American Councils for International Education, and the head of the International Council of EHU, to discuss the format and size of the current and future financial support for the university. The representatives of the educational institutions, Blair Ruble, Director of the Kennan Institute, and Teppo Hekkanen, Director of the Office of the Council of Ministers of the Northern Countries in Vilnius, initiated a comprehensive brainstorming session, not only to determine the needs in the budget, but also to focus on the future operation of the University and its equipment. William Newton-Smith, representative of the Open Society Institute, emphasized in particular the welcome continuation of the activities of "E.H.U. International" in Minsk and and the willingness of the Institute to provide two-thirds of the required annual amount for the distance education of students. Rymantas Vaitkus, Vice-Rector of the University named after Mykolas Romeris, assured that in the first year, "E.H.U. International" would be provided with some premises on Didlaukio Street, 350 square meters, to be shared with the Faculty of Politics and Management in the building on Valakupių Street, with lecture halls, a library and the internet. Ironically, this is where the Police Academy used to be. EHU could start work as early as 1 September, or in October 2005 at the latest. The following year, when the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania issued a licence to EHU, Mykolas Romeris University agreed to expand

the space for EHU. George Krol — U.S. Ambassador to Belarus assured that the embassy and the U.S. State Department support and will support the EHU (financially, diplomatically and morally). The representative of the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed about the start of a dialogue with the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the Swedish Institute — two organisations that could help with financing. The Counsellor of the German Embassy in Lithuania, Joachim Schmill, not only confirmed that Germany would stick to the line of supporting EHU but also announced a specific proposal: the Viadrina University (Frankfurt on the Oder), the Free University of Berlin and the Goethe Institute in Minsk would provide 80 scholarships for EHU students to study in Germany. The French Ambassador to Belarus Stefan Hmielewski announced the political decision of the French government to support EHU as long as possible. The President of the public institution "E.H.U. International" Anatoli Mikhailov, expressed his sincere gratitude to those present and drew attention not only to the need for financial support for the creation of a small administrative structure from Vilnius, but also to the often insurmountable problem of communication with some Western institutions and the sometimes insurmountable bureaucratic difficulties that stand in the way of the E.H.U.'s development. For example, embassies working in Belarus cannot support the institution in Lithuania, a European Union country. Conversely, embassies of countries working in Lithuania cannot support a Belarusian institution there. Eurasia confirmed its readiness to support the university for the next three years in the area of "Human Rights and Democracy", which became a significant support. However, it did not coincide with the terms of the students' education at the university and created additional stress and tension before each new intake of students.

Soon, a new thunderbolt resounded from the team of the renewed Faculty of Arts. In an urgent video call to Vilnius, the Vice-President of E.H.U. International, Vladimir Dounaev, issued an ultimatum. It is impossible to reopen the Faculty of Arts in Minsk. There is a categorical demand from donors for its reformatting. The decision had to be made that very day. The brilliant brainstorming led to a complicated "umbelliferous" solution — we will create a Department of Art and History. A new program with three specialisations was prepared for registration on the basis of the emerging program 'Belarusian Studies' by Pavel Tereshkovich. The first specialization was 'Belarusian History

and Culture', with 'Intercultural Communication' being the second, under the disguise of which the program 'Contemporary Art' found refuge. And the third specialization was 'Preservation and Use of Cultural Heritage', which 'covered' the program 'Cultural Heritage and Tourism.' The design program was renamed into the 'Visual Design and Media' program. The 'covered' programs/specializations were separately submitted for registration at the Lithuanian Center for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC). A relatively stable model of the Faculty's existence was built, where students, having completed an additional module of 10 disciplines (60 credits) over 4 years, could obtain diplomas in two specializations. And it worked! We got registered! We did not lose the support of donors! We convinced/inspired students. And the students, after four years, defending two bachelor theses, received two diplomas. Within the 'E.H.U. International', in addition to the three renewed faculties/departments: International and European Law (Ala Sakalova); Arts and Cultural History (Aliaksandr Kalbaska); Philosophy and Political Sciences (Ryhor Miniankou), a fourth one was created, that was the Department of Social Sciences headed by Almira Ousmanova.

In Minsk, things were unfolding in their own way. Under the leadership of the former preparatory faculty of EHU the language courses "Propilei" were revived. As a continuation of the work to attract and prepare future applicants for enrolment at the EHU. In order to ensure work experience and payment for their work

in Minsk, the European Cultural Institute was registered, which in October 2005 had 30 employees. Through it, agreements were made with E.H.U. International to develop distance learning courses along the same lines as those registered in Lithuania, but specifically for Belarusians without legal status abroad.

The first-year students of the Faculty immediately faced a number of challenges and difficulties. They had to move into the dormitory at 12 Sauletekis Street the day after the builders left. The conditions they left behind were not very comfortable. Getting used to the new living conditions was accompanied by repairs to some of the showers and washrooms. Installation of a communal kitchen. Getting used to uncomfortable neighbours one by one. Independent wallpapering. Replacing the laminate flooring. Forming habits of self-service. Solving existential questions such as whether to do your own laundry or send it home to mum, whether to clean the lampshades of lazy flies or go into hibernation with them? The dean had to go from the station to the dormitory with a cake to gather in the reading room at midnight to support the fighting spirit. And in the morning, he would encourage the cleaning of the scenes and the cleaning of the warm batteries by his personal example. A unique document has survived in which the first-year students, during their first meeting, recorded their complaints: from the lack of furniture, cold floors, the invasion of cockroaches, to the futile visits of Monday roofers, as parents worked on that day.

It wasn't any easier for the teachers. Skieste Miskinite was also responsible for drawing up the timetable. It was necessary to integrate our activities into the real educational process of another academic institution, to use all possible premises for teaching, including the cold rooms of the former shooting range. it had no windows because it was underground, next to the academic building, and was characterised by unpredictable power cuts. The lack of classrooms in the building forced the school to make Sunday a working day from the outset. Since only a few of the administrative staff of E.H.U. International had Lithuanian legal status, Belarusian visitors from the Institute of Belarusian Culture took over the educational process on a rotating basis. It was accompanied by the full flavour of community life, the weekly change of different neighbours, bringing to Vilnius everything a person needs for a week of living and teaching, from a computer and methodological handouts to changeable shoes. above that there was an obligatory export of all belongings to the home on the other side of the border. Since the train with the new visitors arrived in Vilnius at 10 p.m., and the predecessors had to leave the apartment by that time, the problem of handing over the keys to the apartment was often solved with the help of the station's luggage storage cameras and SMS communication. In addition, the schedule had to take into account the capabilities and expectations of the teachers themselves, who had different work and family responsibilities at home.

The search for the university's own identity abroad became quite a challenge. Belarusian. European. International. Lithuanian. The Carnegie Corporation-funded Centre for Advanced Study and Education (CASE) was established in Minsk in 2003 under the co-direction of Svetlana Naumova and Pavel Tereshkovich. Scholars from Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova focused on the 'social transformations of border regions' in Western Eurasia in the pages of serial publications such as 'Crossroads' (Perecrestki) and the English-language 'Crossroads Digest' (Johnson, M.S. and Tereshkovich, P., 2014: 235). The Centre's activities continued in Vilnius.

Each member of the EHU community and each external observer had their own view and answer to this question, sometimes diametrically opposed. Consensus was hard to find. For example, there were no limits to the astonishment of the students of the "Belarusian Studies" programme when they heard Mr Uladzimir Rouda's lecture

"Introduction to Political History" in Russian. Demonstratively they left the auditorium and handed in a petition with 42 signatures to the administration demanding that the course be taught in Belarusian. After the second lecture, which was held in Belarusian, 32 signatures were collected in favour of teaching the subject in Russian. Through a joint brainstorming between the administration and the students, a compromise solution was found: each lecturer at the EHU chooses the language of instruction. Students retain the right to respond in the language in which they feel most comfortable expressing their own thoughts. This unwritten language code remained in force until 2022, when the Senate drafted and approved the "Declaration on Languages at EHU".

European Humanities University in exile

On February 22, 2006, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the establishment of the European Humanities University in exile, and on March 2, President Anatoli Mikhailov officially signed the "Law on the Establishment of the EHU". This law outlined the University's mission, goals, governance structure and legal basis for its activities, with particular emphasis on its role in providing higher education and promoting humanitarian research.

The admissions campaign for the summer of 2006 was launched with renewed vigour. Under difficult conditions, and despite an unofficial ban in the Belarusian media and state television, it was possible not only to advertise recruitment, but also to mention the name of the EHU. Social media networks and the usual "word of mouth" from students and their parents helped. The authorities did not stand aside, inserting 'hot news' in the press and on television about EHU students not only using drugs, but also dealing them in Vilnius and generally engaging in unknown activities. Belarusian customs and border guards, especially before the celebration of Freedom Day on March 25, carried out 'surveillance' of EHU students and teachers at the border. They inspected personal belongings, searched computers. For dozens of colleagues, this resulted in spending the night at the state border.

The 2006 enrollment doubled the number of EHU students. Thanks to the honor of the donors, first-year students received full

tuition, free accommodation in dormitories, and even a scholarship. This made it easier for students to adjust to life abroad, but it often did not contribute to high academic performance and did not stimulate a strong interest in studying. Weekly visits by colleagues, especially administrators, became regular trips — week after week. Stays in Vilnius reached up to 15 working days and the problem of relocation arose for many. In different cases, it had different solutions and different consequences for families and institutions. But that's another story.

The case had to go on. In February 2006, thanks to the efforts of the current staff of the university and with the support of the Eurasia Foundation, an important conference was held on the current issues of distance education. The focused discussions of the participants revolved around key issues: how to envisage the strategic development of distance education programs, how to ensure quality within these programs. How to develop distance learning courses in an optimal way, taking into account the quantity, quality and volume of educational materials, and the specificities of the Humanities and Social Sciences. Also, which digital platforms should be used for collaborative and group activities. The discussions were aimed at increasing the effectiveness, accessibility and activity of distance education, which the participants had to apply immediately when organising courses with distance learners.

Conclusions and Instead of Epilogue

Time has not waited to see how two and twenty years have passed. Three conclusions can be drawn from the experience three years of intensive restoration of the university in exile.

1. The university demonstrated its ability to withstand a blow. Its closure and relocation to Vilnius revealed the resilience and determination of its community. Despite political pressures and numerous daily challenges, the university's leadership, faculty, students, and donors worked together to fulfill EHU's mission. A space for independent academic research and education was maintained even under conditions of repression.
2. It is impossible not to note that the relocation and restoration of EHU in Vilnius became possible thanks to significant international support. The participation of the Lithuanian government, the European Commission, the Council of Ministers of the Nordic countries, as well as the support of various European countries and international funds played a decisive role in ensuring the continuity of EHU's activities.
3. The period of "EHU International" was marked by a search for strategic adaptation and new growth points. The university showed its ability to adjust to changing circumstances by developing new programs and initiatives. It made continuous efforts to preserve its Belarusian identity and mission in exile, while also seeking integration into the Lithuanian and European academic communities.

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At the international conference held at the Pontifical Catholic University of Parana in Brazil in November 2023, the organisation Scholars at Risk (SAR) presented a project monitoring academic freedom worldwide. The analysis covers 409 attacks on academic communities in 66 countries and territories between July 1, 2022 and June 30, 2023. Cases of violence range from the use of force by Iranian authorities to suppress student participation in the Women, Life, Freedom protest movement to proposed US legislation restricting the teaching of unpopular subjects. The list of countries and territories is striking: Afghanistan, where the Taliban took the extraordinary step of banning women from higher education; Russia, Belarus, China and Turkey, where government

repression of intellectuals has reinforced a culture of fear and self-censorship; Iran, India and Sri Lanka, where police have used violence to suppress student expression. In Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine, military operations destroyed the premises of several universities.

Today, the Republic of Belarus continues to replenish its own portfolio with new cases. In addition to the closure and expulsion of EHU beyond the country, the following were added:

- The imprisonment of former EHU staff member Tatsiana Kuzina/Kouzina for 10 years;
- The imprisonment of Marfa Rabkova, a third-year student of the EHU's International Law and Law of the Eurasian Union programme, who was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment in 2002;
- A two-year sentence imposed on 11 students of the Belarusian Students' Union and their teacher;
- The persecution and dismissal of dozens of scientists from the Academy of Sciences for their participation in the Telegram group "Scientists Against Violence", which the Belarusian authorities described as "extremist".

As we can see, Belarus has firmly established itself among the authoritarian countries and seems unwilling to give up its position.

Is this a new story or a continuation of the old one?*

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* In 2024, a virtual exhibition of the same name — An Impossible Dream? *E.H.U. International Between Closure and Recovery (2004–2006)* — was created. Available at https://ehumuseum.tilda.ws. Illustrations by Darya Pauliuchenka, Design program student.

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Liudmila Ulyashyna

Legal and Social Aspects of the 'Third Mission': The Case of a University in Exile (Lithuania/Belarus)

Quo vadis?[42] *Once upon a time, this question was posed to someone who was going to fulfil his mission — filled with suffering, tension and joy — and to open new perspectives of life. It can be posed to every individual, community, nation, and to all of humanity. It is a question about the meaning of history and the role of each participant in it.*[43]

Introduction

Teaching and research are recognised as two main missions of universities. The 'Third Mission' (TM) as a relatively new notion emerged half a century ago to encompass community engagement and social responsibility. In other words, the TM emphasizes the role of universities in contributing to societal development, fostering innovation, and addressing local and global challenges through collaboration with various stakeholders. Its development coincided with, or perhaps was even caused by, a rising demand for the 'knowledge economy,' alongside significant political and socio-legal changes across the continent. These changes fostered hope for the establishment of a cohesive European environment, where rights and freedoms, including academic freedom, would be upheld. However, this progress has not been without its challenges. Indeed, The collapse of the Soviet Union and the transition of Eastern European countries away from the socialist model paved the way for integration into international human rights legal systems.

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42 «Where are you going?»

43 Extracted from the concept of the conference "Quo vadis European Humanities University? EHU, 27–28 September 2024

Together, these developments underscored the role of higher education institutions not only in learning and research but also as active contributors to democratic governance, societal progress, and the realization of human rights in a newly integrated European landscape.

In reality, however, the development of some post-Soviet countries reveals complex challenges. In this, respect the experience of Belarus is chosen to illustrate the hard road to academic freedom and engagement with civil society. The invitation to Belarus to join the European system of human rights protection and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has largely been in vain due to political decisions rooted in authoritarianism and self-isolation. While countries such as the Baltic states have successfully integrated into these systems, Belarus's journey has been marked by setbacks, including its suspension from the Council of Europe in 1997 due to undemocratic practices.

In 2004, the European Humanities University (EHU), established in Minsk in 1992, was compelled to leave the country. Lithuania became the first European nation to offer refuge to a university in exile, granting EHU the status of a Lithuanian university. The readiness of the entire Belarusian academic community, suppressed in its own country, alongside the solidarity of the academic and political establishment in Lithuania, facilitated EHU's relocation and sustained its commitment to freedom in practice. This choice allowed EHU to continue its objectives based on European values. Nowadays, the Council of Europe (CoE) recognizes EHU as "the only Belarusian university functioning under the principles of academic freedom," as noted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE. The EHU, now based in exile in Vilnius since 2005, "is capable of exploring new opportunities to further strengthen creative, free, and critical thinking among Belarusian students and has the potential to attract scholars and students from the countries of the Eastern Partnership," the Assembly states (Council of Europe, 2023: 3).

For the purposes of this study, EHU serves as a contemporary example of a university in exile. The scope of the study limits the analysis of the university by focusing on it's mission(s) or objectives, including also so-called Third mission. The terms may be used as synonyms in a *mutatis mutandis* manner. Thus, the article´s focus embraces a combination of two *lex specialis* statuses: the Third Mission and the Third mission for a university in exile.

