“AI must be the context in which we act, think and transform the world”

Inaugural lecture 2023/2024

UOC’s 29th academic year

“Rethinking intelligence to rethink ourselves. The emergence of generative AI as a chance to think about ourselves in a new light and try to understand what defines us as a species”, a conversation between philosopher Marina Garcés, director of the UOC’s Master’s Degree in Philosophy for Contemporary Challenge, and Andreas Kaltenbrunner, lead researcher of the UOC’s AI and Data for Society (AID4So) group.

Wednesday 18 October 2023, 11 a.m. (CEST), in the UOC Campus’s auditorium

w.uoc.edu/en/inaugural23
#inauguralUOC

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

Contents

Opening ceremony of UOC's 29th academic year

01

- *Cello Suite no. 1, Prelude* by J.S. Bach, played by cellist Biel Garriga, from the Pau Casals Foundation
- Opening words from Sílvia Sivera, director of the eLearning Innovation Center and master of ceremonies
- Conversation between philosopher Marina Garcés, member of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and researcher Andreas Kaltenbrunner: Rethinking intelligence to rethink ourselves
- *March* (from Music for Children) by S. Prokofiev, played by Biel Garriga
- Speech by Helena Guardans, chair of the FUOC Board of Trustees' Standing Committee
- Video report 2022/2023, the UOC's 28th academic year
- Speech by Àngels Fitó, rector of the UOC
- Closing words from Joaquim Nadal, Minister for Research and Universities of the Government of Catalonia and member of the FUOC Board of Trustees
- *Gaudeamus igitur*

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya

Report: Philosopher Marina Garcés and researcher Andreas Kaltenbrunner open the academic year with a discussion on artificial intelligence

Philosopher **Marina Garcés**, a member of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, and **Andreas Kaltenbrunner**, lead researcher of the AI and Data for Society (AID4So) group at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC) opened the UOC's academic year 2023/2024. They did so with a discussion – **"Rethinking intelligence to rethink ourselves.** The emergence of generative AI as a chance to think about ourselves in a new light and try to understand what defines us as a species" – moderated by Sílvia Sivera, director of the eLearning Innovation Center (eLinC). The event also featured Àngels Fitó, the rector of the UOC, alongside Helena Guardans, president of the Standing Committee of the university's Board of Trustees, and Joaquim Nadal, Minister for Research and Universities of the Government of Catalonia and also a member of the Board of Trustees. The event, which was held at the UOC Campus, was streamed live on LinkedIn and YouTube.

The discussion was enriched by the different approaches from the two sides – more philosophical from Garcés and more technological from Kaltenbrunner – and started with a **reflection on the concept of intelligence**. In Garcés's opinion, "where artificial intelligence has really succeeded is in its name, because it places the key word of human aspirations, which is to define ourselves as intelligent beings, at the heart of technological development". According to her,

anthropocentrism – the idea that one species is superior to the rest because of its ability to know, understand and manipulate the world – has constructed a notion of what makes us human that we are now projecting onto this new entity as if we were looking into a mirror. "If I had to define the current situation, I'd say that, on the one hand, we're just taking another step in this human power struggle in relation to intelligence, but there's also another way, which involves ousting human beings from this position of assumed superiority over all other beings," she said.

Kaltenbrunner posited that **the greatest challenge of working with AI is probably how to evolve with it and co-create with it**. Along the lines of the notion of intelligence as different types of intelligence in a hierarchy, he wondered whether AI can really be a superior intelligence and what consequences this could lead to. He explained that "we can already see that this is the case" in some areas. He gave chess as an example, where even the best players in the world "don't stand a chance against the algorithm". This is why, according to him, "we must think about whether this is a problem and we're scared of it or whether we'll simply use AI as a tool, in the same way that we use calculators, which can calculate faster than us and we can use to boost our own capabilities."

An extremely human debate

Beyond the concept of intelligence, which is usually the focus of the debate when talking about AI, Garcés also placed the focus on artificiality, which implies that

"we, humans, are natural beings" while the things we produce – our works, productions and technologies – are "non-human and alien". According to the philosopher, "this concept is completely wrong" but is consistent with our fears around AI and with a certain vision that something from outside is infiltrating our brains, our minds and the "natural" way in which we experience the world. "This idea that the natural elements of human beings are being invaded goes back to dangerous essentialistic ideas that had already been debunked, both philosophically and politically," she warned, while noting that a much more interesting and possibly even **more "human" way of looking at our essence would be to see it as "this ability of ours to relate to very diverse and changing environments in a creative way and gain some sort of understanding of them** [...] Let's get there with our full ability, not to be invaded to a greater or lesser extent, but to make it where we act, think and transform the world," she said.

Kaltenbrunner talked in more depth about the concept of AI as a tool, mentioning some of its possible positive consequences. Going back to the chess example, he noted that players are much better now than before AI, because they can train against a very sophisticated algorithm. In addition, he explained how **AI can help address some imbalances**: "Some people are better at science than art, and these tools can, for example, help someone with little knowledge of English produce a good text in that language." Garcés pointed out that seeing something as a tool entails the risk of "assuming

that every tool is neutral". Against this idea of neutrality, she shared her opinion that AI, as it is being developed in our context, is a "highly political" device and that, as political subjects and subjects of knowledge, we must work out "not so much how to use it or protect ourselves" but "how to be part of it".

The two experts agreed that there are many subjects behind AI, and that the question of who is key when it comes to considering what we want this device to be like. "Do we want it to be just like us and, therefore, to have the same biases as us? Or do we want it to be better? And, if so, who decides what's better and what characteristics it should have?" asked Kaltenbrunner. He shied away from demonizing biases, which he defined as necessary in some cases, but clarified that we must "clearly understand" the risks. He also pointed out **the danger of "humanizing" systems**: "You think of it as an entity with its own reasons, but that's not really the case: it's just an algorithm. We must always bear this in mind for both the good and bad aspects: AI lacks its own values or goals. Someone has given it these values and this appearance."

Explaining AI in order to understand ourselves

In the last part of the discussion, which focused on knowledge, Garcés summarized the general feeling about artificial intelligence that guides people's everyday lives, making us live "**between a sense of urgency that makes us hurry to adapt to it and the paranoia that makes us run in the opposite direction.**"

"What we must ask ourselves is how to escape from this dual reaction," she said, convinced that it is here that universities can make the greatest contributions, because "they are exactly where all this knowledge aims to become universally available, collectively desirable and debatable under conditions of equality".

Kaltenbrunner stressed how, far from being merely a subject for study, AI is increasingly being used to carry out research. He used the case of computer science papers as an example of this: ten years ago, only 10% of papers used AI, compared to today's 25%. **He stressed that "this tool is often used to produce new knowledge"** and noted that "this has significant ethical implications that cannot be ignored, particularly because it could hinder reproducibility, which is a key issue in science".

