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**A Tribute to Anatoli Mikhailov: What EHU and Its Founder, Professor
Anatoli Mikhailov, Tell Us about the Humanities, Humanities
Education and the Current Revolution in How Communicate**

What EHU and its founder, Professor Anatoli Mikhailov, tell us about the Humanities, Humanities Education, and the Current Revolution in How We Communicate

Anatoli Mikhailov, whom we honor by being here today, is the archetypal example of the truism that Humanities Education is a redundant concept. To educate is to humanize. To humanize is to educate.

All education is about connections, no matter how narrow or broad the subject and what makes us human, the essential question of the humanities, is our ability to connect. The ability to connect creates meaning, creates context, creates new knowledge and new questions. To engage in the humanities as creator or recipient is to be engaged in the act of education, the act of connection.

What I call the Five Principles of the Humanities underscores the centrality of the humanities in education and explains why Professor Mikhailov represents so completely the humanist ideal that a humanities education seeks to create.

Principle One: The Humanities, as a field, is defined by a set of questions, not by a set of disciplines”

The essential Humanities questions focus on what makes us human –questions that have abstract, concrete, historical, philosophical, political, artistic, and scientific dimensions and, importantly, consequences.

Professor Mikhailov founded EHU to examine that very question, recognizing that to ask what makes us human inevitably is a political act and one that all too often requires immense courage to ask because having asked the question, no subject can be off limits.

Principle Two: Because the humanities as a field is defined by questions, not content, it subsumes all fields and disciplines. The opposite is not true.

A comparison with the sciences offers an illustrative example. The Humanities, by asking what it means to be human must utilize all disciplines including the sciences but the sciences alone can only illuminate a part of the how and why we exist and what it means to be human.

Professor Mikhailov, in founding a humanities university, and again with courage and insight was making a bold statement that the humanities are the foundation upon which not only knowledge but also social structures and individual lives have to be to be built. He designed a university to help students and a country understand the difference between making a living and making a life.

Principle Three: The Humanities are both timeless and time-bound.

Questions about what it means to be human are timeless. The answers are not. They will change over time, evolving in the same way that both language and the human brain evolve. As a scholar, Professor has explored with insight and finesse how “realities” on the ground change, how changing realities change the way we think and how changes in the way we think

and communicate change the realities on the ground. He created EHU to embed the act of critical thinking in the consciousness of its students, not to define a reality.

Principle Four: The Humanities depend on the principal that truth exists even if it can never be fully captured or encompassed.

Whatever the discipline, the humanist, by definition, is attempting to illuminate “truths” that are essential to understanding the full sense of what it means to be human and, without which, the picture would not be complete. The true humanist does so accepting that truth is illusive but rejecting that it is illusory.

Professor Mikhailov, in the face of the fluidity of the ways of knowing and realities that he has had to address, still was able to establish a university built on a core truth: that the acts of critical, creative, and ethical thinking needed to build connections represent the essence of what it means to be human and that those acts are all driven by the premise that if humans were omniscient, truth could be found

Principle Five: There is no global issue that humankind faces that ultimately is not, at its core, a Humanities question, dependent on what it means to be human.

Even if the issue is as science-based as that of how to cure an endemic disease, strategies pursued will be as dependent on ethical reasoning as scientific reasoning.

Professor Mikhailov, in standing up to the state that sought to destroy EHU, was taking a stand of critical importance to every issue facing humankind. Without the capacity to think critically, creatively and ethically, no issue can be addressed fully and successfully.

What Professor Mikhailov and EHU have taught us makes very clear that the core challenge the Humanities as a field faces today and has faced in the past is never simply a new idea or a new technology. Its greatest challenge is always the existence of those for whom it has failed to provide successfully or never had a chance to provide a humanities education and who are thus free to act in ways antithetical to the well-being of the community. To be sure technology amplifies the power of such individuals and the consequences their failure to acquire a humanities education; but, at the core, the challenge the humanities face today is no different than in the past - how to educate a society so as to reduce its receptivity to such individuals. The challenge the humanities face is a communications challenge, not a technology challenge. The question of how we communicate and the relationship between reality and communication has been at the core of Professor Mikhailov’s work from the beginning, whether it be in the academic or the political realm. He has lived by the principle that how we communicate, not just what we communicate, profoundly impacts human society and the human psyche.

In exploring this topic, we honor one who has lived as a true humanist and whose life has demonstrated the real-world urgency and importance of seeking and providing a humanities education.