When discussing the relevance of this focus, researchers cannot overlook the increasing prevalence of authoritarian regimes and the mounting pressures on free science and education, especially in Eastern Europe and the Eastern Partnership countries, often termed the "post-Soviet Eurasian space" (Simonyan 2024: 83). This ongoing crisis of democracy is exacerbating the rise of authoritarianism, underscoring the urgent need for European institutions to enhance their support for scholars who advocate for liberal education rooted in academic freedom.

Despite the discrepancies between Eastern and Western Europe, a recent study by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) (Euronews, 2025, February 27) reveals that Europe's democratic health remains resilient amid a worldwide decline. In 2024, while Eastern Europe continued to experience a decline in democracy, Western Europe improved marginally by 0.01 points. The negative trend in the post-Soviet region leads to a deficit of free thought and diminished academic freedom, adversely impacting civil society. In authoritarian regimes, this marginalization is both a consequence and a goal of restrictions on freedom. Consequently, there has been a significant rise in the mass migration of scientists and academics, often entire teams, seeking refuge in Western democracies due to repressive conditions that hinder free research: Off University in Germany, Svobodny University, and Academic Projects in Exile with the "Independent Institute of Philosophy" among others. The EHU is at the top of the list of academic institutions that have emigrated in the search of freedom and its experience in that respect is of special significance.

Data from the 2021 Survey of Impact on the Country of Origin (Belarus) conducted at the request of the Lithuanian authorities highlight the significant contributions of EHU alumni to civic development in Belarus (SATIO, 2021). The survey coincided with the worsening political climate following the 2020 presidential elections, which led to widespread human rights violations (OSCE report, Benedek, November 2020). Despite these challenges, the survey revealed that EHU graduates have played a vital role in transforming Belarusian society upon their return. Alumni reported that they valued the academic and extracurricular opportunities provided by EHU, which had a significant impact on their professional and personal development.

They have made notable contributions to the socio-economic and cultural development of Belarus, particularly in fostering entrepreneurship, independent research, and civil society (Ulyashyna, 2023: 104).

This article will address the following questions:

- What legal and social frameworks allow universities in exile to cultivate community engagement and social responsibility as part of their Third Mission?
- How does the experience of the European Humanities University (EHU) exemplify the legal and social dimensions of the Third Mission for universities in exile?
- What legal challenges and social opportunities do universities in exile encounter in fulfilling their Third Mission towards their country of origin, and how do these elements shape their role in contemporary academia?

The aim of this article is to explore the evolving concept of the "Third Mission" of universities in general, particularly in the context of higher education institutions operating in exile. It seeks to highlight the challenges faced by scholars and universities that have relocated due to oppressive environments, as well as the need to redefine their roles in supporting the civil society in their country of origin from exile. This redefinition must align with the legal regulations of the host state and European policies regarding the role of modern universities.

This research scope encompasses a comprehensive examination of the evolution of the Third Mission in higher education since the 1990s. Moreover, it will analyze legal provisions and the social aspects associated with the EHU as a university in exile, detailing its transition from Belarus to Lithuania and the strategic and operational challenges it faced in contributing to its home country's society as well as to the local and broader European academic landscape.

To achieve this, the research will use internal documents from EHU and relevant legal frameworks from Lithuania as primary sources to conduct a thorough legal analysis and social assessment of the implications of integrating the Third Mission into the core mission of EHU. Additionally, the study will address the broader implications of the Third Mission for universities in exile and their potential to foster democratic values and support communities in politically challenging environments.

The article is divided into two main parts, each addressing critical aspects of this theme. The first part examines the general legal approach and various modes of the Third Mission in "regular" European universities. It delves into the academic research and policy frameworks that enable institutions across Europe to engage with their communities, drive innovation, and contribute to societal development. In addition, this section illustrates how European normative provisions and policy papers operate at the national level, using Lithuania's national implementation as a demonstration. It also includes an analysis of relevant legislation and practices concerning the European Humanities University (EHU).

The second part focuses on the experience of the EHU in its pursuit and performance of its missions. Its path to the Third Mission has been dramatic due to existential challenges in its country of origin and the process of defining its identity after becoming a refuge. Questions concerning the definition of its general mission and the characteristics of the implied Third Mission represent a unique experience that is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the Third Mission's models, especially for a university in exile. Finally, a concluding section will present the results of the analyses discussed in the article and provide answers to the research questions.

Part 1. Third Mission in European universities

The phrase "Third Mission" may seem straightforward. In the introduction to the article, it is briefly presented as complementing education and research in universities. However, for a more consistent and comprehensive application, there is a need for a three-level analysis. First, the author will disclose its semantic meaning and then present scholars' views on this phenomenon from the perspective of its function and content in the context of the evolving role of universities. Furthermore, for a complete understanding, the Third Mission (TM) will be examined through a brief comparative overview of its normative manifestations in the updated edition of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* and other legal and policy instruments in the field of education, including the national legislation of the Republic of Lithuania, a European country that hosts the EHU in exile. The aim of this analysis is to provide a set of approaches and key characteristics of the Third Mission

as it pertains to universities. While the attempt to define the notion does not imply a unified legal definition, it represents a social reflection of the term from the perspective of its practicality, including its application to universities in exile.

Semantic or lexical analyses

The term consists of two words — "Third" and "Mission" — which are widely used. The reason for breaking it down into its individual elements is to determine the meanings of these components in common use and then to combine them to derive their significance in relation to universities, which are the subject of this study, with an emphasis on the area of their activities that pertains to the application of the phenomenon of the Third Mission.

According to the Oxford Dictionary, the word "Third" refers to the number three in a sequence, indicating the position after the second and before the fourth. It is used to denote one of three equal parts or divisions of something. In various contexts, "third" can also refer to a third party or an additional element in a situation, such as in legal terms or discussions involving multiple stakeholders (Oxford, 2024: Third). This latest meaning most accurately reflects the current situation or status quo in which the Third Mission of universities exists. Recognized significantly later than the two classical areas of university responsibility, it still appears to be viewed as an "additional" element rather than one of equal standing.

The word "Mission," as a noun, refers to the commission, business, or function with which a messenger, envoy, or agent is entrusted, especially the task assigned to a political or diplomatic representative (Oxford, 2024: Mission). It is evident that although the mission in relation to universities is not mentioned in the dictionary, this does not prevent the expansion of the concept of mission to encompass the university as an agent responsible for education and other related activities.

The combination of the two words — "Third Mission" — has not been found in the consulted dictionaries. However, the analysis of the individual words allows us to define the semantic meaning of this special term in relation to the object of study — universities. The content and aspects of the Third Mission will be analysed further. At this stage, we can conclude that the lexical meaning of the concept of the Third Mission in the context of universities signifies that

this mission complements the two traditional roles of any university: teaching and research. While education and research are widely recognized, the term "Third Mission" is newer and may not always be used due to the lack of established practices for its application. Therefore, although the functions and tasks of the socially oriented activities of modern universities aimed at enhancing societal well-being may align with the theory of the Third Mission, their designation may be expressed differently.

Academic analysis

Starting with a retrospective look at the historical evolution of the university's role and mission, it is reasonable to introduce Brian Martin's view, which examines universities, particularly in relation to the legacy of John Henry Newman — a theologian, academic, philosopher, historian, writer, and poet. Indeed, Newman, in his influential work *The Idea of a University* (Newman, 1907: 381–392), emphasized the importance of a liberal education that fosters critical thinking and moral development rather than merely vocational training. Martin underscores Newman's vision of the university as a place for holistic education and the cultivation of knowledge for its own sake, contrasting it with contemporary trends that prioritize practical skills and economic outcomes. Martin asserts that, universities have traditionally focused on two missions: teaching and research. He describes universities as the "high protecting power of all knowledge and science, of fact and principle, of inquiry and discovery, of experiment and speculation" (Martin, 1982). In summary, Martin's analysis reflects on the tension between traditional ideals of higher education, as articulated by Newman, and the modern realities of university functions, and emphasises the need to reconsider the foundational purposes of universities in the light of historical perspectives

In his other work, "What Should Be Done About Higher Education?", he introduces the main elements of a modern university without directly mentioning the concept of the "Third Mission," but discusses the role of universities, their engagement with society, and critiques of their current functions (Martin, 1989). According to Martin's understanding, the core aspects of the Third Mission include (1) the participation of universities in societal development and knowledge transfer, (2) community engagement beyond the traditional

teaching and research roles, and (3) the intention to contribute positively to social movements and community empowerment.

At the beginning of the millennium, in 2000, Klofsten and Jones-Evans (Klofsten and Jones-Evans, 2000: 302–320) presented the Third Mission of universities regarding their relationship with industry, emphasizing the need for supportive frameworks that foster academic entrepreneurship. Their research highlights the proactive role of academic institutions in bridging the gap between scientific advances and industrial applications. One significant challenge facing European economies is the limited ability to transform scientific breakthroughs into commercial successes. By examining entrepreneurial activities of academics in Sweden and Ireland, the study defines academic entrepreneurship as commercialization activities beyond basic research and teaching. The authors investigate factors influencing these activities, including gender, age, prior entrepreneurial experience, and the university environment. Their findings reveal a substantial level of entrepreneurial experience among academics, leading to significant involvement in "soft" activities such as consultancy and contract research.

The evolution of universities as we moved into the next millennium recognizes a significant shift in universities´ purposes. Universities are no longer seen by researchers solely as institutions of higher education, but as vital engines of social and technological progress and economic growth. Universities play a crucial role in these areas, especially at the regional level (Acs, Fitzroy, and Smith, 1995: 299–302). Thus, the phenomenon of the 'Third Mission' coincided with the rise of the 'knowledge economy" (Barret, 2018) and the Bologna Process in Europe in 1990s (Bologna Declaration, 1988). Scholars´ research prove that these initiatives have led to major changes aimed at improving the unity and quality of European universities (Nicolò, Raimo, Polcini, Vitolla, 2021).

Moreover, as universities have evolved further, as universities have evolved, there has been a shift from the traditional role of knowledge creation and dissemination to innovation-driven institutions that emphasise entrepreneurship, collaboration, sustainability and social engagement (Cai, Ahmad, 2021: 23). The concept of the Third Mission has flourished in this context, signifying universities' active roles in regional innovation and community engagement. This mission encompasses activities beyond teaching and research, highlighting the university's contributions to social well-being, and knowledge

transfer. Engaged universities enhance people's skills and knowledge, contribute to local development projects, and build partnerships with businesses (Benneworth, de Boer, Jongbloed, 2015: 280–296). As part of this paradigm shift, new models such as the "civic university" (Civic University Network, 2019) and the "regionally engaged university" (Sanderson, Benneworth, 2009: 1–18) have emerged, emphasizing the integral role of universities within civil society and regional innovation systems (Goddard, Vallance, 2011). According the recent scholars´ research, these initiatives have led to major changes aimed at improving the unity and quality of European universities and a new role of the universities has been increasingly seen as centers of innovation, where knowledge is generated and shared with external stakeholders, including businesses and communities (Nicolò, Raimo, Polcini, Vitolla, 2021: 88).

Moreover, academic works reveal also different models illustrating how universities adapt their missions in response to societal needs and challenges, including the need for local development, support for democratic values, and the promotion of resilience in communities facing socio-political challenges (Marhl, Pausits, 2013). Scholars identify three driving factors that differentiate the types of the "Third Mission": social, entrepreneurial, and innovative (Montesinos, Carot, Martinez, and Mora, 259–271) The *social aspect* includes activities aimed at non-economic gain, such as providing voluntary social services, forming social networks, and hosting open cultural events at the university. The *entrepreneurial aspect* involves universities generating commercial profit as a differentiated source of funding, including contract-based collaborative research, commercialization of intellectual property, offering paid professional development programs, and renting out facilities for exhibitions or conferences. The key component of the *innovative direction* of the "Third Mission" is the concept of enhancement, exemplified by regional innovation projects, the establishment of networks with entrepreneurs, patent implementation, and consulting for government agencies. From an innovative perspective, the "Third Mission" of universities is to use research for transformative change.

Moreover, academic works reveal various models illustrating how universities adapt their missions to societal needs, such as local development, support for democratic values, and resilience in communities facing socio-political challenges (Marhl, M., & Pausits, 2013). Scholars identify three driving factors that differentiate "Third Mission" types:

social, entrepreneurial, and innovative (Montesinos, Carot, Martinez, & Mora, 259–271). *The social aspect* includes non-economic activities such as providing voluntary services, forming social networks, and hosting cultural events. *The entrepreneurial aspect* involves generating commercial profit through contract-based research, commercialization of intellectual property, offering paid professional development programs, and renting facilities for exhibitions. *The innovative direction focuses* on enhancement, exemplified by regional innovation projects, networking with entrepreneurs, patent implementation, and consulting for government agencies.

This review has examined the evolution of university missions, with a particular focus on the Third Mission alongside the traditional teaching and research functions. The literature shows universities that universities are increasingly acting as drivers of innovation, economic development, and community engagement in response to the demands of the knowledge economy. While this expanded role creates opportunities to demonstrate relevance and secure resources, it also presents challenges to institutional identity and resource allocation. To gain a complete understanding of how Third Mission theory translates into practice, further analysis of normative frameworks and national implementation strategies will be presented. This subsequent examination will reveal how conceptual models are incorporated into institutional realities across different contexts and regulatory environments.

Normative framework on the Third mission

The framework of Third Mission regulations can be presented as a composition of three types of instruments: 1. those developed by European universities as professional education institutions, 2. a normative framework that includes hard law and policies within the EU, and 3. the national implementation of the Third Mission by individual governments and their agencies.

Magna Charta Universitatum

Established in 1988 and signed by 388 rectors on the occasion of the 900th Anniversary of the Alma Mater in Bologna, it serves as a foundational document outlining the principles and missions of higher education (Magna Charta Universitatum, 1988). It emphasizes

the vital role of universities in promoting knowledge, culture, and societal advancement. Although it is not a normative act, it reinforces essential principles, including the independence of institutions from political, economic, and social pressures, which is crucial for fostering free inquiry and critical thinking. Additionally, the Magna Charta underscores the importance of academic freedom, allowing scholars to explore and disseminate knowledge without fear of censorship. This principle is essential for fostering innovation and diverse perspectives within academia.

The 2020 edition of the *Magna Charta Universitatum* emphasizes the need for universities to adapt to an interconnected world, acknowledging the challenges posed by rapid technological change and evolving societal expectations. In this context, the scientific community is expected to explore new possibilities while maintaining its commitment to knowledge and social transformation. The updated Charta builds on well-developed scientific analyses of the Third Mission and stresses the responsibility of universities to engage with society and make a positive contribution to community development and sustainable progress.

Bologna Declaration of 1999

The next document, which significantly reshaped the perception of European universities, emphasizing their vital role in fostering a "Europe of Knowledge" for social and human growth. It recognized universities as key contributors to the intellectual, cultural, and technological dimensions of society. Signed in 1999 by 31 European ministers of education, it aimed to enhance the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) while emphasizing the independence and autonomy of higher education institutions. By promoting objectives such as the adoption of a two-cycle degree system and the establishment of a system of credits for student mobility, the declaration supports the Third Mission of universities — engagement with society and contribution to social and economic development. Additionally, the Bologna Declaration encourages universities to align their curricula and research with the needs of society and the labor market, thereby enhancing graduates' employability and ensuring that higher education institutions contribute positively to social movements and community empowerment. The Declaration provides "a framework for universities

to address contemporary societal challenges while maintaining a competitive and cohesive European higher education landscape (Bologna Declaration, 1999).