As for his own area of specialization, research in the field of AI, he said that **the most important thing is that "interdisciplinary research" is carried out.** And, although he believes that the UOC is very well-positioned in this regard, he also warned of the difficulties involved in carrying it out, "because algorithm experts often feel that others are encroaching on their field". He said that the purpose of the research should be to provide explanations: "I believe that we must be able to understand where the results yielded by algorithms come from, and people should know what they can and can't do." Finally, he again referred to the way we define the various concepts around AI and concluded that **"all this research can be used in the future to gain a slightly better understanding of what we're like"** because, if eventually "we do end up with artificial intelligence that has consciousness,"

for example, "we'll have to redefine the concept of consciousness and rethink what constitutes intelligence and how we measure it".

The UOC marks the start of a new era with three strategic lines

The institutional welcome for the new academic year at the UOC, which is starting with over 66,600 enrolments on bachelor's and master's degree programmes, was given by the rector, **Àngels Fitó**, who took up her position in April and who set out the three lines that will guide her term in office. She first stressed the entire university system's common need "to synchronize our evolution as institutions with our social function. [...] The second challenge affects the UOC directly and is basically the need to ensure our viability, resolving our legal status and agreeing on a funding model that is viable, and fair and proportional to our mission." Finally, she highlighted the need for strong and clear leadership with room for different points of view: "This university we have conceived will only be feasible if we can develop a clear, functional and up-to-date governance model; if we are committed to ensuring that all voices, sensitivities and expertise can take part; and if we perfect what we already have on the basis of dialogue, trial and error and the wish to improve and be active agents of knowledge."

Helena Guardans, chair of the Standing Committee of the FUOC's Board of Trustees, presented the video report for the academic year 2022/2023, which was marked by the end of the term of the previous rector, Josep A. Planell, and the start of Rector Fitó's term. Guardans highlighted the UOC's constant accountability over its almost three decades of

existence. “Leaving evidence of what you’ve done enables you to operate in an adult, responsible and objective manner. Being accountable means that you know where you stand, as well as your strengths and weaknesses, your potential and limitations,” she said.

The last speech was delivered by **Joaquim Nadal**, Minister for Research and Universities of the Government of Catalonia, who talked about the university’s role. “The Government wants the UOC to be a university of Catalonia, at the service of Catalonia and of the entire universe of students who study at it. And it wants it to be a university that spans the public and private spheres: public due to the political will of the people that back it, but with all the features of a private institution in order to achieve its mission,” he said.

Image Gallery

Key moments from the lecture: Rethinking intelligence to rethink ourselves

PART 1. A higher intelligence?

I wanted to start by thanking the rector's team for the idea of making this lecture into a conversation and a conversation between us. We are two people from this large community, but I think it's above all an invitation for all of us to join in this much needed conversation about challenges like these, but about all those we are experiencing at the moment in our society in general and at universities in particular, which I think are in a sensitive, delicate and essential position. So I think we are instigators, provocateurs of a conversation that I wanted to begin by using two definitions.

Key moments from the lecture: Rethinking intelligence to rethink ourselves

The concept of intelligence, like all those great concepts in our tradition, has as many definitions as there are concepts of what is human which we can advocate and propose. I wanted to start with two: one, turning to the etymology, which, very simply and very transparently, contains the word intelligence, which comes from *inter* and *legere*, or in other words, "read between" or "between reading", which are two ways of ordering the two semantic parts of the word, which give us a lot to talk about when we consider everything that the question of intelligence opens up. Because a "between" is precisely what opens up a space, it opens up a distance, locates a possibility of not living, nor thinking nor being in the immediacy of what we are, focused on what there is, but instead, in some way it permits a movement. That is undoubtedly reading, which we will talk about later, and what reading means in the era of artificial intelligence. And based on that, what understanding something means.

That is the first definition, a sign or clue that I wanted to leave floating among us. The other one is a little more complex, but I think it's very transparent. It is a definition by Jean Piaget, from 1947. He was a child psychologist, and an observer of how human intelligence develops from childhood. Many other things have been observed since then, but he says one thing in one of his books which I really like, and which I also mention here for you to think about. He says: "Intelligence is not an isolated category or one structure among others" or in other words, we cannot isolate it as such, but instead, and here I am quoting literally, "the form of equilibrium". I think that's beautiful. "Intelligence constitutes the form of equilibrium towards which all the structures arising out of perception, habit and elementary sensori-motor mechanisms tend."

So it is tendential, we are moving towards it. So, it is a body, which is also something I want to mention here, because the digital world is an appearance of immaterial existence that also contains many assumptions of dualistic idealistic traditions that have shaped our culture and that suggest that intelligence is whatever is not the body, which is not matter, movement, roots. This definition contains these two elements: the corporeality of intelligence, not only in an anatomical and cerebral sense, but also in the sense of movement, habits and perception, of how we relate to the world we are part of and as a structure that cannot be isolated, we cannot separate it from all the other movements and relationships, but which is a form of tendential equilibrium, towards which we can tend, in the same way as we do or will do with all the tools we have today and how artificial intelligence may or may not help us. I don't know if these definitions are very appropriate for what artificial intelligence, (as AI, as a very specific term for some technological practices), covers, or if they go beyond it. – Well, it's the other way around, because artificial intelligence does something else. It doesn't focus on the broader picture, it looks at problems individually. Mainly because they're easier to solve. Perhaps later it may see the whole, and solve problems that way, but it was created to... The classic definition is that they are computer systems which are able to perform tasks that do not require human intelligence, because they are isolated tasks. It could be visual perception, translating between languages, generating texts or recognizing a face. So they are clearly isolated. There were two main ideas or two main currents when it started. One was weaker, and simply wanted to obtain the result.

Key moments from the lecture: Rethinking intelligence to rethink ourselves

You have a problem and you want to solve it. And it doesn't matter how you do it. And the other stronger current, the stronger idea, was to do it in the same way as a human does. And also to understand how we do it. What happened? It is much easier to do it the other way. So understanding and doing it in the way humans do it has been more or less sidelined and it is done with brute force or with different algorithms to get the job done. And perhaps it even does the task better than humans in many areas, but we have this discrepancy. And now it seems that we can see we're trying to reach what's known as general AI, which would be like an artificial intelligence which is able to solve all the problems, to generalize. So that any task you give it, it can solve it, or at least more or less solve it. There are even people who say that a model like ChatGPT already has some of these abilities, that there are things like one-shot learning and zero-shot learning, where you give it a couple of examples and sometimes it is able to generate them. Then it gets mixed up, it doesn't remember and in the long run it doesn't work, but at least, there was the hope that some progress towards this goal of general artificial intelligence could be made. But of course, we need above all to understand how. If we have these intelligences, what they tell us about this intelligence and what they tell us about other intelligences. – I was just listening and thinking that this use of the singular to talk about intelligence is related to... or really refers to an intelligence in the singular, or in other words to a very isolated, determined and focused use, to a specific way of posing problems and solutions which you have just described very well, or it starts to need a lot of plurals.

Key moments from the lecture: Rethinking intelligence to rethink ourselves

What intelligences are we talking about when in the question we focus on knowledge and not only mechanical knowledge, but also creative and generative knowledge.

