

FOREWORD

After an absence of more than two decades, the Journal of the Faculty of Arts, first published in 1957, is finally being re-launched under the new title *Humanitas* and in a different livery. Its long absence tells an important tale.

Since the last issue of this Journal in 1977, the Faculty of Arts has gone through innumerable changes and extensive experiences, some of which were indeed traumatic. The Faculty of Arts was suppressed in 1981, and this brought about concomitant repercussions. Some of its members served in other Faculties for some time, while others carried out tasks away from the University Campus. In 1987 the Faculty of Arts began to function again when Professor Peter Serracino-Inglott, who had just been appointed Rector, took the necessary steps to re-instate the Faculties of Arts and Science.

Since then, the Faculty has grown both in numbers and services: in addition to providing teaching and research in 37 areas of studies, it services numerous other courses, provided both by other Faculties and Institutes. Within it, new courses both professional and otherwise have been born. Some still thrive within the Faculty of Arts, others now prosper in other Faculties or Institutes. Since the last issue of the Journal, some senior staff who had contributed enormously through their work to successive issues of the Journal and to the work of the Faculty of Arts are, alas, with us no more, while the younger ones who remember the last issue of this Journal, have since then flourished in their academic career.

Humanitas is being brought back to life because of the dire need for the Faculty to demonstrate that, despite the trials and tribulations it has gone through since the last issue of this Journal, it is alive and active, eager to dwell on the values that have enriched the life of the Faculty ever since it was first established, initially as the College of Philosophy, many decades ago. The breadth and depth of the articles in this issue are a clear indication of the concerns of its members, of the variety of topics that are discussed and researched during the courses provided by the Faculty, and can serve as a pointer to some of the main current interests within the Faculty. The emphasis needs to be on 'some', because there are many other interests, interspersed within the various disciplines in which members of the Faculty of Arts specialise, which could not be covered by a specialised article in this first issue of *Humanitas*.

Despite the variety of topics discussed in this issue, a number of common threads can be identified and all these relate, in one way or other, to the core of the *raison d'être* of the Faculty. The Faculty's scientific concern is the study of humanity, of the preoccupations of men and women and of their search for a better understanding of their own achievements. This search is undertaken through the study of languages and literatures, perhaps the largest component of the whole Faculty. It is undertaken also through the study of History through which the present can be better understood. It is completed through reflection and empirical analysis of man and of his milieu, respectively undertaken by the philosophers and the sociologists in the Faculty. Although at first glance these areas of specialisation appear to be different and unrelated, they are essential for a deep understanding of humans, what they are, what they aspire for and of how, empirically, they provide solutions to problems of ultimate meaning. In one way or another, whether this is done through Literature or Sociolinguistics, Philosophy or Sociology, History or Music, members of the Faculty seek to understand how men and women construct universes of meaning that make life worth living, and how, during periods of stress and strain, they express their humanity in the form of a record that casts their experience in an indestructible record for others to understand and eventually interpret.

Over the years, the Faculty has proved its worth in many different ways. The skills it imparts are not always perceived to be immediately marketable or strictly utilitarian. In fact, the main criticism over the years from both friend and foe has been that its courses are not 'functional' and therefore not much in demand in a society bent on immediate returns, time and motion studies, opportunity costs and profitability. This is, of course, a myopic vision of reality. A more than surface analysis of current economic reality shows that skills learnt narrowly in a classroom environment are quickly out of phase, and what an effective educational system needs to impart is not solutions to problems that will last a lifetime, but attitudes of creativity, a critical outlook to life and work, the ability to understand effectively and the knack to understand and participate in interaction processes. The vast and fast changes in technology constantly make *passé* solutions that were *avant garde* only a couple of years ago. Through its courses and approach, the Faculty's challenge has always been to nurture creativity, research and critique, especially by looking at how the great catalysts of past and contemporary cultures have managed to do so in a prophetic way during their lifetime.

It is with these ideas in mind that the Faculty re-presents itself through the re-launch of its Journal, *Humanitas*. The future beckons today in the same way that it did when the greatest of past civilisations managed to survive best when they systematically undertook to understand their own cultural productions and to promote them. It is hoped that this publication will contribute, even if in a small way, towards this great project which men and women will never tire to engage in: to understand, to enjoy the beautiful and to keep recreating themselves in their culture.

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