European Union law and politics

Further development of the framework has been supported by the economic power of the European Union. The Lisbon Strategy, initiated in 2000, aimed to position the European Union (EU) as the leading competitive knowledge-based economy by 2010, highlighting the critical roles of research, innovation, and education in driving economic growth and social cohesion. A key element of this strategy was the establishment of the European Research Area (ERA, 2022), designed to enhance collaboration among member states in the field of research and technology.

The Framework Programmes for Research and Technological Development (FP1 to FP9), created by the EU, have provided essential funding since 1984 and have evolved to meet changing research priorities. Rebranded as Horizon in 2014 (European Commission, 2020) these programmes support not only the academic commitments outlined in the Bologna Declaration and the Magna Charta Universitatum but also foster a Knowledge Society by facilitating collaboration between universities, businesses, and civil society. This aligns with the Third Mission of universities, which is to promote citizenship and address societal needs through innovative projects.

The implementation of these initiatives is guided by the Amsterdam Treaty (Resolution, 1999), which mandates the development of research policies. The European Commission, supported by various advisory groups, defines the programmes and strategies. Overall, the Framework Programmes play a pivotal role in advancing research and innovation and in promoting effective collaboration that benefits both academia and society.

Thus, an analysis of scholars' works and an overview of existing normative acts and policies regarding modern European universities allow the author to identify common elements of their missions, with a focus on the so-called Third Mission. The rationale behind the Third Mission concept is implicitly expressed through its overarching goal: to increase universities' positive impact on the well-being of society. Furthermore, the Third Mission is not always explicitly mentioned but

is indirectly included in key normative acts and EU policies through phrases such as "research, innovation, and education in driving economic growth and social cohesion" and "higher education and research systems continuously adapt to changing needs, society's demands, and advances in scientific knowledge." (Resolution, 1999, European Education Area, 2022). Another characteristic is that the Third Mission is not necessarily strictly separated from research and education. While in most universities the Third Mission is seen as supplementary to education and research, its implementation may intertwine with the two "classical" missions of modern universities.

In addition to the preliminary findings on the driving factors that differentiate the types of the Third Mission — social, entrepreneurial, and innovative — an important characteristic is that it can manifest in various modes, such as: by *Civic Engagement* modes universities are increasingly viewed as an integral part of civil society, promoting democratic values and community empowerment through active participation in local development and social movements; in case of *Innovation focus,* institutions aim to bridge the gap between scientific research and industrial applications, fostering academic entrepreneurship and supporting technological advancements to drive economic growth. In case of so-called *Knowledge Transfer* model*,* universities engage in the dissemination of knowledge beyond their traditional teaching and research roles and facilitate collaboration with external stakeholders, including businesses and communities. Finally, in case of *Community Development,* a university emphasizes its responsibilities to contribute positively to societal development, addressing local needs and challenges through innovative projects and partnerships. Being closed to another model, namely the so-called *Social Impact,* universities are called to enhance social well-being by actively addressing societal issues and challenges, thereby reinforcing their role as centers of innovation and knowledge generation.

These different modes of the Third Mission demonstrate that universities can tailor their activities to support societies with knowledge and innovation, regardless of their specific education or research fields. Last but not least, Third Mission activities, regardless of their mode of appearance, require support in terms of developed policies, as well as managerial and financial backing provided by the universities or external actors. Generally, the Third Mission reflects a significant evolution in the role of universities, emphasizing their commitment to societal engagement,

economic development, and cultural awareness alongside their traditional functions of teaching and research. By actively participating in local and global challenges, universities are positioned as vital contributors to the sustainable development of society.

National implementation of the European Third Mission policy

This part will be illustrated through the national legislation of Lithuania, a country where the EHU — an example case study — was re-established in 2005 and continues its operations at the time of preparing this article. This section will illustrate the implementation through the legislative act "Law on Science and Studies," (Law 2009) specifically its Preamble, which reflects the main elements of the Third Mission concept without explicitly mentioning it, while highlighting several modes of universities' activities for the sake of societal well-being.

Adopted in 2009 and amended in 2017, the national law in Lithuania reflects the modern understanding of the role of education and research institutions by providing a general description of the mission of science and studies: "to help ensure the prosperity of the country's society, culture, and economy; to support and incentivize the full life of every citizen of the Republic of Lithuania; and to satisfy the natural desire for knowledge." This national law exemplifies the major changes aimed at improving the unity and quality of European education, which "underpins the development of the knowledge society, strengthens the knowledge-based economy, and promotes the sustainable development of the country, alongside the dynamic and competitive life of the economy and social and economic well-being; cultivates a creative, educated, dignified, ethically responsible, civic, independent, and entrepreneurial personality; nurtures the civilizational identity of Lithuania; and supports, develops, and creates the cultural traditions of the country and the world" (Law 2009: Preamble).

The following table presents the wording from the National Law (Lithuania) and the Magna Charta Universitatum (2020 edition) regarding a university's role through specific elements that encompass all three missions: education, research, and service to society. The missions of these universities are broken down by functional characteristics, such as integration with society, ensuring quality and equal access to education, fostering civic and cultural responsibility, responding effectively to change, and demonstrating a commitment to development (in the left

column). Elements of the Third Mission, which are characterized by innovation, civic engagement, and social impact, are also included among others; they do not stand out separately. Even if the words "innovation," "civic engagement," and "social impact" do not appear explicitly in the provided text they are implicit mentioned. The central column contains excerpts from the national law, while the right column features excerpts from the Magna Charta.

Element	**National Law on Science and Studies (Lithuania)**	**Magna Charta Universitatum**
Purpose of Education	Aims to ensure the prosperity of society, culture, and economy; supports the full life of every citizen and satisfies the desire for knowledge.	Establishes universities as sites for free inquiry and debate, promoting the pursuit of knowledge and understanding, which is essential for societal advancement.
Independence	Emphasizes the need for quality in science and studies, implying a degree of independence in research and education to meet societal needs without external interference.	Independence is a fundamental principle, asserting that research and teaching must be free from political and economic influences. This independence fosters an environment conducive to critical inquiry and academic freedom.
Integration with Society	Focuses on the need for the science and study system to align with societal and economic needs, promoting openness and integration into the international research and education space.	Acknowledges that universities can take many forms influenced by culture, geography, and history, thus emphasizing their role in crossing cultural boundaries to achieve human understanding and societal development.
Quality and Equal Access	Guarantees quality in education and equal rights for all citizens to obtain higher education, ensuring that the best can pursue scientific work and improvement.	Emphasizes the importance of quality in education and the integration of teaching and research, ensuring that all students are engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, which inherently supports equality and access to education.

Element	**National Law on Science and Studies (Lithuania)**	**Magna Charta Universitatum**
Civic and Cultural Responsibility	Cultivates a creative, educated, and ethically responsible citizenry; nurtures the civilizational identity of Lithuania and supports cultural traditions.	Promotes openness to dialogue and rejection of intolerance, fostering a diverse academic community that can contribute to cultural understanding and civic engagement. The principles support the development of a knowledgeable citizenry capable of engaging in civic matters and contributing to social transformation.
Response to Change	Addresses the need for a harmonious system that underpins the development of a knowledge society and supports sustainable development, reflecting adaptability to societal changes.	Recognizes the evolving landscape of higher education and the interconnectedness of the world, urging universities to adapt to new technologies and modes of learning while maintaining their role as positive agents of change and social transformation.
Commitment to Development	Highlights the importance of a knowledge-based economy and social well-being, indicating a commitment to the development of the nation and its citizens.	Emphasizes the continued relevance of its principles in the face of global challenges, calling upon universities to identify their responsibilities in the 21st century to foster human advancement through inquiry, analysis, and sound action, thus underpinning their commitment to societal development.

A brief comparative analysis allows for some preliminary conclusions. Firstly, the absence of the terms “mission” or “Third Mission” in both international and national documents indicates that the roles and objectives of universities are reflected through key

elements that define modern universities. Understanding these elements and principles implies the possibility of obtaining answers to questions related to education, research activities, and societal engagement. Secondly, the examined National Law´s and the Magna Charta´s provisions represent a vision for universities that integrates education, research, and community service. Analysis shows that both emphasize education's role in societal prosperity and the pursuit of knowledge, with the Magna Charta highlighting universities as centers for free inquiry. These instruments underscore academic freedom and autonomy, while also advocating for alignment with societal needs, promoting cultural understanding and development. Thus, they highlight quality education and equal access as crucial for fostering knowledge and scientific work, recognizing the role of universities in nurturing an educated, ethically responsible citizenry and promoting civic engagement. Finally, while not mentioning the Third Mission explicitly, they underline universities' ability to adapt to societal changes and emerging technologies, acting as agents of positive transformation and playing vital roles in fostering societal development through knowledge, especially amid global challenges.

Enforcement of the European policy by the Lithuanian state agency

The enforcement of European Union policy and law regarding modern universities will be illustrated through the Lithuanian state agency that monitors and certifies university operations in science and education (SKVC) for all Lithuanian higher education institutions. In its 2023 report, SKVC highlights EHU's alignment with the Lithuanian Law on Science and Studies, emphasizing the importance of education and research in promoting societal prosperity and cultural identity (SKVC, 2023: 24–25). It is remarkable, how the agency applying national law and approaches developed in the EU policy acknowledges the EHU's progress in international engagement, particularly through partnerships like the Open Society University Network. It notes critically that EHU's involvement in significant research programs, such as EU Horizon, remains limited. The Agency highlights that while the university's study programs are increasingly developed in collaboration with national and international partners, its contribution to international research initiatives is still lacking. The report

suggests that although EHU's mission aligns with the law's goals of fostering an educated and responsible citizenry, strategic improvements are needed to enhance cooperation with civil society and international partners.

In conclusion, it can be said that the 2023 SKVC report on EHU clearly reflects the university's efforts to adhere to the principles outlined in the Preamble of the Lithuanian Law. While the state agency emphasized this alignment, it also noted areas for improvement, particularly regarding enhanced strategic planning and effective implementation of the mission. This report serves as a significant milestone in the complex legacy of EHU in its search for its mission, including the Third Mission. A more detailed account of this challenging journey will be presented in the next section.

As a general conclusion to the first part of this article, it is important to emphasize that the presented materials — academic research, normative frameworks, European policy, and national pathways for implementing the university's mission with respect to the phenomenon of the Third Mission — help illustrate that the activities aimed at creating a space and connection between academia and society, as well as the international integration of university activities, are recognized as essential elements of a modern university. Whether this activity is termed the "Third Mission" or not, as well as what specific type of a University´s activity will be developed for benefits of society, can vary significantly and often overlap with the "classical" missions of teaching and research.

Part 2. EHU and its Missions

For this study, EHU serves as a contemporary example of a university in exile that has pursued its missions over the past three decades. The choice of these missions has not been straightforward, owing to political forces opposing academic autonomy in its country of origin and the challenges of identity for a university in exile. The analysis of EHU's mission encompasses the period from 1992 to 2024, highlighting the university's role and its resilience in transforming by adjusting previous objectives to new realities and legal frameworks. The university's mission and objectives will be considered synonymous in a mutatis mutandis manner. This section will explore

the combination of two *lex specialis* statuses: the university in exile and its Third Mission. Additionally, it will discuss the role of a state that adheres to international obligations and fulfils them in good faith.

EHU in Belarus

Founded in Belarus during its transition period in 1992, EHU aimed to educate specialists in the humanities and foster dialogue among European cultures. The university´s objectives were *to create a pan-European cultural space, preserve spiritual continuity, and train professionals dedicated to European values, preserve spiritual continuity, and train professionals dedicated to human rights*. EHU operated successfully in Minsk until 2004, achieving significant educational and cultural goals. In his book Prince Jr. (Prince, 2008: 89–91) noted that when the university was founded in 1992, initially offering a Ph.D. along with an undergraduate program, the Ministry of Education, the Belarus Academy of Sciences, and other public institutions supported EHU as a crucial step in reconnecting Belarus with the Western European educational tradition, which embodies the foundations of a democratic civic culture. As the university evolved, there were significant hopes that EHU would help guide Belarus into the Bologna process initiated by the European Union, aimed at harmonizing the educational systems of member countries. The growing authoritarianism in Belarus, especially after the 1996 referendum, and state pressure due to EHU's extensive international connections, became unacceptable to the regime. In 2004, the Minister of Education of Belarus asked the rector, Anatoly Mikhailov, to resign, but he refused. Despite being an independent institution, EHU's license was revoked on a technicality, with the government citing unsuitable premises (Ash, 2013).

Numerous publications have been written about the fate of the EHU, and while not all of them agree, most highlight the adherence of its mission to the principles of the Magna Carta and European higher education policy. To draw a comparison, the objectives of the EHU in the 1997 Statute (EHU, 1997) centered on preparing highly educated humanitarian specialists, fostering dialogue among European cultures to create a pan-European cultural space, maintaining spiritual continuity amidst new statehood, training professionals committed to safeguarding human rights and dignity, and

offering opportunities for intellectual, cultural, and moral development. According to the Statute (EHU, 2000), the primary objective of the university's establishment and activities is to blend European experiences with national traditions in higher education based on fundamental scientific research. This aim is to prepare a new generation of Belarusian specialists who can facilitate interactions between the West and the East, thereby enhancing mutual understanding among cultures (EHU, History).

Today, as the importance of both European and global values must be re-recognized for the continued existence of humanity, it is pertinent to emphasize that EHU's mission in the 1990s and early 2000s fully aligned with the axiological goals and principles outlined in the UN Charter. One of these principles highlights the importance of the efforts of the international community and each state to promote social progress and improve living conditions in greater freedom. The restriction of academic freedom made it impossible for EHU to achieve the stated goals and forced the university to relocate to another country. The solidarity of scholars, as well as the Lithuanian state regarding the future of Belarusian science and education, allowed for the practical realization of the principles of the UN Charter, as well as its special provisions, which mandate the UN and its member states to foster solutions in international cultural, economic, and educational cooperation and require all UN members to engage in collaborative and individual actions in this regard (UN *Charter*, 1945: 55 "b", 56).

Once EHU's mission, initially aimed at *an alternative civilizational path* (Michailov, 2009: 857) was rejected by the Belarusian authorities, its legacy, reflecting a commitment to European goals, became crucial for determining its direction and gaining support.

Lithuanian soil

On July 27, 2004, EHU relocated to Lithuania to continue its educational activities based on academic freedom and European values. In 2005, with support from President Valdas Adamkus and international backing, the EHU's move was facilitated. In that time, EHU faced challenges in adapting to the EU's educational landscape, particularly concerning programs and support for Belarusian students and faculty as well with its mission while starting a new stage of the university´s life.

Fortunately, institutions like Mykolas Romeris University (Vilnius, Lithuania) provided valuable assistance. Recognized as a university in exile de facto, EHU aligned its programs with Bologna Process standards, allowing it to grant EU-recognized diplomas on Lithuanian soil. While the struggle for academic freedom appeared successful, sustained support from the EU, the Nordic Council, and other organizations was crucial. In the summer of 2012, EHU celebrated its 20th anniversary, and the following year, it was honored with the Atlantic Council Freedom Award in recognition of its steadfast dedication to democracy in Belarus, providing Belarusian students with a free and democratic environment for their education (Lithuania-EU, 2012).