I would say, I don't know what you think, that maybe for now the greatest achievement of artificial intelligence is to be called artificial intelligence. In other words, its biggest achievement is its name. It's all in the name, as they say. And I think that in this case I don't know if it is all in the name because I think it leads to confusion about what it is. But it is indeed an achievement to have placed at the centre of all these scientific and technological developments the key word of human aspirations, which is to define ourselves, humans, as intelligent beings. That is what has motivated all the reflection, not only specifically philosophical, but also cultural, artistic, and religious.

In other words, what defines us as humans and what makes us unique as humans. And what role does intelligence play in this aspirational desire for singularization that even turns intelligence into the sign of God's creation according to certain perspectives. We are intelligent because an intelligent being created us, whether it's God, nature or whatever we mean by this kind of intelligence, So it's a sign.

It is an aspiration that includes everything good and better that we would like to be, but also all that is good and better that we can possess. So the aspiration to intelligence is also I think the driving force in the entire history of human struggles and conflicts.

Who possesses knowledge, who can decide, who can think, about what subjects, about what questions, who has the power to define what we can know and what we can't. All this is obviously a driving force behind our history as humans, but also between humans and other beings. The history of what we call anthropocentrism, the idea that there is one species, among others, which is superior to the rest, because it can know about and understand the world. And that's what we call intelligence and manipulating it, which is the third aspect. So that has built an entire construct of what is human, which we are now projecting onto this new entity like a mirror, which we think is more or less analogous to certain imaginaries of the divine and of the superior, of the intelligence that is beyond us and which gives us a place in the world in this widget, in this device, in this technology. I see two paths here that we can talk about if this conversation continues, and with you, Andreas.

On the one hand we are... If I had to define the current situation, I would say that on the one hand, we are a further step down the road in the struggle between humans for power in relation to intelligence. And we are at a time of concentration. What we are seeing is a clear concentration, of individuals, people and companies who are orchestrating this entire war for knowledge and for control over and through intelligence, and artificial intelligence in this case. This is a path that we are experiencing very clearly and which I believe concerns and involves us all, those of us at institutions for knowledge and education, cultural institutions, etc.

But the other path that is also opening up today and which I think is much more interesting, is precisely what is happening with what I would call the dethronement of the human species, of the human being, precisely from where it thought it was superior over other species, over other beings, over other bodies.

And here I include both those that we call natural and artificial, and we are beginning to see ourselves as one intelligence among many. That's from the perspective of biology, animal observation, plant intelligences, many approaches in the fields of biochemistry and biomedicine. There is a plurality of intelligences that if we were able to become a part of them like a vision, like another experience of one intelligence, among many, perhaps artificial intelligence too, instead of lifting it up again, like a great trophy to be possessed, could be an expression of precisely that plurality.

There is an author who I really like, who has come to Barcelona a few times and who been something of an inspiration for the exhibition at the CCCB about artificial intelligence that opened yesterday. And I strongly recommend that you go and see it. Her name is Helga Nowotny, and she has written a book called In *AI We Trust* in which she asks the question: How will we coevolve? How we will co-evolve between intelligences, between beings that express plural and diverse intelligences, and how can we integrate artificial intelligence? I can see two paths: a concentration of powers, a fight for power and intelligence, coevolution, integration, collaboration between species, between beings, between intelligences. We have this dilemma and I think that both paths need answers, from universities as well. – **Marina Garcés**

Yes, that's certainly the biggest challenge, co-evolving and co-creating later. Maybe we could talk some more about that, about how we should work with artificial intelligence. We also have to mention the topic of higher intelligences and of being God. There's a little of that, humans wanting to play God and we want to create an intelligent being. And maybe, it could become a smarter being. So then a question arises. Could artificial intelligence be superior intelligence? And if it could, what would happen to us?

And it's obviously superior in some areas. For example, if you look at games, at chess, the best players in the world don't stand a chance against the mobile, the phone, playing against the algorithm that you have on your phone. And also perhaps, if we look at algorithms like ChatGPT, maybe the one we have today, many people cannot write texts which ChatGPT is able to write. Maybe the elite, yes, but an average person maybe not. So then we have to think what does that mean? Is it a problem, or is it like a car that goes faster than us, or like a calculator which does calculations more quickly and is a tool we simply use to improve our capabilities.

And that raises another issue, which is fear. Because if you have something that is better than you, you may feel threatened. And this is also where the humanization of artificial systems comes in.

How do we project ourselves in this system and what do we think humans will do if they are superior? We have already seen man examples and a lot of this fear that we have of artificial intelligence is also fear of what we have done or what we are still doing if we are superior to other species or other peoples.

So it's something about ourselves that we have to think about. How we consider and also how we can use topics like artificial intelligence to have advantages in other areas. There is a danger in this field. And for example, I always think that if there were a superintelligent artificial intelligence, wouldn't it be more logical for it to try to preserve less intelligent entities? If one existed. If we believe that intelligence is tolerance, etc., right?

And to come back to the dangers, because a much greater danger is stupid artificial intelligences that do very simple things, like a system that shoots at everything that moves, which can be far more dangerous than superior intelligence. – **Andreas Kaltenbrunner**

Vídeo

Key ideas

"For now the greatest achievement of artificial intelligence is to be called artificial intelligence. In other words, its biggest achievement is its name. It's all in the name, as they say. And I think that in this case I don't know if it is all in the name because I think it leads to confusion about what it is. But it is indeed an achievement to have placed at the centre of all these scientific and technological developments the key word of human aspirations, which is to define ourselves, humans, as intelligent beings."

"A much greater danger is stupid artificial intelligences that do very simple things, like a system that shoots at everything that moves, which can be far more dangerous than superior intelligence."

PART 2. An extremely human debate

Yes, I'm really pleased that adjectives are important and in this language which we speak a lot, they are very important when we use them and sometimes when we talk about artificial intelligence we underestimate it a little, because as we said before, intelligences are at the centre of human aspirations and all debates. But what happens when we talk about artificiality?

