The young people are open to the humanities and social sciences

In addition to the university's 100-year centenary, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is celebrating a double anniversary: 40 years ago, the first university courses were launched at the then Faculty of Teacher Education, and 30 years ago, the Faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences were established as separate faculties - We talked to Dr. habil András Láng, Associate Professor and Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences for Academic and Accreditation Affairs.

What kind of university was it when you came here?

I came here from Sopron in 1997 with great expectations. I wanted a vibrant cultural life, which the university delivered, both at the level of peers and faculty life. Looking back 25 years later, the structure of the Faculty and the composition of the student body has changed a lot. Back then, history and Hungarian were the main subjects, with 120 students in the giga-year courses, and I remember the nervous faces of my friends as they queued up for the exams. Today, the faculty portfolio has been reshuffled. For example, my year group consisted of 20 students, compared to 120 who are now starting their psychology degree.

I was here almost 30 years ago, and I remember our teachers were absolutely up to date, bringing the latest research to the classroom, and sometimes one of them would change what they had said in a previous class because a new article had come out. In addition, there was a high degree of freedom in teaching, because of the credit system.

This still exists today. There is both student and instructor freedom, with instructors present in the classroom with their own habitus, their own world view. The humanities and social sciences cannot be taught only "objectively", they are not sciences that can be taught by rote. In the 25-30 years since then, the pace of scientific publications has accelerated, and there is an enormous volume of publications. It is a serious challenge to keep our knowledge up to date.

And - I say this without any offensee - there were many "holy nuts" among our teachers. Are there still people like that today?

The humanities and social sciences do not generate what they produce in the short term. We don't develop a clever rotational cabbage, which is a two or three-year project, and then every farmer will use it. There is a long, long process of fine-tuning, of responding to social change, of transferring knowledge and of shaping attitudes. How to question things, even things that are happening around you, how to think critically, how to do this in a scientific way...

What is the prestige of being a philosopher now?

It's very twofold. Internally, not only as academics, but also as students and staff, we take pride in what we do, and those who experience the usefulness of the humanities feel the same. You can value the knowledge of the humanities as abstract, but that is why it is useful in so many areas. It is for this reason that the assessment of the humanities can have a somewhat negative, somewhat condemnatory tone, because a humanities graduate is not necessarily trained for one specific profession, but is an intellectual who can be deployed in many fields. The world today is much happier to welcome those who are, in a sense, specialists in a field - specialists in a subfield where their knowledge can be turned into a tangible product in months, years. Cruise control in the car is convenient, air conditioning is convenient, but these are not the things that make life meaningful and meaningful. Humanities and social sciences contribute to understanding things, to positioning ourselves in the world. We may walk our way, ride our bikes, or sit in a warm room in the summer, but we still think that the approach of the humanities and social sciences provides a far compensating pleasure for these too.