Meanwhile, EHU underwent a self-identification process to redefine its mission at this new stage of development, which was not an easy task. In the Statute (EHU, 2011: 3), the mission was formulated as following: "To create conditions for our students, graduates, and academic staff to acquire and deepen knowledge so they can participate more effectively and consistently in achieving the task of ensuring a better quality of life for themselves and their civic society. In doing so, they assist Belarus and contribute to its integration into Europe and the global community". A brief analyse of the EHU mission (2011) and the mission of high education institutions articulated in the national law *On science and studies*, shows that the common goals in prioritizing the development of individuals and society through education, emphasizing civic responsibility and cultural identity have been pertained. However, EHU highlights its unique role in its mission to Belarus, focusing on the needs of its community while aligning with broader European values, whereas the Lithuanian mission adopts a national perspective that incorporates European goals. EHU's mission specifically supports Belarusian students and faculty, facilitating their integration into European society, while the Lithuanian mission aims to enhance the prosperity of society, culture, and the economy as a whole. Both missions advocate for integration and openness — EHU connects Belarus with Europe, while Lithuania emphasizes its integration into international research and higher education. In summary, while both missions aim to enhance individual and societal well-being through education, EHU focuses on its unique context within Belarus and its integration into Europe, whereas the Lithuanian mission emphasizes national prosperity and inclusivity within a broader framework.

The wording of the EHU mission (2011) has received strong critique from experts invited by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC, 2014: 5–15). According the SKVC, the EHU mission was being predominantly Belarusian and lacking orientation towards Lithuania, despite being recognized as a Lithuanian university by law. They recommended that the EHU reconsider "its mission and identity and formulate a clear description of its mission that acknowledges its current position and the perspectives of all its stakeholders, and/or prepare a more detailed description of how its mission is understood within the EHU community, incorporating it into a new strategic plan to be prepared by the end of 2014. Experts recommended in defining its true mission, the University should also clearly identify its external social stakeholders, not only supporters but especially considering Lithuanian social and business partners (SKVC, 2014: 31).

Interestingly, that the SKVC underlined also a divergence in how management and academic staff perceive the mission, with some viewing EHU as a "Belarusian university in exile," while others see it as a "Lithuanian" and "European university." This confusion, in the SKVC´s opinion, indicates that the mission may be too broadly defined and lacks clarity within the community. The evaluation team concluded that, while EHU's educational efforts meet the needs of Belarus, the institution must redefine its role and engage more actively with Lithuanian society to fulfil its new mission as a "normal Lithuanian university." (SKVC, 2014: 6–7). In its recommendations, the evaluation group emphasizes the need to clearly define EHU's mission and identity to align with strategic planning and foster unity among stakeholders.

Struggle of EHU for self-identification in exile

Following recommendations of the 2014 SKVC evaluation, the EHU has prepared the EHU Strategic Plan 2016–2021, which included what the university´s team described as its revised *Statement of the European Humanities University Mission and Values* (Strategic Plan, 2016: 7). However, the SKVC commission (2017) criticized the text considering that the one-page statement doesn't explicitly identify its mission, but rather refers to its aspiration to "pursue its mission within a community in which caring and concern for others is a core value" and states that

"at the heart of EHU is the production and dissemination of socially responsible and critical knowledge in the social sciences and the humanities..." (SKVC, 2017: 7). Moreover, it concluded that despite significant efforts by the university to collectively discuss and present its own mission description, "the university remains without a consistently documented and understood mission" (SKVC, 2017: 17). The 2017 SKVC institutional evaluation emphasized the need to reach a consensus on this mission to prevent the university from being pulled in conflicting directions, which could harm its fundamental operations.

Remarkably, in the same report, the SKVC assessed, alongside educational and research activities, the "impact of the university on regional and national development," in other words, the "Third Mission." Although this component was not explicitly named as such, the envisaged activities fall into one of the Third Mission modes (specifically, Social Impact, where universities are called to enhance social well-being by actively addressing societal issues and challenges, thereby reinforcing their role as centers of innovation and knowledge generation) and received a positive assessment.

However, the SKVC encountered challenges in its evaluation. On one hand, the influence on society was difficult to deny as a merit of EHU's work; nonetheless, the SKVC expressed doubts about assessing this impact since EHU's influence appears negligible for Lithuanian society, while it is significant for Belarus and the EHU community, which, according to SLVC, struggles to clearly and reliably define itself. This confusion is reflected in the following statements: "EHU is primarily oriented towards Belarusian culture, which limits its compliance with Lithuanian evaluation criteria. The university's previous mission focused on benefiting Belarusian society, as evidenced by its student body, over 95% of whom are Belarusian. While EHU engages in activities supporting cultural and social development in Belarus, its contribution to Lithuania remains unclear and underdeveloped." (SKVC, 2017: 17). Moreover, the SKVC in 2017 acknowledged EHU's origins, legacy, and significant impact on Belarusian society, affirming that its role as a university in exile remains relevant in 2017. Evaluators also appreciated EHU's contributions to social life in Belarus, noting positive community effects and that 83% of returning alumni find employment in their fields while participating in civic initiatives.

The SKVC confidently stated that the university aims to cultivate change agents among its graduates and promote critical thinking,

fostering a vibrant Belarusian intelligentsia. This conclusion was based on the fact that Belarus has been emphasized in EHU's student programs and research, with theses designed to apply knowledge in the Belarusian context. Despite these positive aspects, the SKVC evaluation highlighted challenges faced by EHU, particularly when its strategic management and research activities received a negative assessment, resulting in the revocation of its permission to conduct studies in February 2018.

The revocation of EHU's permission to conduct studies came as a shock to the university's academia and administration. In a letter addressed to the SKVC team, they outlined the key discrepancies that prevented EHU from aligning with "normal" higher education institutions. They emphasized that "operation in exile is not a symbolic sentiment. EHU is forced to navigate "the dual regulations of Lithuanian hospitality and Belarusian oppression, facing unique challenges such as numerous migration permissions and labour regulations, restrictions on advertising in Belarus, and double taxation. No other Lithuanian counterparts experience such a breadth of difficulties, and the status of the University in Exile significantly influences EHU's daily operations and strategic decisions" (SKVC 2017, Annex: 12).

Mission of EHU as a matter of international obligations of Lithuania

As illustrated in the previous section, the assessment of the mission of the Belarusian university in exile was conducted based on Lithuanian legislation, which reflects only the general role of the Lithuanian universities in society. The unique status of the EHU as a university in exile made it a "lex specialis" entity, distinguishing it from other higher education institutions in Lithuania. As a result, due to the equal application of general legislation to unequal subjects, the EHU found itself in an unequal position and could not meet the general requirements, as it was engaged in activities aimed at fulfilling a mission primarily oriented towards Belarus.

Since November 1991, Lithuania has been a State Party to both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights. It is committed to fulfilling its obligations to individuals in good faith and avoiding unequal treatment that leads to discrimination. Therefore,

despite the existence of the necessary legislative acts and institutional support for higher education, Lithuania faced the need to develop special implementation measures. These measures should include not only legislative acts but also administrative provisions specifically concerning the EHU as a university in exile. Such measures would allow for an institutional assessment that takes into account the EHU's mission aimed at a future democratic Belarus, ensuring rights and academic freedom for students and staff (Ulyashyna, 2024: 85).

During the period from 2011 to 2017, the formation of the EHU mission, considering the focus on Belarusian society, was challenging. As a result, both EHU students and academic staff faced negative consequences related to the suspension of the university's educational license by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Sport. In fact, the main reason for the unsatisfactory institutional assessment was the difficulty in understanding the mission of the university in exile, which could not reflect its true purpose without violating the national legislation. The institutional evaluation by the SKVC became a trigger for the necessity to update the general legal prescriptions to include provisions concerning universities operating in exile.

The efforts of the EHU academic community to overcome doubts and disagreements regarding its own mission, considering the recommendations of the experts who conducted the institutional evaluation, did not go unnoticed by the government. The situation was brought forward for discussion among members of Parliament, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Office of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania (Seimas, 2018). It became evident that the absence of a specific legal framework hindered the EHU, which operates outside its home country for the benefit of Belarusian society, from meeting the standards set by Lithuanian institutions. Members of Parliament noted that this situation jeopardizes the interests of students, Lithuania's ability to fulfil its international commitments, and its reputation.

Consequently, amendments were made to the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, which define a university in exile as "a Lithuanian higher education institution whose activities in its country of origin have been terminated for political reasons." (Law, 2018, art. 4, para. 6). The status of such institutions is granted by the Government based on the proposal of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, the host state has been actively developing this

legal framework, adapting national regulations to EHU's unique status and mission while aligning with European standards for higher education. Specifically, the Methodology for Conducting Institutional Review in Higher Education Institutions in Exile, approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) on November 4, 2020, Order No V-90 based on the Government of the Republic of Lithuania resolved on February 12, 2020, to amend Resolution No. 149 from March 1, 2017, regarding the implementation of the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania (No. 113) tailored regulations which establish the criteria for assessing the fulfilment of the university's mission, which is de jure Lithuanian but, in essence and rationale, serves the society of its country of origin.

These instruments were ready to serve as a basis while assessing the EHU performance with respect to the Impact Assessment conducted in 2020–21 (SATIO, & CiVITTA, 2021) and in 2023 (MFA Lithuania, 2023).

Results of the Impact Assessment as realisation of the EHU mission

New legislation paved the way to conduct the assessments of the EHU impact on Belarus and the region. It included the list of questions for the collecting data and drawing conclusions:

1. Analysis of the scope of the impact on the development of the country or region of origin foreseen in the HEI (high education institution) in exile strategic documents.
2. An examination of what distinguishes the HEI in exile from other HEIs in the country of origin and how this distinctiveness is important for the development of the country of origin.
3. Assessment of how the HEI in exile contributes to the dissemination of democratic European values in the country of origin (and region).
4. Data on the number of alumni (students) who return to their country of origin after graduating from the HEI in exile.
5. Examination of the contributions made by students and alumni of the HEI in exile to political, social, economic, and cultural transformations in the country of origin.

6. Assessment of how the HEI in exile contributes to the promotion of equal opportunities and diversity in the country of origin.
7. Information on whether and to what extent the inclusion of topics of relevance to the country of origin in the descriptions of final theses is foreseen (according to study programmes).
8. Analysis of the diversity and dynamics of expression of social (civic) activity by the academic and administrative staff of the HEI in exile.
9. Description of the ways in which the HEI in exile cooperates with social partners in the country of origin (or related to the country of origin).
10. Information on how international donors and civil society organisations in the country of origin perceive the HEI in exile.
11. Assessment of the role of the HEI in exile in ensuring that nationals of the country of origin (students and lecturers) have access to common European higher education programmes.

In 2021, analysing the collected data from Belarus as well as from internal self-evaluation report, the following Summary of the External Review Report on EHU's Impact might be drawn and useful for further analyse: *1.* EHU has a strategic focus on fostering civil society in Belarus. The 2021 Survey highlights how EHU graduates contribute significantly to the socio-economic and cultural development of their home country, especially following the political unrest in Belarus post-2020 elections. *2.* EHU distinguishes itself from other higher education institutions in Belarus by providing a politically and ideologically free education. This environment promotes democratic values, critical thinking, and creativity among students, essential for the country's development. *3.* EHU plays a crucial role in disseminating democratic European values in Belarus. Through its academic programs, it cultivates a mindset resistant to authoritarianism, encouraging alumni to engage in social transformation upon their return. *4.* Approximately 75% of EHU alumni return to Belarus after graduation, actively participating in NGOs and initiatives that promote social change. This statistics underscores the university's influence on the next generation of Belarusian leaders. *5.* EHU alumni significantly impact political, social, economic, and cultural transformations in Belarus. They lead efforts in entrepreneurship, independent research, and civil society development, demonstrating the effectiveness of the EHU's educational approach. *6.* EHU fosters equal opportunities and diversity through its policies, such as the "EHU Code of Conduct"

and initiatives within its Centre for Gender Studies, promoting gender equality and inclusivity. *7.* While the inclusion of Belarusian topics in final theses is not mandatory, many students choose to explore these subjects, reflecting their relevance and the students' engagement with their national context. *8.* EHU's academic and administrative staff demonstrate active civic engagement by participating in protests and contributing to public discourse on issues relating to Belarus, thereby enhancing the university's role as a civic actor. *9.* EHU maintains strong ties with civil society organizations and the media in Belarus, facilitating collaborative projects that support its mission to promote democratic values and civic engagement. *10.* International donors view EHU favorably, especially following the events of 2020. The university is seen as a safe haven for Belarusian students and academics, leading to renewed support from several donor countries. EHU actively participates in EU higher education initiatives, providing students and lecturers from Belarus with access to European educational programs, thus enhancing their academic and professional opportunities.

The overall conclusion about the EHU impact in 2020–2021 highlights that it effectively fulfils its mission of promoting civil society development in Belarus, demonstrating a significant educational and social impact that distinguishes it from other institutions in the region. The support of the Lithuanian government further amplifies this impact, facilitating academic freedom and collaboration in the face of authoritarian challenges.

In 2023, the outcomes of the evaluation report might be presented as follows: *1.* The EHU aims to foster civil society in Belarus by attracting students with a civic mindset and promoting European values through liberal education and critical thinking. *2.* EHU sets itself apart from Belarusian higher education institutions by offering education free from political constraints and fostering democratic relations between students and faculty. This focus on Belarusian heritage and language policies strengthens students' national identity while providing a multilingual educational environment. *3.* EHU contributes to the dissemination of democratic European values, although its direct influence on Belarus is limited. The institution aims to prepare students to engage in the democratic transformation of Belarus, with a clear vision for the future should political conditions improve. *4.* EHU has established a strong network of alumni and partners in Belarus, facilitating support for students and alumni, including

those who are political prisoners. While exact data on alumni returning to Belarus after 2022 is lacking, EHU graduates significantly contribute to Belarusian civil society through advocacy, media, arts, and entrepreneurship. They play a vital role in promoting democracy and social transformation, driving economic growth and innovation in various sectors. *5.* EHU alumni are actively involved in various sectors, including advocacy, media, and business, contributing to the democratization and development of civil society even not remaining in Belarus. *6.* The EHU's efforts to create a more inclusive community and provide study and employment opportunities for people with disabilities or socially vulnerable people were also appreciated. *7.* Many students select topics related to Belarusian themes, reflecting their engagement with national issues and their relevance in academic discourse (32.29% of the final thesis of the Academic department of social science and almost 40% — Humanity and Art). *8.* EHU faculty are actively engaged in public discourse, contributing to research on Belarusian issues and participating in civic activities, including protests. *9.* EHU maintains strong ties with alumni and civil society organizations and media which forced to ceased in Belarus and operate in Lithuania or in their countries. *10.* Following the events of 2020, international donors have renewed their support for EHU, recognizing it as a vital institution for Belarusian students and academics affected by political repression. *11.* EHU actively participates in EU higher education initiatives, ensuring that its students and faculty have access to European academic opportunities, which enhances their educational and professional prospects. Generally, the experts concluded that the EHU has indirect positive impact on Belarus. EHU distinguishes itself from other Belarusian higher education institutions by allowing study and teaching without political constraints, while focusing on Belarusian language and heritage. Despite this supportive environment, EHU graduates do not perceive themselves as a direct force for significant political change in Belarus, particularly in light of the repressions posed by the events of 2020.

A comparative analyse of two reports on impact of EHU on the country of origin shows the following dynamics in the impact on the country of origin. While the most aspects remained common and differ only in numberings, the following three aspects reveal a negative dynamic which decreased the possibilities to impact the civil society in Belarus.

Aspect	**Report 2021**	**Report 2023**
Alumni Engagement	Approximately 75% of alumni return to Belarus.	Exact data on alumni returning after 2022 is lacking; alumni contribute significantly to Belarusian civil society which operates in various locations.
Impact on Transformations	Alumni significantly impact transformations in Belarus.	Alumni strive to contribute to democratization and the Belarusian civil society development regardless of their location.
Collaboration with Civil Society	Strong ties with civil society organizations and media in Belarus.	Connections maintained with alumni and organizations that have relocated due to political circumstances.