If you go to the exhibition at the CCCB, stop for a while at the entrance and then again at the end. They have done a trick with the acronym AI. Because now we're saying artificial intelligence all the time, I'm very reluctant to jump up and say AI, AI, AI, because it's also pretty awful phonetically. But they have done something very beautiful, which is to display words that begin with A and adjectives that start with I, and they are resignifying the acronym. So you find things ranging from alternative imagination to alternative ideas. To... It depends on how long you stay. It multiplies the meanings of the acronym and opens up new and different ways of understanding what it might mean. I think it is very interesting and I related it to... I don't know if you have seen the latest things that Harari, Yuval Harari, is saying in the international media. Now about Gaza and Israel, but until a few weeks ago he was very focused on talking about artificial intelligence and he had replaced the A for artificial with an A for alien. So he is talking about an alien intelligence. That gets a lot of clicks and is great for attracting attention. But it has a deeper meaning, which is this idea that something artificial is totally different. In other words, we are natural beings, humans, and the artificial things we create, our works, productions and technologies, are non-human. That

concept is completely mistaken. Harari goes so far as to say: “an alien intelligence”, produced on Earth, but alien, has hacked the system of human civilization. That is like the latest buzzword. I don’t want to get caught up in this, but it is something which in a very, very striking way contains an idea that we have to some extent now, those fears that you mentioned. That there’s like a foreign body that’s getting inside our brains, in our mind, in our soul, into our natural way of experiencing the world. Indeed, the concept of nature is itself an invented concept used to name anything which is not human. It is a dualistic 19th-century concept, in contrast to what we recognize as the human world, civilisation culture, society, politics. In other words, everything with ahigh degree of artificiality, which is based on the artificiality of a social contract, for example, on the artificiality of language, on the artificiality of our cultural imaginaries, etc. Human experience is a vast repertoire of artificiality. And we left nature outside of it, as if it were untouched by this human artificiality. Now we have reversed the terms. We see ourselves as natural, threatened by the artificiality of an entity that we consider completely different. Why? And I think it’s something we need to consider because precisely at the heart of those fears, there is a kind of invasion of the natural side of the human being, a return to rather dangerous essentialisms, which I think philosophically and politically and culturally we had dismantled. What is this human essence? Well, maybe it is precisely what we were talking about earlier, the ability to relate creatively to very diverse and changing environments and try to have some kind of understanding and collaboration and relationship. Perhaps that is more human than preserving a fictional human nature that now seems to be in danger as a result of all of this. So

that's why I had put forward the phrase: "Everything that is artificial is human." So let's relate to each other as authors collaborators, interlocutors, critics and therefore part of this artificiality that today follows technological paths of this type, but which are still an expression and fundamental element of the human experience of the world. So let's go there with all our powers, not to be invaded or otherwise, but to make it somewhere we work, for thought and to transform the world. And then the question will arise: based on which values, from which point of view, with what concepts and with what expectations? But this is an extremely human or all too human debate, as has been said on occasion. – **Marina Garcés**

In this context there is something interesting: you mentioned aliens. For example, there are projects that try to find out what it would be like to communicate with aliens. What do they do? They look for how it can be done. They take whales. They say the closest thing we have on Earth to the language of aliens is whales. So what do they do? That's exactly what artificial intelligence is used for, to try to decipher this language. In that respect, we can get close... – Get closer.– Get closer, excuse me. Thank you. Get closer to nature. The artificial aspect can perhaps communicate with species that are perhaps also intelligent and they may be able to say something. We have this curious connection.

And another aspect I wanted to mention is... I've said this about chess before, that algorithms play chess better. And the curious thing, in this context, is that today's chess players play much better than players before these algorithms, because they can train with these systems and it makes us better, much better. We have to ask

ourselves: might artificial intelligence make us more intelligent? Is it useful, for example, if we train to write with systems like ChatGPT? Will we get better at writing and will it make us better? And there is an analogy, a bit like the calculators which we mentioned before. which is that when calculators came out at the end of the 1970s, teachers in schools said: "Now our students have calculators, but it's better for them to have their brains in their heads and not in their pockets, with the calculator." Maybe it's a bit similar with the ChatGPT systems and those like it, maybe they simply help. They help us and we have to adapt. And in the end they will be tools, like the calculators we use. And also because to some extent, this is a tool that can resolve some imbalances we have. There are people who respond better, who have more knowledge or are better in areas like the sciences, while others are better at writing. And with these tools it might be possible to strike a balance, that you can learn to write very well in English, even though you don't know English very well, and other things, right? So it's like there's something which balances our skills. That does not mean that there are no dangers and risks, and I suppose we have to talk a little about that too. – **Andreas Kaltenbrunner**

Yes, but I think that it is true that all these types of technologies have a dimension as a tool in some ways. If we compare it with the calculator and with so many others that have mediated precisely in this artificiality that is the human experience. But the concept of the tool has ad anger, which is to consider that any tool is neutral. What's the classic example? A hammer can be used to hammer in a nail, or to bash your neighbour's head in. Yes, but it is a question of neutralizing, decontextualizing people who want to kill their

neighbour or who are building a house to have a better life. So maybe that's the point of the tool. So tools are not neutral. Tools, and these are cognitive tools, are built, are programmed, are designed, are imagined based on certain perspectives of the world rather than others, and based on certain business conditions, economic, political, geopolitical and material conditions. We should also first remember that the question of all intelligence involves bodies and in this case, it involves subjects and a struggle for resources and for chips and for energy. In other words, everything that is involved in what ultimately reaches the user, in this culture of the user, as a tool which individually, and also from a very moralistic perspective, we can use either for good or for bad. I think we have to move past this point, which is always there. In the end, we are individuals who make decisions, but we make them in contexts where there are no neutral tools. And I think that artificial intelligence, in the way it is developing in our real context, is a highly political mechanism, not only ethical, but also highly political. It involves all these dimensions that we were talking about, all those delegations, of data, of decisions, of visions of the world, of concentration of power and so we will not only relate to their end product, ChatGPT and all the millions of applications that are being created, but instead we will relate to these worlds in the way they operate and make these tools possible.

So I think this idea is very important: artificial intelligence is a political mechanism. There is a book that I would recommend to you, which also came out very recently, because of course this is a very hot topic at the moment. It is by an author named Mark Coeckelbergh, who I think works in Vienna. And it's called The Political Philosophy of AI. And it looks at

how the key concepts of classical political philosophy – freedom, democracy, the subject, decisions – are affected and can be affected, but also how they can be re-occupied and re-signified based on this relationship we have now, with this massive potential of dealing with the data of the rest and the consequences that this has on so many levels. So maybe, along with all these fears of new forms of authoritarianism, of concentration of power, of an authoritarian delegation of our ideas and decisions, which is a considerable possibility that we are facing. It perhaps also has a repoliticizing effect, if we consider that all these are political mechanisms and they have implications for both ideas and decisions. The two key questions of philosophy and politics are those of who thinks, who can think and who decides, who can decide. From all this, we can then say more democracy, less democracy, more shared knowledge, or less. We can offer various solutions, but who thinks and who decides are the two key questions of any human system, of life, knowledge and decisions. Artificial intelligence is forcing us to think about it. It is forcing us to ask ourselves about this political mechanism, about who thinks and who decides. Who is permitted, called upon to think, and who is excluded. Who can decide what the algorithm executes and who can take part. I think that maybe at this point we can take up this repoliticization of us as subjects of knowledge and as political subjects and think in terms of specific environments like ours, not so much how to protect ourselves or how to integrate ourselves, but how to really participate, how to take a participatory radicalism to its extremes in this new political mechanism which is artificial intelligence. They've seen it in Hollywood, and it's not that difficult. They have mobilized, there are mobilizations that are not only defensive, but people who write, who think, who tell

stories and for whom. The question of "for whom" is I think always the key that this alien intelligence is often taking out of our hands. Because it seems that there is no single who, there's only a hammer. And yes, there are a lot of whos there are a lot of subjects, there are a lot of decisions and a lot of ideas in the existence of this digital hammer, which is the artificial algorithm.
– **Marina Garcés**

