Byung-Chul Han, awarded an honorary doctorate by La Salle-Universitat Ramon Llull, proposes an ‘architecture of the soul’ to restore meaning and human bonds

Byung-Chul Han, philosopher and essayist, has been awarded an honorary doctorate by the Universitat Ramon Llull (URL) at the recommendation of the **La Salle-URL Higher Technical School of Architecture** and the La Salle-URL Faculty of Philosophy. During the ceremony, held on Tuesday 17 November at Santa María del Mar Basilica in Barcelona, Han delivered a keynote lecture entitled **‘The Architecture of the Soul’**, in which he explored some of the key themes of his thinking.

In his address, Han explored the relationship between architecture and the soul, arguing that **physical spaces, symbols and rituals help shape** the **way we inhabit the world** and give meaning to life. “Architecture and the soul condition one another; reflect one another or even generate one another,” the philosopher stated.

Building on this idea, **Han warned that the acceleration of information and digitalisation** make it harder to establish stable reference points and weaken the symbolic structures that provide us with orientation. “Digitalisation accelerates the demolition of the architecture of the soul,” he warned.

The philosopher also highlighted the consequences of individualism and the erosion of community bonds, emphasising **the importance of shared narratives in building a life within a community**. In this regard, he noted that one of the essential functions of creating a home is “to make the soul part of a community and allow it to take root there”.

Philosophy and architecture: two perspectives for rethinking how we inhabit the world

In his *laudatio*, Carles Llinàs, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy at La Salle-URL, highlighted Han's ability to interpret the contradictions of contemporary society, ranging from the consequences of neoliberalism and technological acceleration to the loss of reference points, community bonds and meaning. Carles also identified hope as a key horizon in Han's thought, recalling that his diagnosis of reality opens up the possibility of finding "a new way of inhabiting and thinking about the world that is keeping with human beings".

For his part, Josep Ferrando, Director of the School of Architecture at La Salle-URL, highlighted the architectural scope of Han's thought, particularly on issues such as the disappearance of rituals, our relationship with the material world, and the need to recover spaces for contemplation and encounter. Furthermore, Josep Ferrando advocated a conception of the discipline that goes beyond the mere construction of buildings. "Byung-Chul Han's thought does not provide architectural solutions, and this is precisely where much of its value for us lies. It provides us with something that comes before that, and is perhaps more important: questions," he noted.

The Rector of the URL, Carles Pérez Testor, brought the ceremony to a close by highlighting how Han's work invites us to question some of the major paradoxes of contemporary society. "We need to preserve spaces for conversation, listening, contemplation and for the kind of question that does not immediately seek a useful answer, but instead helps us to better understand who we are and what kind of world we want to build," said the Rector of Ramon Llull University, who also explored the concepts of 'benésser' – understood as a full, meaningful life, rich in meaning and lived alongside others – and 'hope'.

A recognition that connects disciplines and opens up new perspectives

This is the first time that Universitat Ramon Llull has awarded an honorary doctorate following a joint proposal by two of its university schools and faculties. The initiative by La Salle URL's School of Architecture and Faculty of Philosophy

highlights the value of connecting disciplines to understand society's challenges and reinforces an educational model in which technology, knowledge and humanism engage in dialogue to open up new perspectives. This approach places people at the centre and reaffirms the university's ability to challenge established ideas and, through questioning, to help build a fairer and more sustainable society.



* *Article problished by La Salle-URL. Photos: La Salle-URL.*