Although the term "Third Mission" is not explicitly mentioned, both the 2021 and 2023 reports imply elements reflecting EHU contributions to society. The reports highlight commonalities with two recognized modes of the Third Mission: *Community Development* and *Social Impact***.**

The reports showcase EHU's strong adherence to the Third Mission, emphasizing its commitment to societal development and community engagement. They illustrate how EHU aligns with the *Community Development* model, demonstrating its responsibility to positively impact local needs through innovative projects and partnerships. This commitment is evident in the university's support for alumni and civil society, as well as its focus on fostering civic engagement among students and faculty.

Furthermore, EHU's efforts resonate with the *Social Impact* model, as the institution actively addresses societal issues and challenges. By promoting democratic values, supporting civil society initiatives, and encouraging alumni to engage in social transformation, EHU reinforces its role as a center of innovation and knowledge generation. The dynamic changes observed between the reports reflect a deepening commitment to enhancing social well-being and adapting

to the evolving needs of Belarusian society. Overall, the continuity and evolution in EHU's mission underscore its vital role in shaping a more engaged and informed citizenry, further solidifying its position as a key player in the broader landscape of higher education and societal advancement.

EHU Third mission: Strategy vs reality

Additionally, in response to critical voices regarding the lack of a well-developed and widely understood mission, recommendations for the EHU's Strategic Plan have been addressed. A new EHU Strategy for 2019–2024 was prepared, which articulated both the (1) mission of the EHU as a "student-centred University for promoting civil society development through Humanities and Liberal Arts for students from Belarus and the region" (Strategy 2019: 7) and (2) the Third Mission. The main characteristics of the EHU Third Mission activities have been introduced as follows:

- They are complementary to the core activities outlined in the Strategy.
- They form an integral part of the university's work, drawing on and enhancing its teaching, learning, and research functions.
- They extend their impact by engaging external stakeholders and audiences.

The updated Strategy 2021–2026 acknowledged that at the EHU (Strategy 2021: Third mission), a considerable amount of activity is already underway in areas such as engaging with research users, promoting cultural heritage, conducting gender studies, coordinating urban development networks, supporting independent media initiatives, and advancing work on constitutionalism and human rights. This work has been conducted mainly via EHU Centres and Labs established by internal rules and remaining unities of departments. The activities, as was acknowledge in the document, have not been adequately valued and most of them lacked visibility due to issues with both internal and external communication at EHU.

Recognising the challenge of insufficient coordination and communication regarding third mission activities, the administration proposed the establishment of a common hub (Strategy 2021–2026: 5.4). This anticipated hub would serve as a venue for both in-person and virtual

engagement between EHU and its external stakeholders, as well as for cultural and arts events organized by EHU, and conferences and seminars focused on Belarusian studies. However, this Hub and the anticipated Resource Center, have not been established, and problems relating to a lack of coordination and communication have persisted.

While the SKVC has recognized the "social impact achievements," the academic community has still not been involved in discussions on strategic and tactical issues concerning EHU's missions. In July 2024, the academic community initiated and conducted discussions on the EHU Third Mission (Strategic Session, 2024). The session was important for several reasons: the lack of a clear understanding of the concept "Third Mission" and some issues related to the notion of "university cooperation with society," which may have a sensitive connotation for Belarusians, both those studying online from Belarus and those who travel home, undergoing scrutiny, searches, and checks of their devices.

Due to the harsh atmosphere towards any civic activities in the country of origin and in some other countries in the region, the university was obliged to prioritize student safety and the continuation of EHU's operations. The university therefore needs to strike a balance between the two main goals — education and research — while also developing its Third Mission, particularly in exile. This balancing act must consider the potential threats and risks to its primary missions. One major risk is the perception of the university as being aligned with a specific political force, which can jeopardize its autonomy and sustainability. For instance, collaboration with a wide range of partners, including political entities, might conflict with EHU's mission of educating Belarusians and representatives from other regions.

The Students' Union has expressed concern, and the Senate of EHU (EHU, Senate, 2024) convened to address these issues. The result was a statement reaffirming the university's commitment to providing a quality education based on European and universal values to motivated, initiative-driven, and free-thinking youth from Belarus and the region. The statement emphasized that EHU will continue its educational, academic, and cultural activities in compliance with Lithuanian law and the principles of academic autonomy. All programs offered by the university are accredited according to European higher education standards, ensuring that they meet rigorous quality benchmarks.

Indeed, the successful operation and further development of EHU rely heavily on the support of the Lithuanian state, the European Commission, and reputable international donors. European academic community. Moreover, the Senate acknowledges the right of individuals to disagree with the university's official position. As an institution of Lithuania and the European Union, EHU respects personal civic positions that may differ from its collective stance.

Despite external challenges, EHU has remained committed to providing quality education and internationally recognized European diplomas to all its graduates. The university values all expressions of solidarity and support, essential for fostering an environment conducive to personal development and a shared future. Accordingly, the academic community has initiated a long-overdue but necessary discussion on redefining its societal role through conversations around the concept of the Third Mission. Launched in summer 2024, these dialogues reflect growing recognition of the evolving responsibilities of universities as independent social actors and of a university in exile in particular. This initiative highlights the need for academic institutions to engage more actively with stakeholders and social groups, extending their impact beyond traditional education and research.

The discussions culminated during two conferences:

- "Quo Vadis European Humanities University?" (Quo Vadis, 2024, October) conference, where prominent experts and scholars from European and American universities gathered with the EHU community to address its challenges.
- International Scientific Conference on the Third Mission of EHU (Third Mission, 2024, November) for academic stuff on universities from Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Austria and USA and alumni from countries globe around.

The "Quo Vadis" conference examined the university's mission and the concept of the Third Mission, highlighting internal obstacles to effective academic governance. Participants emphasized the need for a stronger commitment to long-term planning, noting that governing bodies often overlook academic recommendations, particularly those related to student safety. This lack of responsiveness raises concerns about governance accountability and limits the Senate's effectiveness as a representative body.

Additionally, the discussions revealed that the Senate's limited competences hinder its ability to advocate for the academic community's interests, calling for a re-evaluation of its roles and responsibilities. The conference underscored the importance of academic freedom, particularly for scholars and students in exile, stressing the need to educate them about their rights and the legal frameworks governing freedoms like assembly and speech.

Although the conference participants did not sound like a chorus, they reached a consensus that EHU's academic community is actively seeking new ways to fulfil the university's mission, including the integration of the Third Mission, while maintaining its core objectives. By promoting responsible participation and collaboration, the university can strengthen its engagement with both local and academic communities, enriching the educational experience and reinforcing its commitment to foundational principles. This approach positions EHU as a vital contributor to societal development amidst ongoing challenges.

The International Scientific Conference on the Third Mission has been a landmark event, organized by EHU in collaboration with international partners such as the Open Society University Network, Ukrainian Tax University and the EHU Center for Constitutionalism and Human Rights, provided a vital platform for exploring how universities can contribute to societal development. The conference focused on the critical role of universities in fostering community engagement and collaboration with civil society, thus reinforcing the importance of the Third Mission in contemporary academic discourse. The conference aimed to cultivate a common understanding of the Third Mission, emphasizing the integration of academic research and educational initiatives with civil society efforts.

The discussions were structured to achieve three key objectives: establishing a foundational understanding of the scientific and practical aspects of the Third Mission, outlining strategic directions for civil society engagement, and creating a coordinated administrative framework for support, monitoring, and reporting. The methodological approach involved a two-tier strategy, including a "Scientific Notebook" that featured contributions from keynote speakers and a summary of the major ideas and observations presented in separate sections' discussions during the event. The conference also served as a forum for alumni to reconnect with EHU, showcasing their achievements and

contributions to the university's mission. Their involvement not only emphasized the importance of alumni networks but also reinforced the idea that education's impact extends far beyond the classroom. This engagement is essential in fostering a robust link between the university and the wider community, ensuring that EHU remains relevant and responsive to societal needs.

Following the conference, recommendations were developed for implementation in the academic year 2024–2025 and beyond. These recommendations are designed to guide EHU in advancing its Third Mission initiatives, ensuring that the university continues to evolve as a dynamic and engaged institution on the basis of a common comprehension and dedication (Report from the First, 2024, Nov: 6–15). The discussions around the Third Mission at EHU and recommendations elaborated by specific panels of the conference, represent a crucial step toward redefining the EHU's role within society and in communication with alumni. By fostering collaboration with civil society and emphasizing the importance of community engagement, EHU is positioning itself as a leader in the academic landscape. This commitment not only enhances the university's educational mission but also ensures its sustainability and relevance in an ever-changing world. As EHU continues on this path, it remains dedicated to providing quality education and actively contributing to the development of a more informed and engaged society.

To conclude this section, EHU has strengthened its identity and understanding of the missions that drive all European universities, as well as the mission that serves the civic societies of its own country and region of origin. As the first University in Exile to emerge in the Eastern Partnership region at the beginning of the millennium, it has navigated various legal and social challenges and may serve as a role model in some respects. Nevertheless, there are still many issues to tackle, prompting the EHU's internal academic and administrative staff, as well as its managerial bodies, to address concerns related to participation, transparency, and accountability.

Furthermore, the legal and social aspects associated with the identity of universities in exile require advocacy and lobbying for the reform of national legislation. This reform is essential to meet the specific needs of universities in exile, enabling them to more effectively articulate their missions and choose appropriate modes and aspects — both implied and expressed — of those missions, including

the so-called Third Mission. Furthermore, the EHU has valuable experiences to share with other academic communities that have relocated to Europe, assisting them in maintaining a sense of academic freedom and the ability to produce the knowledge and research vital for the well-being of society.

In conclusion, the interplay between the concepts of universities in exile and the Third Mission reveals a complex landscape shaped by legal and social frameworks. The first question — what legal and social frameworks enable universities in exile to cultivate community engagement and social responsibility as part of their Third Mission — highlights that, despite their unique status, these institutions must adhere to recognized social roles. The theoretical and normative framework acknowledges the social responsibility of all universities, irrespective of their status. It is crucial for universities in exile that their host country recognizes their obligation to engage in Third Mission activities directed towards the societies of their countries or regions of origin.

The case of the European Humanities University (EHU) exemplifies this dynamic. Despite facing significant legal and social challenges, the EHU has successfully collaborated with state authorities to ensure academic autonomy while remaining accountable to national, European, and international regulations. This cooperation is crucial for fostering an environment where universities can effectively fulfil their missions.

In response to the question of how universities in exile fulfil their Third Mission towards their country of origin, it is evident that the modes of implementation can vary and are often intertwined with teaching and research activities. Political engagement, aimed at instigating necessary changes in the country of origin, can sometimes jeopardize the core missions of teaching and research. It falls upon the university and its academics to navigate these complexities, seeking a balance between effectiveness, sustainability, and political involvement.

Finally, in response to the question about the legal challenges and social opportunities universities in exile face in fulfilling their Third Mission, it is clear that although there are obstacles, such as navigating different regulatory environments and maintaining academic freedom, there are also significant opportunities for building networks, fostering collaboration, and influencing policy. These elements not only shape the universities' roles in contemporary academia but also highlight their

potential to contribute positively to both their host societies and their countries of origin.

Overall, the experience of universities in exile underscores the need for adaptive strategies that enhance their social impact while maintaining their academic integrity and mission.

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Aliaksei Makhnach

EHUtopia

Quo vadis?

In 2022, the European Humanities University celebrated the 30th anniversary of its foundation in Minsk. 2024 marks twenty years since the EHU's license was withdrawn, and it ceased its operation in Belarus as well as five years since it received the special status of a "university in exile", enshrined in the Law on Science and Education of the Republic of Lithuania. For the EHU, these "anniversaries" are not a reason for celebration, but rather another cause to question the anomalous nature of this university.

The thirty years of the EHU's operation as an educational project provide a striking example of a utopia. This word may be translated from Greek as a place that does not exist. And indeed, the university established in Belarus is no longer in this country and have become a "non-existent place" there. Yet, another translation interprets utopia as a benign place, which implies social transformations leading to the implementation of a certain ideal. In view of the radical challenges facing the region where the university was created and the whole world in the mid-2020s, it is extremely important to conceptualise the EHU as a utopian project. The university was founded in the early 1990s with the aim of understanding and meeting these challenges.

The Difficulties of Understanding

To understand the EHU as a utopian project, we need to turn to the intellectual legacy of Hannah Arendt. In the 1954 "Essays understanding: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism", which was originally called "Understanding and Politics (The Difficulties of Understanding)", Arendt draws attention to the challenges that societies will have to face while overcoming their totalitarian legacy. The key problem at end of the Cold War and during the process of political transformation of the Soviet state was overcoming

the totalitarianism, embodied in the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which became the backbone for all studies in humanities and social sciences. It is thus symbolic that the first Hannah Arendt's work to be translated into Russian was Totalitarianism (1951), arranged for publication in 1990 and published in 1996. In her works, Arendt emphasized that theorizing a problem does not contribute to its practical implementation, unless it is duly prepared (Arendt 1994: 307). She insisted on interpreting judgment as a way of thinking that presupposes radical individual effort. Time and again, she drew attention to the predominance of politics over any theory, as the problem of totalitarianism required not only radical rethinking, but also practical overcoming. Arendt emphasized the role of education in this process too.

Yet, it must be acknowledged that humanities and social sciences' education today have degenerated into a product of the "feuilleton era", about which Hermann Hesse wrote in his "Glass Bead Game". Thus, it turned out extremely naive to expect that the totalitarianism of the 20th century can be finally overcome and that there is no return to it in the 21st century. Regional conflicts, the migration crisis, economic decline, the problem of bureaucracy, artificial intelligence and digital control — all these challenges demand simple solutions, which in turn reflects the quality of education in the humanities and social sciences. Education stubbornly continues to ignore facts and still sticks to sterile theory. Conversely, Hannah Arendt provides an example of studying totalitarianism not only as a theorist, but also as a person who faced it in real life and as a field researcher. Her example is a rare exception, and testifies to the fact that genuine education, as well as genuine thinking, are only possible in a situation of personally confronting a problem, to which there has been no solution so far. It is this problem that mobilizes intellectual and emotional resources of a solver. In other words, education is productive only if it challenges a student with personally meaningful problems and cases. In this sense, the EHU itself represents a practical case that cannot be conceptualized in the framework of any theory. It continues to exist in spite of, overcoming very specific challenges, whose essence cannot be formulated in the format of a bureaucratic document. The years of "thousand meetings" of bureaucrats of all sorts, showing nothing but formal interest in the EHU, prove that the case of the university each time becomes a discovery and sincerely surprizes them by the fact that the university still exists after what has happened

and is still happening to it. This experience of anomalous survival could be of extreme demand for those who are still aware of the drastic unbalance between the scope of the challenges of the 21st century and the number and quality of those who are able not only to understand these challenges, but also to meet them. The lack of space for fostering the thinking that can envisage and solve impending problems constitutes the main catastrophe of what is called education today, especially in the domains of humanities and social sciences. In this sense, the word "humanitarian" in the name of the university invokes a very apt association with humanitarian aid for people in need.

The EHU was conceived as an educational project, the substantive basis of which was to become the European intellectual tradition, which had previously rethought and practically overcome the European totalitarianism of the mid-twentieth century. This project had significant potential for the upcoming transformations in Belarus and in the Eastern European region. In practical terms, it was necessary to overcome the long period during which Belarus and other countries had been deprived of intellectual stimulation, having been isolated from the Western European intellectual tradition while part of the Soviet state. Soviet citizens were introduced to key Western European intellectual debates in the humanities and social sciences exclusively through the prism of their criticism as "bourgeois," that is, opposed to "socialist." It was only in the late 1980s and early 1990s, with the collapse of the Soviet state, that this isolation was overcome.