And apart from the who, which is fundamental, the question is also how– how we want artificial intelligence to be. Do we want it to be like us, for it to have the same biases? I will talk more about that later. Or for it to be better? In what way better? Who decides what is better? Or for it to even be like a God? In other words, for it to know everything and to be the ultimate authority which decides things? And that takes us back to the who. Who decides what form should it take? Of course, there is a lot of debate. Society in general needs to reflect on this. And we must bear in mind that there is always a danger of us humanizing the systems, of us attributing capabilities to them as if they were human. When you imagine a person, you imagine a being that has motives, and they don't have any, they are algorithms, basically. So that has to be taken into account. In both positive and negative terms. No, it doesn't have values, it doesn't have any goals for itself, instead it has values that someone has assigned it, those... those aspects that it has that may even be unknown. Because it consists of what has been used to train it and maybe it has buried this force that it has behind it.

And bias comes into it, which is in itself a neutral concept. That doesn't mean it's good or bad. They are patterns that have a deviation, from a real or objective

value. Because what is objective? And it can have many negative aspects. A lot has been said about this. I don't want to get into that now, discrimination and so on. But we must bear in mind that they are also positive aspects, that sometimes it is necessary for systems to have a bias. For example, to ensure legal or ethical compliance, or privacy. You can't be neutral on this issue, you have to follow some rules. Especially to comply with laws or to protect people. And it is also necessary because of the cultural context. If you want a system that gives the answers users want, you have to more or less understand the cultural context around you. If not, it won't be accepted. And there is a very clear example that I use myself: when we measure bias in texts, we always look and see if the system we use is able to detect biases that must be there. For example, if there is a bias towards flowers, it is more inclined towards pleasant things than to more unpleasant things like insects which is something that almost all humans share. So if there is a system that produces texts and doesn't do this, we would not be able to relate to it. It wouldn't be human or it wouldn't be accepted. So there is this dilemma that biases must be allowed, but the risks involved must also be clear, and which ones we want and which ones we don't. – **Andreas Kaltenbrunner**

Vídeo

Key ideas

"What is this human essence? Well, maybe it is precisely what we were talking about earlier, the ability to relate creatively to very diverse and changing environments and try to have some kind of understanding and collaboration and relationship. Perhaps that is more human than preserving a fictional human nature that now seems to be in danger as a result of all of this."

"We must bear in mind that there is always a danger of us humanizing the systems, of us attributing capabilities to them as if they were human. When you imagine a person, you imagine a being that has motives, and they don't have any, they are algorithms, basically. So that has to be taken into account. In both positive and negative terms. No, it doesn't have values, it doesn't have any goals for itself."

PART 3. Explaining AI in order to understand ourselves

We now turn to the third and final section of the conversation, which focuses on the role of universities in the face of these challenges which we are talking about and the issues the generative AI raises for us. We talked about the noun, the adjective, and I think that now we will put a lot of verbs on the table. We have a lot of work to do, a lot of actions and a lot of reflection. Yes, this third section is the conversation we all need to have. So I think we'll highlight some ideas that we have tried to share and reflect on, but it is the point we have reached in our work, our tasks as professionals, here at the university, and in our lives in general. I would say, considering what we do in our everyday academic lives, we're caught up in the hurry to adapt, we're rushing to update our knowledge, to do courses on teaching and ChatGPT; this panic about being obsolete because our students are faster, or companies or whoever and we give in to this panic. It is as if there were an emergency that can only be responded to by adapting to it and incorporating it as another unarguable aspect that has its own criteria, its own pace and its own way of imposing itself and applying itself. Or paranoia, which is the other common situation we experience. Everything is collapsing, no one will write, everyone will copy their works, research papers will no longer need to be written, and neither will applications. The end of the world. So between the emergency, which makes us rush to adapt, and paranoia, which makes us run away, I think it is the general feeling in our everyday life which leads to very uninteresting actions, because they are both reactive: one is to reacting to what you are told you have to do and the other is reacting to what you think will

be a total disaster. How can we move away from this doubly reactive position, either involving adapting, or a paranoid reaction?

I think that is the question we have to ask ourselves. And I think that's where universities can express and can demonstrate their raison d'être. Universities, for me, and I think many of us can agree, are not simply factories of approved knowledge, they are not repositories of accumulated research, they are not places for the mere production and accumulation of what we call knowledge, science, etc., and conveying it in the form of teaching, they are in fact the place, I think, and this is their raison d'être, where all this knowledge which has been accumulated historically and created in the present and future has the mission of becoming universally available. That is why they are called universities, rather than other possible names for schools and research centres. Universally available. To me, that means collectively desirable. In other words, at a university you have to be able to ask through what we do, what we want to know, how we want to learn, what the issues are that mobilize a desire, not a compulsive consumerist desire, but a desire. Do we want to know about what we are investigating? Do we need to transfer what we are teaching? All these questions are the centre, which gives this institution of knowledge its raison d'être.

And for me, that means, thirdly, debatable in terms of equality. If what we generate as forms of knowledge, if what we convey as forms of teaching is not also in addition to universally available and collectively desirable knowledge, debatable in terms of equality, what we have is something that flows in one direction,

an output of a series of products that will be more or less widely accepted and received by the market and little else. I started at the beginning with the etymology of intelligence, "read between" or "between read". This relationship with what we can read and understand between us. And that means asking ourselves what this between is, whom the university system consists of, the people, the ideas, the sciences, the experiences that interact. So what is this between made of? And what does it mean to learn to read? I can get quite boring about this, maybe I'm very old-fashioned, but I think the basis of anything we do in the field of knowledge has to do with learning to read. In fact, artificial intelligence is a model of a type of learning that generates answers to what it reads based on data. That is one way of learning to read. We can then ask ourselves who reads what artificial intelligence reads, but we would then be getting onto the subject of who. But what does learning to read mean today? Literacy, which is a great tradition in popular and collective education in many contexts, and has been very important in this country and in many others as well, is based on the idea that becoming or being made literate, digitally as well, is not learning the language of the master to understand their commands, but to be able to engage them in conversation, on equal terms. That is literacy. The tradition of education based on literacy is that. It is not learning to receive orders, but instead engaging in conversation not only with the master, but with the master's language, or in other words, with the codes that are inside what we learn with conversations. And this is a conversation, if we really allow ourselves to question the codes of what is coded when we receive it and therefore how can we engage in arguments, discussions, in conversation. Can universities perform this role today? I think it's the

and once again I place the word desire at the centre, and not only knowledge, intelligence, etc. The desire of many of us who work at them, who can indeed be everything I was talking about. And what's more, if not, we are easily replaceable. I mean easily. In other words, we don't need to do anything except a lot of things that are already being done in many other ways, producing, accumulating and generating other forms of experience and knowledge. So I think we have not just an opportunity, but in fact a responsibility to make all this possible. –– **Marina Garcés**

Science happens at universities and we have to talk about science because in addition, science is used a great deal, in all disciplines and for example, if we look at how the amount of articles that use artificial intelligence has changed, there has been a major change in recent years. For example, in computer science ten years ago it was less than 10% and now it is 25%. One in four computer science articles is about artificial intelligence, using algorithms or better. But that's not all. In all the sciences ten years ago it was less than 2% and now it is 8%. That means that it is a field that is used extensively to generate new knowledge, which is a tool, again, that is used a lot. But it has important ethical implications that we have to take into account. And above all because perhaps it could make reproducibility more difficult, which is always a very important issue in science: things have to be reproducible. And also because large companies may have access to the tools.

