

UBB's Proposal for Redefining the Idea of University Through the Lens of the Humanities

The Humanist Program is the outcome of interdisciplinary and democratic dialogues within Babeş-Bolyai University, involving all fields of knowledge and a significant number of professors and researchers. Drawing on UBB's three core missions (education, research and active engagement in society), we find that the optimal fulfilment of these missions is encountering major difficulties in the current educational system, as a result of the increasingly alarming marginalisation of the humanities at all levels over the past decades, and also of the humanities component in all fields of study. We believe that the propaedeutic role of this component is of crucial importance, and this must be clearly outlined in the institutional and education process. The key issue for us today is how to retrieve the humanistic approach in all fields of knowledge. In order to achieve this goal, first and foremost, a reform of the political social, economic and mass-media frame of thought is necessary, which could, in turn, entail major systemic changes. We strongly believe that reframing the idea of the University, not only for today but also for the future, is more than ever required nowadays. In the sense of reasserting the importance of a sense of humanism attuned to the present and to the democratic principles and values we believe in.

In a world in which humanity is undergoing constant transformations, viewed through the lens of a careful awareness of its surroundings, we can delineate several major reference points in the teaching and research of subject areas by accentuating, fostering and broadening humanistic elements:

- exploring and generating new knowledge in a shared and democratically inclusive learning process;
- Placing reason, judgement and an ethical dimension at the centre of the pursuit of finding and transmitting new knowledge;
- undertaking a crucial position in research and teaching, an active position in society, in order to address current social, political, technological, environmental challenges;
- combining emphasis on knowledge with mindfulness and responsibility towards oneself and towards human/non-human actors;

- developing new forms of solidarity, co-existence and co-evolution based on collective and rhizomatic connections for a societal transformation based on the axiom of equality and respect for otherness.

In our view, we need to rethink the idea of the University by placing the humanistic component at its core, so that awareness and solutions can be found to important aspects of today's world, along the following lines:

- a) there are multiple aspects of human life that carry non-measurable values;
- b) the logic of punitive quantification narrows the gamut of values to a statistical metric;
- c) education is forfeiting its own language to one imposed by the business sector;
- d) consumerist behaviour in academia undermines the role of universities as active agents in society, pressuring them to integrate into an unquestioned economic system;
- e) implementation of a competitive knowledge policy has various detrimental consequences.

Current European policies provide essential dimensions for an Idea of University that redefines and reassesses the humanistic component in all fields. In line with the most recent European Commission survey for a strategy on universities, the following recommendations fall in line with our proposal for a Humanist Manifesto:

- universities today are in a special position where teaching, research, the demand for innovation and the social and economic role of education intersect;

- universities foster cultural diversity, inclusion and equality policies which are more important than ever;

- present-day universities are aware of the current strain on academic and democratic values and of their own fundamental role in defining and protecting these values, particularly academic autonomy, freedom of thought and expression, and the university's autonomy from any ideological, political and economic pressures of current times;

- universities are in a position to shape and foster a modern and democratic approach to life, with strong emphasis on the quality and relevance of developing skills that are economically, anthropologically, socially and democratically relevant;

- universities identify themselves and act as key players in the value-driven societal transformations of the world today and in the debates around its underlying issues, from the

ecological crisis to technological transitions, from the problem of inequality to the rampant absence of dialogue;

- universities support and promote interdisciplinary approaches and forms of interaction in the context of a diverse world, in which solutions cannot be standardised and one-sided;

- universities discuss, define and advance the idea of a responsible, tolerant citizen, advocating the axiom of equality and the imperative of inclusion, open to critical thinking and social cohesion based on mutual trust and respect.

Following from these strategic recommendations, we believe that emphasising the importance of the humanistic component and its reframing in the contemporary framework is essential. Drawing on the German philosopher Immanuel Kant's assertion that the *raison d'être* of a university is reason itself, we believe that the rationale for a revitalised humanistic component in every field of knowledge is shaped by the following *principles*:

- the axiom of equality, critical judgment and free thinking;
- emphasis on science and the development of technologies that are ethical and beneficial to humanity;
- emphasis on art as an intrinsic form of expressing human values, and on culture as a form of safeguarding and fostering this heritage;
- risk-taking in the process of research and innovation and less statistical confirmation of what is possible and desirable;
- emphasis placed on output, not just input, in research and funding to genuinely support innovation, development and societal evolution.

Against this background, the premises called for by the Humanist Manifesto are the following:

- a university cannot be assessed solely in terms of competition and market criteria; knowledge continues to be a common asset of all humanity;
- quality education may be assessed, not measured. Culture, cultural sciences and the humanistic aspects of all other subject areas call for an acknowledgement that assessment of teaching and research must include more than just rankings and comparative data;

- the main purpose of a university is to educate through one or several disciplines, not to educate in one discipline for the sole purpose of a degree.