According to Hannah Arendt, overcoming the totalitarian tradition is an extremely painful process. It is impossible to overcome totalitarianism with the human resources that were nurtured by it. This was also perceived as an acute problem in the post-Soviet states. Hannah Arendt noted that the phenomenon of education is in the deep crisis in the 20th century (Arendt 1961: 173). By this, we mean "mass education", which contributes to cultivation of mediocrity, which is incapable of overcoming the ideological pressure of the totalitarian state. Hence, one could only hope for educational institutions with the mission of bringing up the young generation capable of participating in social transformations. That is, an educational environment based on understanding what a "person" and "society" are, and formulating it in a language of openness and democracy, being thus in opposition to totalitarianism. A focus on humanitarian and social knowledge, shaped and embodied within the framework

of the European intellectual tradition, provided the basis for actualization of such initiatives in the context of the upcoming transformations of the of the Eastern European countries.

The radical need for such educational institutions led to the almost simultaneous foundation in 1992 of the Central European University in Hungary, the European University in Russia and the European Humanities University in Belarus. The Central European University, brought about by the processes of transformation of Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 — 1990, in all its subsequent missions, it draws on its history based on academic and political achievements in the transformation of the closed communist legacy (Ignatieff 2018: 53).

In the first half of the 1990s, Belarusian higher educational establishments attempted to transform the Soviet education system with the focus on the formation of values based on the national history. However, the 1994 presidential elections proved that Belarusian society was not at all ready to accept the values of the national state, and continued to stick to the values of the previous historical period. The social sciences and humanities at Belarusian universities and academies only slightly rethought Soviet values and modernized them in view of the newly acquired "independence" of Belarus. This process accelerated along with the intensive political and economic integration of Belarus and Russia in the second half of the 1990s. The higher education returned to the paradigm of the Soviet period values in its Belarusian "modernized" version, where national history is considered marginal, while the Second World War, won by the Soviet Union, remains the key event of the Belarusian history.

The idea of overcoming totalitarianism, which inspired the founders of European universities, was deemed to be extremely "toxic" to ideologies of Belarusian, Hungarian and Russian authorities, which brought about attempts to close these universities. This permits us to wonder, whether the very idea of the "open society" is a utopia that requires radical rethinking? Isn't the chance of the EHU ever returning to Belarus not utopian?

The lack of sufficient intellectual resources apt for the radical social transformations in the early 1990s gave an impetus for establishing a Belarusian university capable of preparing these resources within a short time. Yet, there was a risk that the existing intellectual resources in such a small country might not be sufficient for the successful operation of the university itself or its educational experiments, which aimed

to formulate new principles and approaches to higher education in line with European ones. The US Ambassador to Belarus David Svartz pointed out that it was Anatoly Mikhailov who accumulated the necessary energy and chose the intellectual benchmark for fulfilling the mission of the new university in the first period of Belarusian independence (Swartz 2007). His quote "a romantic experiment of intellectuals who decided to challenge the conservative traditions inherited from Soviet higher education" — sounds bitterly ironic in the light of the events that followed. In his book *Teach Them to Challenge Authority: Educating for Healthy Societies*, Gregory Prince Jr. noted that "when the university was founded in 1992, initially offering a doctorate and an undergraduate program, the Ministry of Education, the Academy of Sciences of Belarus, and other government agencies supported it as a vital step in reconnecting Belarus with the Western European tradition of education, as an embodiment of democratic civic culture foundations. As the university was progressing, there were high hopes that the EHU would help to incorporate Belarus into the European Union's Bologna Process, created to harmonize the educational systems of its member states" (Prince 2008: 153).

The key objective of the university was to create an intense intellectual environment that would be recognized in the post-Soviet countries and beyond. For instance, Professor Walter Brogan was invited to visit Minsk by Anatoly Mikhailov. He later wrote in the *Graduate Studies Newsletter* of Villanova University that he had discovered an oasis for researchers of continental philosophy there. In his article "Listening to the Silence: Reticence and the Call of Consciousness in Heidegger's Philosophy," Brogan noted: "It is an honour for me to dedicate this essay to Anatoli Mikhailov, who more than anyone I know has responded to the call of conscience with the reticence and reserve of which Heidegger speaks" (Brogan 2013: 42). EHU students made a considerable part of the audience of President Clinton's meeting with the youth of Minsk at the assembly hall of the Academy of Sciences of Belarus. Ambassador David Swartz's original idea was to arrange this meeting with students of the EHU only, but that was unrealistic at the time.

Under those circumstances, the mission of the university was totally unacceptable to the government, since it which presupposed a different civilizational path for the transformation of education. The authorities were irritated both by the explicit financial support

of the university by the embassies of the European Union countries, and by the experimental status of the university as a platform for the implementation of the Bologna Process principles, and by the expertise of the transformation in Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova, performed together with colleagues from Eastern European countries as part of the Carnegie Endowment project. As a result, the Belarusian Minister of Education recommended that Anatoly Mikhailov step down as rector. His refusal brought about a wave of institutional inspections, which eventually led to withdrawal of the university's license.

Following the closure of the EHU by the Belarusian authorities in 2004, an incredible amount of effort was invested in restoring it in Lithuania as a "university in exile". "We still face various obstacles on the way to becoming an intellectual stronghold for Belarus and for the whole region, on the way to demonstrate through our practical activities a highly demanded paradigm of alternative education that leaves far behind the still prevailing ineffective, conservative, recidivist educational practices. It is vital to realize how important such innovative "implants" are within the framework of the highly necessary new strategy of education in the post-totalitarian space and beyond. With due support and realistic intellectual assistance, they can become elements of a cooperative infrastructure capable to educate a new generation of democracy advocates." (Mikhailov 2007)

The idea of a "university in exile" was not new to the 20th century. Thus, The New School became a university in exile, where representatives of the European academia persecuted by the Nazis got a chance to work. Hannah Arendt's life path also went through this university after she had escaped Europe in the mid-1930s. While the New School was purposefully established as a university "gathering" scientists at risk, there has been no examples of a university continuing to exist after its closure. Hence, the very idea of recreating the first university in exile in Europe in the 21st century demanded incredible courage from its conceivers, and enormous efforts for its practical implementation. Only those European initiatives currently striving to create an educational space for scholars at risk from Russia within the framework of a new university can match this "unrealistic" achievement, and it may receive the status of a "university in exile".

To integrate the university into the educational space of the European Union required overcoming a number of obstacles.

The Lithuanian Quality Assurance Center registered and approved of the first study programs of the EHU in 2007. Mykolas Romeris University provided the premises, while the Lithuanian government granted financial support. The Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided unprecedented assistance in obtaining visas for the faculty and students. The EHU became the first university in the European Union teaching in English, Russian, and Belarusian, which still makes it a unique educational project.

As an academic project, the EHU required internationalisation, which was achieved in cooperation with Lithuanian academia through mutual programs, projects and personnel policy. The "lithuanization" of the university contributed to its productive integration into the higher education environment of Lithuania in conformity with the educational standards of the EU. The support of the George Soros Open Society Foundation and academic integration with Bard College and OSUN can hardly be overestimated. The EHU's Belarusian experience as that of an experimental platform for the liberal education model, was reconstructed in Lithuania and incorporated into new BA programs.

At the same time, the intellectual resources that gravitated around the university in the first decade of its operation in Belarus, were lost during the relocation to Lithuania and its politicization as a "university in exile". Attempts to restore the previous intellectual energy were futile. During the first decade in Lithuania, all efforts were targeted primarily at "survival" in the forced immigration. The university mission, content of educational programs, and personnel policy were entirely subordinated to the "negative calculation", while financial managers had been exclusively in charge of the "development strategy" of the university. The international recognition of the EHU as a university in exile was a political project, attracting a long range of officials from various bureaucratic structures of the EU and the USA. Academic recognition of the EHU as that of an educational project became virtually impossible due to the meagre intellectual capacity. Attempts to gather intellectual resources capable of reforming the Belarusian reality were utopian. The situation has been significantly exacerbated by the decline of academia in Belarus over the past few decades. This causes persistent pessimism regarding the prospect of fostering intellectual resources capable of solving the university's initial tasks.

Homelessness

In his "Letter on Humanism", Martin Heidegger drew attention to homelessness of the modern European person of the 20th century. He was talking about the absence of those foundations that formed the European tradition itself and exerted a powerful influence on the formation of European thinking. Lev Shestov saw the foundations of Europe in the wisdom of Athens, the law of Rome and the Christianity of Jerusalem. However, the 20th century proved that the values embodied by such heroes as Socrates, Christ, or Marcus Aurelius had lost their unifying energy. The 20th century became the period when Oswald Spengler's premonition came true time and again. The values supposedly uniting Europe today have nothing to do with those which laid its foundation. Human life has lost its value giving way to economic indicators, technological progress and political pragmatism. Any attempt to create a political force based on the ideas of thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, Peter Sloterdijk and Gianni Vattimo, who drew attention to the crisis of European thinking, would be suicidal. Hence, the thinking that is in short supply today must, according to Edmund Husserl's appeal, return "back to things themselves". But how is it possible in the feuilleton era, where what is called "critical thinking" is crucial?

That is why the civilizational choice of EHU as of a European university had to do with the search for a "home": a place where gods live; a place where thinking should address the primary phenomena: language, thinking, life, world, education, social reality, natality, authorship. Until this "home" is found, the university remains "homeless".

The key substantive values of EHU were initially codified in its name. Thus, the term "European" implied an orientation toward the European intellectual tradition. This process presupposed a serious selection of everything created in this tradition. The University assumed responsibility not only for overcoming the prolonged intellectual isolation, but also for active involvement in solving the global problems of social and humanitarian knowledge. Indeed, the university adopted existentialism as its substantive foundation; a philosophy that radically rethought the European intellectual tradition and formulated key challenges for everyone, not just Europeans. This was about a way of thinking that, in the first place, implied extreme

caution in relation to oneself, to the generated ideas, and especially to understanding the methods of their practical implementation. Hence, the European intellectual tradition acted as the substantive foundation, on which a qualitatively new kind of thinking could be nurtured; the one that did not ignore rationality, but was essentially the thinking of an artist, a person capable of seeing the essence of things in an unconventional way. It is actually the kind of thinking capable of providing comprehension not based on abstract theory, but on the facts of the "here and now". This was crucial for overcoming the legacy of the Enlightenment, which produced an unjustified social optimism regarding transformations of society.

In the 2000 EHU Charter, "Europeanness" was enshrined as the goal of its establishment and operation. The purpose was to integrate, on the basis of fundamental research, the European experience and national traditions in the field of university education in order to prepare a new generation of Belarusian specialists capable of mediating the West-East interaction, and promoting productive mutual understanding of cultures.

In a practical sense, the purpose was to formulate principles and strategies for operation of democratic institutions of European civilization in Belarus. The university assumed responsibility to implement the Bologna process in the higher education environment of Belarus. This experiment was approved by the Ministry of Education of Belarus and allowed the university to work according to the regulatory documents of the European educational space, adapted for Belarus, as reflected in the statutory documents of the university. The same 2000 Charter noted that the university was established as an experimental platform for testing modern progressive educational programs and technologies of training and education, including the Artes Liberales programs, principles of mixed financing of higher education, forms and methods of integrating national educational institutions into the global educational space by bringing together the principles of design and structure of educational institutions, their curricula and programs; which paves way for experimental (non-normative) structures within the university, work schedule, personnel, curricula, as well as the quantity of students, provided that it does not exceed the number permitted by the license. Successful implementation of the European experience through the Bologna process at the EHU, brought about a transition of the entire higher education space of Belarus to these principles.

However, this process coincided with the closure of the EHU in Minsk. This led to the Bologna process being implemented mechanically, without taking reality into account or making the necessary adaptations. Consequently, the principles of the Bologna process were merely imitated, and the concept of academic freedom was severely distorted behind a veil of terminological rebuses.

Following the university's relocation to Lithuania, the 'European' concept acquired additional meanings. This was partly because the university began operating in the European city of Vilnius. One more meaning was acquired from complying with European educational standards, which formed the basis of the Bologna process. But what is most important, the EHU turned into an experimental platform for the "practical" implementation of European democratic principles in academia. A lack of real experience in this kind of activity was compensated for with confidence in theory, which provided a framework for various models of the university's structure and operation. This was exacerbated by the active public manipulation of key democratic values in an attempt to "democratize" the university from the inside and outside.

These processes involved bureaucrats from various EU institutions, who were appointed to oversee the university's sustainability for short periods of time and were thus unable to address the specifics of the EHU's existence in exile. Another group involved were various Belarusian political projects which had failed to implement their social reforms in Belarus for over thirty years. Finally, there were experts in education who, having failed to create their own educational projects, attempted to "democratize" others. Anyway, the EHU has eventually turned into an experimental field to find out how exactly the "Europeanization" of the Belarusian society should be implemented. It should be noted that theoreticians far outnumbered those who could demonstrate any practical results.

At the same time, the relocation of the university from Minsk to Vilnius brought about a unique reverse situation; rather than planting European institutions in the Belarusian context, it placed a Belarusian institution in a European context. The "Europeanization" of the university brought about understanding that this educational institution cannot comply with the Lithuanian requirements for higher education institutions. On the one hand, this inflicted the negative assessments of the university at the 2017 accreditation, subsequently

followed by withdrawal of its license (for the second time in its history). On the other hand, this situation brought about the "inclusivity" solution; that is, of the university as a kind of an intellectually "disabled" that can operate only under certain special conditions, fixed in the Law on Science and Education of Lithuania. Under such conditions, the university got a new new educational license and the opportunity to continue operation as a university in exile.

In a time of intellectual confusion in Europe, where a new rationality in European thinking has been discovered, the university can no longer search for its "home". By this, we mean the substantive foundations that will enable future generations in the region to understand how Europe can overcome future catastrophes by drawing on the extremely painful experience of previous ones. However, it is clear today that the likelihood of both the EHU finding its 'home' and Europe avoiding the impending catastrophe is utopian.

The Tower of Babel

The very attempt to translate *humanities* into Russian is a curse today. It all began with a certain set of values that society shared and seemed to implement the processes of upbringing or education accordingly. In Homer's Greece, this set of values was personified by Odysseus, a hero of myths. In Ancient Rome, it was consul Seneca, a citizen who upheld the tradition of Roman law. Francis of Assisi not only believed in Christian values, but also showed an example of their embodiment in everyday life. In Florence, Michelangelo restored faith in the creative genius of man, which had been fading since the time of Phidias. Each of these individuals was a hero of their era, the embodiment of the values, discussed and used as examples by the others. Despite not receiving a higher education or graduating from universities, they were able to reveal to their epochs what we may today call outstanding personal traits. These include intelligence, talent, courage, discipline and empathy. Each of them had a refined sense of taste, which could only be achieved by understanding what "barbarism" is. They revealed creative genius in their works, be it Odysseus's Trojan Horse or Michelangelo's David. Their lives were a tapestry of events that required maximal tension; physical, emotional, and intellectual effort. They exemplified such feats, the myths of which were passed from

mouth to mouth for centuries; and when memory of them started to fade, they were deemed worthy of being recorded.

It was the Age of Enlightenment that made Goethe's Faust a hero. Science became the language that replaced myth. It began to shape the values, which were supposed to become universal, and therefore anonymous. The number of concepts brought about by humanities in an attempt to defend their significance as sciences for just over a century is breathtaking. Social roles, psychological types, political actors and so on started coining values for humanities, thus exempting them of any specific individual forms. A key attribute of a person became their ability to "fit" into a particular professional role, enabling them to avoid the fear of becoming poor, unsuccessful or unheard. The creative potential of natality was practically negated by the ability to read and follow instructions. This skill is a key tool for any university graduate. The value of novelty has shifted from authorship to new technologies. Undisputed technological progress has exacerbated the devaluation of people and human values, deepening the degradation caused by civilisation's development. The Neolithic Revolution brought about the "human zoo", in which humans, alongside the domestication of plants and animals, domesticated themselves. At least it left us with physical labour. However, the technological revolution is taking labour away, leaving humans face to face with boredom, technology, food and entertainment.