Now let's talk a little about power, which we mentioned before. And in that respect it is making us more unequal. Perhaps it should make us more equal, more equal in our abilities. But a lot of investment is needed to access these

things and it makes us more unequal. We need to think about how we can solve this, because it is clearly a very big problem. Then thinking about research into artificial intelligence, I think it's very important that it is interdisciplinary research. In this area in particular I think the UOC is very well-positioned in this field. These things are always difficult, particularly in the field of artificial intelligence, because algorithm experts often feel that other people are trespassing in their field, that people who know nothing are told to research things. So there is some rejection. Some respect is needed here. Maybe some listening is required. Even if the person isn't an expert in your field, exactly. To see it from the other side, with people who come from other fields where artificial intelligence isn't common. One shouldn't be too naive or too hostile in these cases. Ideas like "this is not working, this should be banned" create rejection. It must be approached from all sides and because of the challenges we face, of which there are many. And research has many challenges.

And an obvious challenge in artificial intelligence research is to explain, because it needs to be explained as it really is. It's called "Explainable AI" which is a field, the most important field, I think, in this area, because it needs to be done. You have to be able to understand where the results that algorithms give you come from. And explaining is also quite important in literacy, explaining to people what algorithms are and are not capable of. And this has to start in schools before university, because my children, if you don't tell them not to, they use ChatGPT to do their homework. And I say to them: "No, be careful. That could have consequences." And also because we have to be aware of the problems algorithms have. Where they make

mistakes. And things usually get mixed up, because they are not yet designed for this kind of thing. And on this point too I think we will get there if we achieve this. Because it has to be done as... These tools shouldn't free us from thinking. They must help us think. And I think we will get to a system which involves a little co-creation between artificial and human intelligence. So that we use these tools to help us think, not to think for us. And here we come back to intelligence and how we think. And to conclude, in the end, all this research can also be used to understand ourselves a little better. Because, in the end, if there are artificial intelligences which can become conscious, for example, we have to ask ourselves how to do it, how we measure consciousness, or how to measure intelligence and consciousness. Some systems fit the definitions we have now. That's no good, because they're not conscious. So we have to rethink those definitions, and we need to rethink what intelligence means and how we measure it. We have to rethink ourselves. –– **Andreas Kaltenbrunner**

Vídeo

Key ideas

"The tradition of education based on literacy is that. It is not learning to receive orders, but instead engaging in conversation not only with the master, but with the master's language, or in other words, with the codes that are inside what we learn with conversations."

"These tools shouldn't free us from thinking. They must help us think."

The lecture in 2 minutes

"For now the greatest achievement of artificial intelligence is its name. It is indeed an achievement to have placed at the centre of all these scientific and technological developments the key word of human aspirations, which is to define ourselves, humans, as intelligent beings."

"If I had to define the current situation, I would say that on the one hand, we are a further step down the road in the struggle between humans for power in relation to intelligence. But the other path that is also opening up today is what I would call the dethronement of the human species from where it thought it was superior over other species."

"In some cases, like when you play chess, you see that the best players in the world don't stand a chance against the algorithm that you have on your phone. So then we have to think what does that mean? Is it a problem, or is it like a car that goes faster than us, or like a calculator which does calculations more quickly and is a tool we simply use to improve our capabilities."

"Precisely at the heart of those fears, there is a kind of invasion of the natural side of the human being, a return to rather dangerous essentialisms, which I think philosophically and politically and culturally we had dismantled."

"Some people are better at science than art, and these tools can, for example, help someone with little knowledge of English produce a good text in that language."

"Do we want it to be just like us and, therefore, to have the same biases as us? Or do we want it to be better? And, if so, who decides what's better and what characteristics it should have?"

Key moments from the lecture: Rethinking intelligence to rethink ourselves

The lecture in 2 minutes

"Between the emergency, which makes us rush to adapt, and paranoia, which makes us run away, I think it is the general feeling in our everyday life which leads to very uninteresting actions, because they are both reactive: one is to reacting to what you are told you have to do and the other is reacting to what you think will be a total disaster. How can we move away from this doubly reactive position, either involving adapting, or a paranoid reaction?"

"When you imagine IA, you imagine a being that has motives, and they don't have any, they are algorithms, basically. So that has to be taken into account. In both positive and negative terms. No, it doesn't have values, it doesn't have any goals for itself, instead it has values that someone has assigned it. Those aspects that it has that may even be unknown."

"In the end, if there are artificial intelligences which can become conscious, for example, we have to ask ourselves how to do it, how we measure consciousness, or how to measure intelligence and consciousness."

Speech by Helena Guardans, chair of the FUOC Board of Trustees' Standing Committee

Minister, rector, deputies, dignitaries, members of the academic community,

Years ago – I don't know if people still do it – we used to have fun with a game that consisted of joining up a series of dots in numerical order which seemed to be arranged randomly. Of course, they weren't. As you went through it and joined up more dots you began to glimpse a pattern, until finally the drawing appeared before the child's amazed eyes.

An institution's various reports are like those dots. When looked at in isolation they can be misleading, difficult to understand due to their complexity. However, once you have made a little progress, you can understand the direction the institution is taking.

We are almost three decades old, and this ongoing accountability at the UOC now adds up to an exceptional, significant and defining basis for the characteristics of a unique university like ours.

Placing what we have done on record is mature, responsible and objective. Taking stock lets you know where you are, what your strengths are and your weaknesses, your potential and your limitations. Accountability partially involves reconsidering things and you can never do that too often.

This academic year's report also marks the end of Dr Planell's term of office and the beginning of Rector Fitó's term. I speak on behalf of myself and the Board of Trustees when I assure you that we could not have found a better person to guide us through the recent years, and nor, I am convinced, a more suitable candidate for the years to come.

The UOC has been fortunate and just between us, we should also congratulate ourselves on the process involved and on our principles of transparency, traceability and rigour and on the end result.

We have a reliable account of what we have done, our reports, of a renewed leadership with an established strategy and a team with proven motivation and competence. I don't think you can ask for more.