The situation is extremely aggravated by bureaucratic requirements to the humanities, which, for instance, must prove their viability and relevance by endlessly providing scientific publications. No one will ever read the vast majority of these publications. This situation makes it virtually impossible to find what is not second hand. The unviability of humanities can be illustrated by one simple example. Humanities haven't so far brought about a single discovery worth of the Nobel Prize, or which could become a reason for such a nomination to appear. Perhaps someone who can prove the meaninglessness of the very idea of the humanities would be worthy of this award. After all, a research result is only meaningful if it can be reproduced in another independent research. What should the nature of an experiment be that reproduces the language of Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Brodsky?

Overcoming the tradition that shaped the idea of humanities as sciences became the foundation for the EHU title. However, the handling of scientific language with extreme caution suggests that

the language of art is better suited to creating humanitarian values. This is still a key task in the pursuit to justify the individuality of the university and its ability to overcome the crisis caused by the non-viability of the humanities as such. Practically, it was about creating an educational space mainly focused on the synthesis of whatever has been analysed and "atomized" by the sciences. Today we should assume that all attempts to form an educational environment space that fosters "natality" in each individual (about which Hannah Arendt wrote), and the opportunity to manifest itself, have proven to be naive or utopian. No one ever questioned the list of traits that are required from graduates of, say, a university of physical education, or a conservatory, since they were primarily physical and musical abilities. During its Minsk and early Vilnius periods, the EHU tried to select applicants, making high demands on knowledge of a foreign language and the ability to express one's thoughts in an essay. But eventually, all the barriers were dismantled. The only remaining hurdle is the applicant questionnaire (which, we must admit, is a Kafkaesque castle in itself). We must acknowledge that the survival of the university in exile depends not on applicants' talent, but on their financial means. The situation is further exacerbated by the fact that applicants' thinking requires resuscitation after school.

An attempt to overcome the "scientific nature" of humanities, to resuscitate applicants' thinking of and navigate them through the key content guidelines manifested itself in establishing the Core Curriculum, common for all students. The idea of "authorship", revealed through individual thinking via the language of creativity, forms its foundation. The German tradition of Bildung, which requires a person to make efforts to create himself, became the benchmark in the formation of this model. Hence, the first discipline that students mastered was the "Language and Thinking" course, which let freshers encounter the quality of their language and thinking. This course is echoed by the fourth-year hermeneutic seminar, demonstrate the quality of authorship at a humanities university. The excitement sparkled by the Core Curriculum educational experiment was due to the active involvement of partners from Bard College and its partners in Bard Berlin, Smolny College in St. Petersburg, and the American University of Central Asia. We hoped for synchronization of seminars and creation of an intercultural environment for the faculty and students.

Today, after ten years of this experiment, it is clear how hard the practical implementation of this idea was and how unprepared the university was for it. The priority of mass education, financial efficiency and practice-oriented educational programs led to the fact that the within the ten years, educational space has reduced by half. The hopes for the partners' support did not come true, since the absolute majority of applicants did not have the command of English sufficient to participate in the mutual courses. The enthusiasm of the students and faculty in the first years yielded some truly successful projects. However, maintaining the proper level of communication with students required much more effort from the faculty, eventually resulting in their "burnout".

Attempting to use the Core Curriculum to involve old and new faculty members in the value agenda led to the devaluation of the curriculum's core content. This was exacerbated by the unprecedented information overload experienced by students, who lost the ability to read in a way that had shaped language and thinking for centuries. Boredom became a key issue, forcing professors to act as 'entertainers'. The advent of GPT chatbots has made it possible to imitate thinking, which will eventually lead to students being unable to read aloud texts generated by AI. This contributes to mediocrity, which is what the university was created to overcome.

In this sense, humanities understood as humanitarian aid, are of core importance for the EHU today. Time and again, society is diagnosed with stupidity. We mean such movies as "Idiocracy" and "Don't Look Up", which are actually modern versions of the "Praise of Folly" by Erasmus of Rotterdam. People have become shepherds of "technology", which, contrary to them, demonstrates undoubted progress. To be shepherds of "being" remains the lot of very few. It seems that in order to keep *humanities* in its name, the university will have to make an attempt to transform the Core Curriculum. This new phenomenological field should combine language, play, taste, and genius. Yet, even on this initial stage, the idea seems to be a utopia. Its practical implementation will be even more complicated. So far, humanities remain the Tower of Babel, the completion of which depends on God, on the builders, on the quality of the materials, and on the artist who can envisage its completion.

Romam eo iterum crucifigī

When we think about the European Humanities University as a utopia, we are inevitably confronted with the ambiguity of the term: a non-existent place (ou-topos) and an unattainable ideal (eu-topos). It is this duality that sets the framework for strategic thinking about the perspective future of the university and requires the utmost effort and intellectual contribution from all those interested in the existence of this project. In the past, the utopian nature of the EHU manifested itself in an attempt to embody a model of a university capable of not only creating new values associated with the European intellectual tradition, but also searching for ways to implement them in practice in the process of overcoming the challenges arising in the region. Now and in future, its utopian nature appears in an even more paradoxical form; that is, as the need to maintain and justify the value of the very existence of this university as a project that continues to give hope for what was started three decades ago, and now must be recognized as practically impossible. In this regard, EHU should be understood not as an educational project in the usual sense, but as a form of homelessness (Heimatlosigkeit), which Heidegger considered a trait of modern thinking, which has lost its rootedness in being. Since the university as a "house of thinking" does not exist in the modern world, any project of a university is doomed to be utopian. There is no doubt that any attempts to create a space at EHU that could become a "house of thinking" are themselves utopian. The attempt by Anatoly Mikhailov and Leonidas Donskis to create the Institute of Advance Studies in Humanities in the early 2010s remains extremely relevant for today, but has not yet had the opportunity to be implemented in practice.

The challenges of transforming the post-Soviet reality that the founders of EHU faced three decades ago, are not only relevant today, but have aggravated significantly and expanded beyond the borders of this region. The identity crisis, the exile, the need to constantly re-constitute one's space and the foundations of one's existence — all this makes the university project not complete, but is always beginning anew. However, it is precisely this sense of perpetual beginning that keeps it within the realm of genuine humanism, where humanism is not a programme, but a question. Therefore, the university is not an institution, but a means of questioning oneself and the world.

The regional crisis has turned out to be a harbinger of a much bigger cataclysm: the emergence of new forms of totalitarianism; the loss of the meaning of education; the crisis of thinking; and the devaluation of humanity in a situation of expansive technological development. These issues are discussed at length at the annual conferences organised by the Humanities and Arts Department. Failing to address these challenges paves the way for the devaluation of the very idea of European university education and, consequently, modern barbarism. Therefore, the EHU must continually question itself, treat itself critically and remain a utopia in the true sense, persistently attempting to consider humans in spite of circumstances and beyond bureaucracy. The globalization of challenges demands the reform of many unviable intellectual platforms. The current global transformations demand practical steps to overcome what Hannah Arendt called "dark times". But is there a perspective for "Humanities in Dark Time"?

The anxiety is exacerbated by the fact that the university is forced to balance between the logic of survival (external standards, demands for efficiency and productivity, mimicry to donors' expectations and their ideas about the quality of university thinking) and the need to preserve itself as a realm of authentic thinking — not pragmatic, useless in a utilitarian sense, but extremely necessary in an ontological sense today. The development of the technological media landscape and the digital environment not only changes the modes of communication, but also transforms the very structure of human presence in the world. The university cannot resist these changes, but should not get dissolved in them either. Its role is to preserve the language that calls a human a human, not an avatar. The language of art and poetry remains the last refuge of this language — and, therefore, the last stronghold of humanities education. The creation of an educational space that is capable of overcoming the dying of the humanities and giving way to the language of art is the only way for survival of whatever in the university is associated with humanities. They do not simply "explain" a human, but allow one to *live* the human, retaining in language something that eludes the bureaucratic rationality of the Bologna Process competencies. To survive as an institution, the EHU needs to constantly balance between the model of the university as a transmitter of normative knowledge, regulated by the Bologna Process and national legislation, and the experimental environment, in which creative thinking is realized in the form of radical educational performative practice, focused on co-existence. We should

admit that the further productive functioning of the EHU on the brink between these two paradigms is a utopia.

Therefore, the EHU must establish its identity not in terms of adaptation, but in terms of resistance: resistance to oblivion, including the oblivion of being, resistance to dissolution in technological noise, to the disappearance of the environment where a person questions itself. This requires not only institutional courage, but also a new generation of the faculty (primarily the former EHU graduates), capable of not only transmitting knowledge, but of continuing and deepening the dialogue with the European intellectual tradition in its most radical incarnations. This is nothing fundamentally new for the space in which the university finds itself today. "Exile" is a specific phenomenon that shapes the identity not merely of the university, but of the entire region. Somehow, the EHU is not a unique project in the historical perspective of the last few centuries, and this is precisely what gives hope for the emergence of those whose fate can at least remotely be consonant with the fate of Dante.

In this sense, the EHU is not a dream of paradise, but an experience of radical anxiety, an ever repeated urge to be on the verge, to be in exile, to be in search. Thus, the utopian nature of the EHU is not a weakness, but a strength; its instability is not a flaw, but a prerequisite for authentic being. The existence of this university in the world is possible only if the university is able to become a home for the language that creates this world. But this is, apparently, a utopia as well. In this impossibility lies the true mission of the university — to be a place that does not exist, and at the same time — the only place you need.

Domine, tecum veniam

The purity of utopian ideas in the rationality of ancient thought implies action as a need, and not a happy accident of an event. Considering the myth of EHU as a utopian narrative, the key role is played by the participants of the project to the same extent as vice versa. The player of such a utopia lives in the times of "non-action". Faith in utopias has dried up due to the unpreparedness for accomplishment, which came in parallel with the understanding of the inevitability of dystopia — a story in which initiation occurs without effort. To the extent that the participant can combine Greek heroism with the inevitable quixoticism born

in "the tragic sense of life", the concept of which is expounded by Miguel Unamuno, to that extent the idea of resolving the conflict of understanding as the root cause of the lack of dialogue with the European intellectual tradition can become a product of utopia, called hope. At the origins of the myth stands a hero, at the origins of the EHU-utopia stands Professor Mikhailov in the role of Don Quixote. By including participants in the theatre of the necessity of natality, EHU takes on the challenge of replacing drug from absorption of the age of "news" with an emulsion of living through, accessible only in the individual experience of each. To expect the emergence of players at the university who can become the next form of participation in reality along with the hero in the era of Antiquity, the scientist in the Age of Enlightenment and the creator in the Renaissance, having the opportunity to be called "the author in the Age of Survival", means to believe. Author in the Age of Survival believe only in unbelievable. Such faith for the humanities university tests itself in the act of parasitism of science on human genius. The project is created in a vacuum caused by the absence of an intellectual and cultural foundation from which the given context could easily enter the European circulation of meanings. However, it is precisely the experience of this vacuum in a favorable environment of existential challenges that exacerbate the disease of non-involvement that can be the environment for the birth of a new actor. A new actor asking the same question "Quo Vadis?" is needed. Hope in this case is "the hope of the desperate", formulated by Emmanuel Mounier. EHUtopia is not a project about innocence, but a project about risk.

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Vilius Šadauskas

Some Thoughts About The EHU 2.0 — A Path to Becoming an Ecological University for the Region Which Will Need Healing

The European Humanities University (EHU), established as a university in exile, has long been committed to fostering academic freedom, critical thinking, and democratic values. However, as the geopolitical and socio-cultural landscape continues to shift, EHU must evolve beyond its traditional mission and embrace a new institutional model — that of an Ecological University. This transformation will not only ensure EHU's sustainability but will also position it as a healing force for a region deeply affected by political repression, cultural displacement, and social instability.

The concept of the Ecological University, as proposed by Barnett (2011), provides a framework for this transformation. Barnett argues that a university should not be confined to the narrow functions of teaching and research but must actively engage with multiple ecosystems — natural, social, cultural, political, and epistemological. An Ecological University is the one that not only produces knowledge but also takes responsibility for its impact on the world, working to repair and regenerate the intellectual, social, and cultural fabric of its environment (Barnett 2023).

This model is particularly relevant for EHU given its unique position as an institution in exile, serving students and scholars from Belarus and the wider post-Soviet region. In an era of displacement, shrinking academic freedoms, and democratic backsliding, EHU must move beyond the traditional framework of higher education and become an active agent in regional recovery and transformation. The transition to an Ecological University will enable EHU to address the intellectual and cultural wounds of exile and repression, thereby fostering social resilience, interdisciplinary innovation, and sustainable academic development.

This article explores the roadmap for EHU's transformation into an Ecological University, drawing on Barnett's theoretical framework and analyzing the institutional, academic, and operational changes necessary for this transition. It also examines how EHU can serve as a model for universities in exile and institutions operating in politically fragile environments, demonstrating that higher education can be a force for social healing and renewal.

Foundational Values of EHU and Their Relevance Today

The European Humanities University was established in 1992 with a mission deeply rooted in academic freedom, critical inquiry, and the promotion of European democratic values. Founded in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse, EHU sought to provide an alternative model of higher education, distinct from the centralized and ideologically constrained university system that had dominated the region. From its inception, EHU championed interdisciplinarity, intellectual openness, and human rights-based education, establishing itself as a pioneering institution in Belarus and the wider post-Soviet space (Mihalisko 1998). However, as the university was forced into exile in 2004, many of its foundational principles became more difficult to sustain within the constraints of operating outside its home country. In today's shifting geopolitical context — where academic freedom is under renewed threat in Belarus and other regions — there is a pressing need to reintroduce and reinforce these core values. Preserving and revitalizing EHU's original ethos is essential for ensuring its continued relevance, particularly as the university embarks on a transformation into an Ecological University (Barnett 2018). Drawing on its foundational commitment to intellectual independence and democratic engagement will enable EHU to better serve the needs of its displaced academic community and contribute to regional intellectual and social healing.

The global landscape of the humanities is facing significant challenges, including declining student enrollment, reduced funding, and debates over their relevance in contemporary society. In the regional context, particularly within post-Soviet states, the humanities grapple with additional obstacles, including political interference and limited

academic freedom. Jordan Peterson, a prominent psychologist and cultural critic, has been vocal about the crises confronting the humanities. He contends that many humanities disciplines have become ideologically driven, leading to a detachment from empirical research and critical inquiry. Peterson highlights a concerning trend: "The humanities are at the core of the university; if they are corrupted, there is no way these universities can survive" (Peterson 2022). He further points out the diminishing impact of scholarly work in these fields, noting that "80% of humanities papers aren't cited once" (Peterson 2016). This statistic underscores a broader issue of insularity and a potential decline in the production of impactful, widely recognized research. Addressing these challenges is imperative, especially for institutions like the EHU, which aim to preserve and promote the rich cultural and intellectual traditions of their regions.

EHU's Commitment to the Humanities: Strengthening Core-Curriculum as the Foundation of Higher Education

EHU has consistently championed the importance of the humanities as a foundation for intellectual growth, critical thinking, and democratic engagement. Unlike many universities that have deprioritized humanities education in favor of specialized professional training, EHU firmly integrates core humanities courses into the first two years of its BA programs. This commitment ensures that students, regardless of their chosen field of study, develop a strong intellectual foundation before transitioning into more discipline-specific subjects.

The Role of Core-Curriculum Courses in EHU's Educational Model

EHU employs a Core-Curriculum model designed to provide students with a broad, interdisciplinary education in the humanities. These courses cover a range of essential fields, including philosophy, history, political theory, ethics, literature, and cultural studies. The objective of this model is to cultivate analytical reasoning, ethical judgment, and a profound understanding of human societies — qualities that are essential for all professional fields (Nussbaum 2010). By engaging

with these disciplines early in their studies, students develop the ability to approach complex global issues from a well-rounded perspective, rather than adopting a narrow, technical focus.