Speech by Àngels Fitó, rector of the UOC

Minister, chair of the Board of Trustees Standing Committee, deputies, president of the Institute of Catalan Studies and trustee, Student Council, Advisory Board, Rector Planell, members of the university community who are on campus and those of you who are following us on social media,

I believe that if we heed the lesson today's inaugural lecture has given us and if we could also overlook some news reports and the behaviour of some of our peers, we could agree that our definition as a species was correct. Homo sapiens, or in other words, the thinking hominid. Today's inaugural lecture, starting with the title, all the contributions, the fantastic work done by the chair and the final word, I think it exemplifies it brilliantly. All of us who here have had the opportunity to think and think again. If knowledge progresses, and this also came up

today, it is precisely because of its ability to re-evaluate, to reflect, to reconsider, to rethink.

What do we do in academia, other than move forward on the basis of re-examining old certainties, in the light of new events, new contexts, new horizons and new variables?

Since its beginnings, the UOC has included as standard a reflection on the impact of technology, from both a teaching point of view with this educational model that enables us to study across borders asynchronously and in which the aim is for us to adapt to the needs of our student body, as well as in research, with focus on e-learning, data science, e-health, intellectual property, the social sciences, the humanities, how technology interacts with all of them.

The rise of artificial intelligence forces us to rethink what we do and how we do it, and not in the sense of giving up or giving in or ignoring it, but simply thinking about it better.

We would be making a huge mistake if we attributed the concept of finality to an instrument, which is what it is, even if it is very powerful, and artificial intelligence is powerful.

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to take part in the Catalunya Futura seminar at Poblet, and there another thinker, another humanist, Joan Manel del Pozo from Girona, also emphasized the importance of

using artificial intelligence properly. And I remember he talked about using it properly in two ways. The first involves this pragmatism: exploiting the potential of technology to achieve worthwhile effects, to simplify the complex, to reach areas that were previously impossible. The second section focused on ethics, principles, values, issues which we could say are essential for human beings. And he said: "Concerning ourselves about this ethical use is not counteracting research and progress in artificial intelligence, [...] but instead simply considering another principle of general interest [...], which is the preservation of human dignity and the values, rights and freedoms that derive from them". And within this twofold challenge universities have a lot to offer. I read somewhere once that "the future of the world is in our classrooms today". And that's why I think it's important to have strategies that allow and guarantee this future, that of our students, as well as that of our teaching staff, those of our researchers, and our administrative teams. So that all of them can develop their potential and fulfil those ambitions, desires and expectations.

Just ten days ago, we shared with all our staff the guiding lines for this new term in office. A strategy for the future that, in terms of my direct responsibility involves three decisive factors to be addressed. First of all, this shared need, and I think we share it in the university system in general and in the Catalan university system in particular. A shared need that involves synchronizing how we evolve as institutions with our social function. How do we do this? And we said we need to combine efforts to align the various groups at universities towards

this shared horizon, which must be a contribution, and which participates actively in the national and international forums of debate. And the idea of listening to and hearing our immediate environment on a regular basis needs to be enforced to make sure that this shared horizon is a horizon of equity, of diversity. At the event in Poblet, I also explained how at the UOC we aspire to lead this integration of artificial intelligence at the service of lifelong learning, which must above all enable us to offer better support for a student body that is increasingly diverse, more diverse in its profile, in expectations. So we have to provide a service that must involve making the programme we offer more flexible, understanding how and why students want to learn, and connecting them to the labour market.

This desire for transformation was summed up really well for me by Eulàlia Bosch: "you want to offer the letters of the alphabet so that everyone can build their own word".

The second major challenge, which is directly for the UOC, involves guaranteeing our viability while sorting out our legal status and our funding model, which must be viable, it must be fair and it must be proportionate to the mission we undertake. And here I take the opportunity to thank Minister Nadal, with whom I believe we have built the relationship needed to make

progress in these areas and to be able to maintain this firm commitment that we have to our public mandate and this equally firm desire to maintain it with the utmost possible efficiency.

The third challenge, which is largely for the UOC internally, because this university that we imagine and that we envision will only be feasible if we are able to develop a governance model that is clear, functional and up to date. If we are committed to the real participation of all voices, sensitivities and expertise, if we perfect what we currently have through dialogue, trial and error, and the desire for continuous improvement to be active knowledge agents.

As Nobel laureate in Economics, Claudia Goldin, reminded us recently when she said that she was above all a teacher. And she added: "I would never have been able to do research without teaching. When I teach I force myself to confront what I think is true, while explaining it to my students. And because they're so intelligent, if I didn't know what I was talking about, I'm sure they'd notice." In other words, if the university is to have a social impact, it has to come from an honest and productive transfer of knowledge.

I said a short time ago that the future of the world is in our classrooms today. Well, to change it, and paraphrase it a little, I'm convinced that the future of the UOC is here today and in those following the event on the

livestream.

We had a fantastic display of it today in the dialogue between Marina Garcés and Andreas Kaltenbrunner, marvellously chaired by Sílvia Sivera. Internal talent that as a university we have the responsibility to foster, to cultivate, to develop. Because without it this new term in office wouldn't be viable.

In short, everything must work towards a new framework, a new beginning, a robust, competitive UOC, that is well-positioned and informed. And I won't say committed because we've been on that path for a long time.

Thank you very much and have a great start to the academic year.

Closing by the Minister for Research and Universities of the Generalitat de Catalunya and patron of the FUOC, Joaquim Nadal

The inaugural lecture is the cornerstone of the opening ceremony of the academic year. I know that deferred applause does not have the same value, but we applauded the cello, but we did not applaud the speakers and the chair, who did such an effective job.

While Helena Guardans was speaking, I asked the rector if she was "honourable rector". And she said, "Forget it, it doesn't matter". But if I don't say *rectora magnífica*,I can't call her a magnificent rector. So, *rectora magnífica*, magnificent rector, chair of the Standing Committee of the Foundation, president of the Institute of Catalan Studies, Rector Planell, Secretary of the Interuniversity Council of Catalonia, deputies, university community. This is the eighth speech I have given at the inauguration of an academic year. I missed four, one for obvious reasons, because it was the President

of the Government of Catalonia's responsibility to inaugurate the system in Tarragona, and others for reasons of force majeure. But I have always wanted to participate in and enjoyed the opening ceremonies of the entire university system of Catalonia, which is a strong, balanced system, a system of excellence, which has some problems, which I will come to in a moment, but which as a whole, within this difficult balance between seven public and five private universities, to put it in blunt terms, or seven public ones, two hybrids and three pure private non-profit universities that in addition make the effort to understand and participate and to work within the system in such a way that the twelve of them together make up the universe of the university system of Catalonia, which is what I regard as excellence from my position of responsibility. With some shortcomings, undoubtedly, but excellence. With a very clear commitment to the future, with a very clear commitment to the country.