Core-Curriculum courses also enhance students' ability to engage with real-world challenges. As Jordan Peterson (2018) noted, "An education in the humanities enables individuals to understand not only the world but also themselves." This understanding is crucial for nurturing civic responsibility, adaptability, and creative problem-solving — all of which are indispensable skills in today's rapidly changing world.

The Need to Strengthen and Expand the Core-Curriculum Approach

Despite its success, EHU recognizes the need to further strengthen this practice. Several key strategies are being pursued:

1. **Internationalizing the Humanities Faculty** — EHU is actively working to attract leading international scholars in the humanities to ensure that students receive a diverse and globally informed education. By bringing in renowned experts in philosophy, history, literature, and political science, EHU aims to enrich students' academic experiences and expand their perspectives beyond national and regional contexts (Barnett 2018).
2. **Making Humanities Core-Curriculum a Standard Across All Programs** — To institutionalize humanities education as a fundamental component of all study programs, EHU is committed to ensuring that every BA student, regardless of their field of specialization, completes a rigorous set of humanities courses. This approach aligns with the best practices of liberal arts education, which have been proven to enhance critical thinking and adaptability (Menand 2010).
3. **Enhancing Experimental Learning: Connecting Humanities with Real-World Problems** — A distinctive feature of EHU's approach is its emphasis on experimental learning, in which students interact with social reality and real social problems as part of their academic training. This model encourages students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical contexts, whether through community engagement projects, internships, or field research.

Experimental learning ensures that humanities education remains deeply relevant, not just theoretical. As Freire (1970) argued in his concept of critical pedagogy, "Education must enable individuals to engage in transformative action within society." EHU adopts this principle by encouraging students to explore the intersection between historical knowledge, cultural heritage, political systems, and contemporary social issues.

For example, students enrolled in philosophy and ethics courses must engage in public discourse initiatives, debating real-world ethical dilemmas and their societal implications. Similarly, students in history courses participate in oral history projects, documenting the narratives of marginalized communities and thereby contributing to historical scholarship while fostering social awareness.

EHU's approach to humanities education through Core-Curriculum courses and experimental learning ensures that students develop strong intellectual foundations before transitioning to their professional disciplines. Strengthening this model by attracting international faculty, institutionalizing humanities requirements across all programs, and expanding real-world engagement opportunities will further solidify EHU's role as a leading center for critical and socially engaged education in the region. By doing so, EHU not only preserves the value of the humanities but also demonstrates their essential role in addressing contemporary challenges and in shaping informed and responsible global citizens.

Humanities as the Core of EHU's Identity and Mission

The increasing global decline of humanities disciplines has led some institutions to deprioritize them in favor of technical and professional programs. However, scholars argue that a university without a strong humanities foundation risks becoming a mere training center rather than a place of intellectual formation (Menand 2010). EHU's commitment to interdisciplinary humanities education, combined with practice-oriented disciplines, ensures that students receive not only technical expertise but also ethical reasoning, analytical skills, and adaptability — qualities that are essential for leadership in any field (Barnett 2018).

The Need for Balance: Strengthening Humanities Alongside Practical Disciplines

While practice-oriented programs in informatics, business, and media studies are crucial for students' employability, their impact is significantly enhanced when combined with a solid humanities education. Research shows that graduates who integrate technical skills with humanities-based critical thinking are better prepared for leadership roles, problem-solving, and navigating complex professional landscapes (Collini 2012). EHU's strategy of ensuring a core humanities curriculum for all students is vital in producing well-rounded professionals who are not only skilled in their respective fields but also socially conscious and adaptable.

By offering a balanced curriculum, EHU can also differentiate itself from its regional competitors. Many universities in the region have increasingly moved towards market-driven educational models that prioritize short-term vocational training over intellectual development. However, the future labor market requires more than just technical specialization; it demands professionals who can think critically, communicate effectively, and navigate ethical dilemmas (Peterson 2018). By maintaining a strong presence of humanities alongside practice-oriented studies, EHU ensures that its graduates possess a unique and sought-after combination of skills.

Humanities as a Tool for Competitive Positioning in the Regional Market

In the competitive landscape of higher education, EHU must strategically position itself against other universities in the region that focus primarily on technical and applied disciplines. While these institutions cater to immediate market demands, they often lack the broader educational philosophy that prepares students for long-term career success. EHU's humanities-driven interdisciplinary approach provides a clear differentiator in the regional market by offering:

1. **A distinct identity** — Unlike other universities that prioritize vocational training, EHU positions itself as a university fostering intellectual resilience, democratic engagement, and critical thought.

2. **Higher employability prospects** — Graduates with a strong humanities foundation alongside technical expertise tend to have greater career flexibility and leadership potential (Freire 1970).
3. **International appeal** — EHU's integration of the humanities with global, practice-oriented perspectives attracts students seeking a deeper, more comprehensive education.

As higher education institutions across Europe and the post-Soviet region continue to evolve, EHU's ability to balance the humanities with practical disciplines will become a key factor in maintaining its competitive edge. Universities that eliminate humanities education in favor of short-term market trends risk producing narrowly skilled graduates who may struggle to adapt to future workforce changes. By ensuring that all students engage with humanities education, regardless of their chosen subject, EHU prepares its graduates for long-term success in dynamic professional environments (Barnett 2023).

For EHU to remain a leader in regional higher education, it must not only preserve but strengthen its commitment to humanities education while maintaining a balance with practice-oriented programs. This approach aligns with both EHU's core mission and the demands of the future job market. By enhancing humanities-driven interdisciplinary learning, EHU will continue to stand out as a university that not only educates professionals but also shapes engaged, thoughtful, and adaptable citizens.

EHU 2.0: Transforming Towards an Ecological University

As it moves into its next phase of development, EHU is embracing the transformative concept of EHU 2.0, which is designed to align its institutional identity with the principles of an Ecological University. Rooted in Ronald Barnett's (2018) vision of the Ecological University, EHU's transformation seeks to go beyond traditional academic functions by integrating sustainability, social engagement, and interdisciplinary learning into its core mission. EHU 2.0 will not only enhance academic excellence but also actively respond to the geopolitical, cultural, and economic challenges of the region by positioning itself as a center of intellectual resilience, democratic engagement, and knowledge production for social transformation.

Core Principles of EHU 2.0 and the Ecological University

The transition to EHU 2.0 is guided by several foundational principles, which align with the multidimensional approach of the Ecological University. Barnett (2018) argues that universities must function across multiple ecological domains, engaging with natural, social, epistemological, cultural, political, and economic ecosystems. For EHU, this means rethinking its institutional framework in ways that prioritize sustainability, societal impact, and intellectual inclusivity. Key principles of EHU 2.0 include:

1. **Interdisciplinary Learning** — Strengthening the integration of the humanities, social sciences, and applied fields to address contemporary challenges in a holistic manner (Nussbaum, 2010).
2. **Sustainability & Ethical Responsibility** — Embedding environmental consciousness and ethical responsibility within research, teaching, and operational policies (Sterling 2012).
3. **Global & Regional Engagement** — Enhancing partnerships with European and global institutions while maintaining a focus on Belarusian and Eastern European intellectual traditions.
4. **Student-Centered & Experiential Learning** — Expanding applied and experiential learning models to equip students with practical skills and critical perspectives needed to address real-world problems (Freire 1970).
5. **Student financial support —** Focusing EHU financial support mechanisms for students in the way that they would promote University values, by supporting talented and motivated students, and talented students but with fewer opportunities.

By embedding these principles into its governance, curriculum, and research priorities, EHU will become an institution that actively engages with societal transformation while maintaining academic rigor and freedom.

Key Initiatives in the EHU 2.0 Transformation

To fully implement EHU 2.0, the university is launching a number of strategic initiatives aimed at strengthening its ecological engagement across disciplines and institutional structures.

Redesigning the Curriculum for an Ecological Approach.

One of the most significant aspects of EHU 2.0 will be a curriculum redesign that integrates ecological, interdisciplinary, and practice-based learning. This includes:

- *Mandatory Core-Curriculum in Humanities & Social Responsibility* — Ensuring that every student, regardless of discipline, is exposed to philosophy, history, ethics, and political thought as tools for critical engagement with social realities (Menand 2010).
- *Sustainability & Digital Humanities Courses* — Introducing cross-disciplinary courses that explore the intersection of climate change, digital culture, AI and human rights.
- *Applied Learning & Civic Engagement* — Strengthening internship, service-learning, and community-based research opportunities that link academic inquiry with societal challenges.

EHU 2.0 as a Regional Leader in Ecological Higher Education

As it transitions towards the Ecological University model, EHU aims to become a regional leader in progressive, interdisciplinary education. While many universities in the region remain focused on traditional disciplinary structures, EHU's commitment to interdisciplinary education, ecological engagement, and applied research will differentiate it within the European and post-Soviet higher education landscape. EHU's dual mission — preserving Belarusian intellectual identity while fostering European integration — uniquely positions it to serve as a bridge between multiple educational traditions. Through the EHU 2.0 transformation, the university will continue to expand its impact beyond the academic sphere, contributing to the social, cultural, and environmental renewal in a region in need of healing.

The transformation to EHU 2.0 will represent a significant step towards realizing the vision of an Ecological University — one that not only produces knowledge but actively engages in shaping a sustainable, democratic, and just society. EHU will strengthen its role as a transformative educational institution. In doing so, it ensures that its graduates are not only skilled professionals but also informed global citizens, critical thinkers, and leaders in their communities.

The Urgency of Transformation: Ensuring EHU's Survival and Relevance

EHU now stands at a critical crossroads. The transformation into EHU 2.0, guided by the principles of the Ecological University, is not simply an aspirational goal — it is an existential necessity. Without an immediate and fact-based transformation, EHU risks losing its relevance and fading from the landscape of higher education. The current global and regional educational landscape is rapidly evolving, demanding universities to adapt, innovate, and demonstrate their unique value. Institutions that fail to evolve in response to shifting economic, political, and technological changes are at risk of declining enrollments, diminished financial sustainability, and weakened academic impact (Barnett 2018).

The Risks of Inaction: The Threat of Irrelevance

Today, higher education is increasingly market-driven, with students and stakeholders seeking universities that provide practical skills, global competencies and robust pathways to employment. As a university in exile, EHU must define its distinctiveness beyond its historical mission. The risks of maintaining the status quo include:

1. **Decreasing Enrollment and Attractiveness** — Without transformation, EHU may fail to attract new generations of students who are seeking innovative, interdisciplinary, and future-oriented education (Nussbaum 2010).
2. **Limited Academic Influence —** Universities that do not evolve intellectually and structurally lose their standing in the global research community. If EHU does not integrate emerging fields and interdisciplinary research, it risks academic stagnation (Menand 2010).
3. **Financial Instability** — In a world where higher education funding is increasingly competitive, universities that fail to provide clear strategic growth plans and societal contributions struggle to secure long-term donor and governmental support (Sterling 2012).

By resisting change, EHU risks not only diminishing its relevance but also facing existential threats — including financial

instability, declining enrollments, and reduced influence in the global academic discourse.

Transformation as the Path to Long-Term Sustainability

For it to not only survive but thrive, EHU must adopt a forward-looking approach that redefines its role in the regional and global academic community. Transformation must be immediate, strategic, and data-driven, focusing on key areas:

1. **Aligning with the Ecological University Model** — By fully embracing the Ecological University concept, EHU will ensure that its curriculum, research, and governance models reflect the social, cultural, and environmental responsibilities of modern higher education (Barnett 2018).
2. **Expanding Interdisciplinary and Applied Learning** — Students today require integrated knowledge that connects humanities, social sciences, and technology. The expansion of applied learning, experiential education, and interdisciplinary programs will position EHU as an innovative institution (Freire 1970).
3. **Strengthening Global Academic and Industry Partnerships** — EHU's future depends on building strong networks with European universities, research institutions, and industry partners. International collaborations will ensure continued academic legitimacy and financial stability (Collini 2012).
4. **Leveraging Digital Transformation** — The integration of digital learning platforms, AI-driven research tools, and online academic engagement will expand EHU's reach, ensuring accessibility for a globally dispersed student and faculty base.

EHU's Unique Opportunity: Becoming a Leader in Transformation

Rather than viewing transformation as a response to crisis, EHU should position itself as a leader in educational reinvention. The university in exile model presents an unparalleled opportunity to become a blueprint for displaced and transnational academic communities, offering:

1. **A distinct academic identity** — Unlike traditional universities, EHU has the potential to lead global discussions on education in exile, academic freedom, and cross-border learning.
2. **A renewed commitment to humanities and social engagement** — By strengthening its role as a humanities-driven, socially engaged institution, EHU can provide critical intellectual leadership at a time when democracy and freedom are under threat in the region (Nussbaum 2010).
3. **A scalable model for the future** — By implementing EHU 2.0, the university will not only secure its own future but also contribute to the broader higher education landscape. This will demonstrate how a mission-driven university can thrive in uncertain geopolitical contexts.

The time for incremental change has passed — EHU must act decisively to secure its future. Through structural reforms, curricular innovation, global partnerships, and digital integration, EHU 2.0 will ensure that the university does not merely survive as an institution in exile but emerges as a global leader in transformative education. The alternative — failure to act — risks irrelevance, financial instability, and the loss of a crucial academic voice in the region. By committing to an immediate, data-driven transformation, EHU reaffirms its place as a pioneering, resilient, and forward-looking university.

Instead of Conclusions

To remain relevant in the rapidly changing educational landscape, EHU must evolve beyond its traditional mission as a university in exile and embrace the Ecological University model. Without immediate and strategic reforms, EHU risks declining student enrollment, reduced academic influence, and financial instability. However, by integrating interdisciplinary learning, sustainability, and digital transformation, the university can secure its long-term viability and academic excellence.

The global decline of the humanities has led many universities to prioritize vocational education over intellectual formation. However, EHU's commitment to a strong humanities foundation alongside practice-oriented programs gives it a clear competitive advantage. This balance ensures that students develop critical thinking, ethical judgement, and adaptability, both of which are essential for both democratic

engagement and professional success. Strengthening Core-Curriculum courses and experimental learning will further solidify EHU's role as a leading institution of interdisciplinary education.

Rather than merely responding to crises, EHU has the opportunity to lead educational reinvention by serving as a blueprint for displaced academic communities. Its dual mission of preserving Belarusian intellectual identity while fostering European integration positions it uniquely within the higher education sector. Through global partnerships, interdisciplinary research, and civic engagement, EHU can demonstrate how universities in exile can thrive and contribute to societal transformation.

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Among other prizes and awards, he received the Fritz-Winter Prize of the Bavarian Academy of Sciences and has had visiting professorships in many countries and fellowships at various institutions, such as the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton.

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In various positions, he actively participated in the relocation and restoration of EHU in Lithuania. His current research and practical interests focused on collection of EHU history and creation of university virtual museum https://project9251501.tilda.ws. Some of the recent publications are: "Virtual University Museums as an 'Absolute Reality'" (2019), The University Museums and Collections Journal // http://umac.icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/UMACJ_11-1_2019.pdf, "The Language of Museum Objects: The Conflict Between Word and Image" // "The Language of Humanities: Between Word and Image" (2020). "European Cultural Routes of Francysk Skaryna" (In Belarussian) (2023).

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- 2005 — PhD candidate, Historical Sciences (Ethnology, Ethnography and Anthropology), Belarusian State University, Minsk, Belarus.

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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)
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QUO VADIS UNIVERSITAS? QUO VADIS EHU?
The epic of one university in an era of crumbling rationality.

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