Marina mentioned five nots when describing the university. It's not, it's not, it's not, it's not, it's not. But she concluded by saying what it is and linked it to a word, which is desire. Let's add passion to that. If universities are not going to fall like ripe fruit, or simply become irrelevant, which is an obvious risk, the only way is for them to work hard in this area, within the framework of freedoms, within the framework of models that everyone defends in their own way, there are doors open to dialogue, dialogue for knowledge and on the basis of equality, not subordination. We come from several centuries of very hierarchical and reproductive systems for transferring knowledge. And now, naturally, we have to enter a different landscape in which

dialogue, on equal terms, without submitting to any kind of imposed authority enables critical knowledge to progress. We don't need to go looking forbad company everywhere. We simply need to understand and decide what it is that makes us grow in this knowledge that we need. The rector also had a beginning that was delayed between the proposal by the Board of Trustees and taking office, and we were joking about it with Rector Planell, who was supposed to be leaving every day, but never quite left. He used to say: "Listen, the day the new rector takes office, I'll be happy to stop, but meanwhile, what do I do?" And since Rector Fitó has taken office, and previously with Rector Planell, providing a clear line of continuity, without a solution of continuity, we have been working closely together in various areas.

One is very pressing, and I can't make a big announcement at the moment that a solution has been reached, but I have more or less been told about the discussion at the Coliseum and what needs to happen in the immediate future, and it's obvious that what we found on the day of the inauguration of the Hub, Rector Planell, which is that the Employees' Committee had raised some issues about the question of the UOC's teaching staff and the consumer price index, and some sort of urgent remedy was required. It's been difficult, we still can't say "we've sorted it out", but the rector knows that we're very close, in an initial phase for this year and that probably, and I hope that we can have a budget next year, this permits us to repeat the emergency measure which we have taken now and which will take shape over the next few days in the continuation next year. If that's the case, I can't say that we will have completely satisfied the demands of the teaching staff here, but I can say that

we will have narrowed the gap between them and the system as a whole. It's not much, but it's progress that aims to be a response to a problem that was acute and which we wanted to respond to.

The second issue is even more complicated and I don't want to avoid it. The rector has already mentioned it, but I want to be even more explicit. This is a university which has some institutional founding trustees, which are considered private, such as the Chamber of Commerce and the Institute of Catalan Studies, for example. I don't know if we can really say private, they are simply non-public trustees. In that respect, Vic has public trustees because all its founders are municipal councils. The UOC is not public in that respect, because its founding trustees are something else.

Now, the UOC was established because the Government wanted it and it was created with a law by the Government. And since 1995, what has the Government expected of the UOC? And what does the Government want from the UOC? Since strictly in terms of institutional continuity, the Government that I represent is the successor to the one which enacted the law creating the UOC. Well, it wants to square the circle. Of course. And this sometimes runs counter to the interpretation of specialists in various areas of the government itself. But it wants it to fulfil the role for which it was created, adapted to our era in 2023 and all the years to come. For it to do this as a public initiative, that is to say, politically, the Government of Catalonia wants the UOC to be a university of Catalonia, at the service of Catalonia, and at the service of the entire universe of students who study at it. And it wants it to

be – the rector talked about efficiency and flexibility – a university that spans the public and private spheres because of the political will of those behind it and with all the private components to achieve its objective, whatever it takes. Striking a balance is not easy because when technicalities come into play, about the definition of public deficit, the public sector, budget contribution, trustees...

But ultimately, it is the Government's job to find the right conceptual or philosophical, legal, but ultimately political role, which it guarantees with a programme agreement, with sufficient funding, respecting the room it needs, with the potential to maintain public fees but at the same time to charge fees to anyone, from wherever they come from to help resolve the university's budget, to establish a universe that makes it viable and gives it a profile in accordance with its founding objectives. We are working on it. It's not easy, it's even quite difficult, if you like.

Now, politically, the President of the Government of Catalonia, I myself, the Minister of Economy, we understand that we need some kind of final document and updated statutes, that have been in limbo for seven years waiting for a government office, I think, Rector. Seven years. Well, so let's find a way to overcome this and pass them. What's the issue? That the public trustees representing the Government of Catalonia don't have a majority? As they say in English: "So what?" What of it? Yes, moreover, in the documents that have been seen so far there is a clause that says: "And in matters etc. etc., the vote of the representatives of the Government of Catalonia will be decisive. "Well, there it is. It's as if we

have a golden share, so there's no need to discuss how things here need to happen. So finally, and I'll finish here, in politics, institutions sometimes lose their way and get in the way.

And I am one of those who believe, and I have some political experience in various fields, at the local and regional levels, and in the Government of Catalonia, that the best thing a Government can do is to support, help, facilitate, not get in the way, and make possible everything we said we wanted. What is very clear is that the Government of Catalonia is working to make the UOC what between all of us we have decided we want it to be and to make it possible with little interference from the public sector and with the maximum support from the public sector. That is what we want. This our hope, and I hope that we can celebrate it together a year from now.

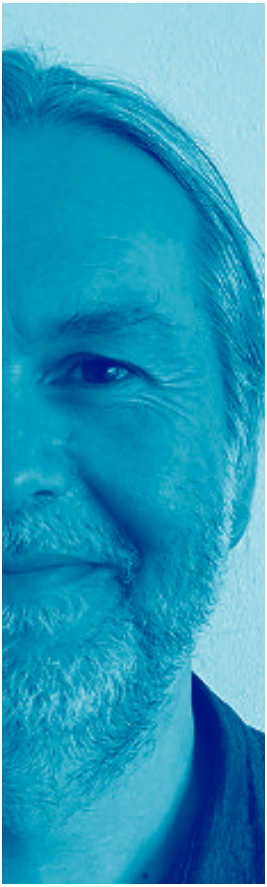
It goes without saying, but have a very good 2023/2024 academic year.

Appendix

Marina Garcés is a philosopher and the director of the UOC's Master's Degree in Philosophy for Contemporary Challenges.

She is also the coordinator of the MUSSOL research group, which seeks to make philosophy a tool for meeting, dialogue and commitment to the common problems of our time. Garcés is also a member of faculty of the MACBA Independent Studies Programme, director of the Open Classroom of Barcelona's Institute of Humanities (CCCB), winner of the 2018 Ciutat de Barcelona Essay Prize, and author of numerous works (both books and articles) on contemporary philosophy.

Interview



Andreas Kaltenbrunner conducts research into the human side of the application of AI, and examines technology while placing the human being at the centre.

After working at various European technology and research centres, he joined the UOC this year to lead the new AI and Data for Society (AID4So) group at the Internet Interdisciplinary Institute (IN3). The group will focus on the development of new methods in AI, machine learning and big data analytics, and on the search for opportunities to undertake research in areas such as the social sciences and digital humanities.

The two of them share a conversation on the occasion of the inauguration of the 2023/2024 academic year, in which two perspectives emerge – a more philosophical outlook, and the technological view – around AI, its consequences and its impacts.

Interview

How will generative artificial intelligence (AI) change our lives?

Library guide

Previous inaugural lectures

Barcelona
Bogotá
Mexico City
Madrid
Palma
Seville
Valencia

All the UOC's centres at
seus.uoc.edu

uoc.edu

@UOCuniversity
@UOCrespon
UOC
UOC.universitat

Universitat Oberta de Catalunya