



Ceremony to award an
honorary doctorate to

Dr Diane Coyle

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01 About Diane Coyle

Diane Coyle (Bury, 1961) is one of the most influential economists in the analysis of the digital economy and the transformations of contemporary capitalism. She is Bennett Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge and co-directs the Bennett Institute, where she combines research with advisory work and public engagement. Her work focuses on the impact of new technologies, artificial intelligence and the need to rethink economic indicators in order to better measure wellbeing and progress.

Author of books such as *The Weightless World* and *The Measure of Progress: Counting What Really Matters*, she has been Economics Editor at *The Independent* and Vice-Chair of the BBC Trust. In 2023, she was appointed Dame of the British Empire and has established herself as a key voice in the debate on how to build a more sustainable, inclusive economy that can face the challenges of the 21st century.



7 May 2026, 12 noon (CET)
UOC Building Auditorium, UOC Campus
Carrer del Perú 52, 08018, Barcelona

02 Report from the ceremony

[Diane Coyle](#): "Universities must play a key role in the emerging social order"

The UOC awarded an honorary doctorate to the British economist **Diane Coyle**, one of the most influential voices on the understanding of the digital economy in the United Kingdom, on Thursday 7 May. At a ceremony which took place on the Poblenou campus in Barcelona, Coyle championed **the role of higher education in "extraordinarily turbulent times"** like those the world is currently experiencing, and reiterated the need for universities to be considered "cultural and social institutions".

She warned that a gap has opened up between people who obtain a university degree and those who do not, and that this is what has made universities "a source of polarization". **She called on those present to defend higher education.** While she was at university, she had "a stroke of luck", as a result of which she had lecturers who motivated her: "They inspired me to see the world as endlessly interesting and to understand that learning is a lifelong occupation; the greatest gift an educator can give." This led to one of her key points: "learning means finding good questions rather than correct answers".

Coyle considers herself a person who was "transformed by education", and she expressed her concern at seeing that "one of the sharpest dividing lines in political and social views is now whether someone has a university degree or not". As an economist, she thinks that while universities "used to be seen as a ladder", today some people see them as "remote institutions divided from the rest of society". She believes that **"this cultural chasm has widened, despite the economic importance of higher education institutions"**. She talked about the difference in university models in the United States, and in countries such as the United Kingdom and Spain, and said that "the arguments reflect an underlying pattern that people who do not have degrees are voting against people who do".

The two groups are separated by their economic prospects because "as the economy digitalizes, higher education has become **a passport to better-paid jobs in cities**", she warned. As a result, smaller towns and rural areas have been "left behind, with worse jobs", while "the solid, well-paid working-class jobs of the past have gone, and with them the accompanying dignity and respect". Coyle also pointed out that "there has been an unfortunate tendency to disparage people with less education, or to imply that it is somehow their fault if they have not done well in a system that is not designed for them".

The UOC's latest honorary doctor expressed her concern that failing to obtain a university degree may be seen as "a personal failing" when she believes it is "a systemic one".

Universities: "a source of polarization"

As a result, universities have become "a source of polarization" at a time when "modern, technologically advanced economies need highly educated people more than ever". Coyle also argued that **"universities are more important than ever**, and access to the intellectual horizons of an education, and the time to study and be curious, are privileges that should be available to anyone who wants them".

Given this need, Coyle said that higher education must be "loudly defended", and that this defence goes beyond focusing on its role within the economy "as a factory churning out human capital". Universities are also **"cultural and social institutions"** because they "provide an environment in which people can disagree constructively, can explore complexity and nuance, can learn to listen to other viewpoints, and change their minds".

Coyle also highlighted the role that research currently plays given the multiple challenges created by AI: "this is the moment to make sure that the role AI plays in our societies is understood and shaped by everyone, not just an educated elite, and certainly not by a small number of brilliant and affluent men in the tech companies". She championed the "key role" played by universities "in illuminating and engaging with this emerging social order". She believes that higher education is responsible for this and warned that "to do so effectively, in such polarized times, means having the grace to listen carefully to people who, at present, feel excluded from social progress, and respecting what they say".

She said she was excited to join the UOC community because she believes that it is **aligned with the values calling for universities' increased engagement with the rest of society**, and she pointed out that it is a university that "specializes in the most important questions of our time". She highlighted the interaction between new technologies and the human and social sciences, an area that her own research focuses on: "The UOC also values the kind of interdisciplinary research that is needed for universities to contribute positively to our societies, whose problems are not single-discipline problems."

Access to "a universal basic infrastructure"

Coyle's speech was preceded by the laudation given by Professor **Joan Torrent** from the UOC's **Faculty of Economics and Business** and director of the **UOC-DIGIT** research centre. He praised Coyle, saying that **"she personifies the committed intellectual, who does not hide in an ivory tower and investigates, makes proposals and engages in**

debate" during turbulent times in order to make "the political economy useful for people and society". He defended the principles set out in Coyle's work, which is based on the assumption that "markets alone will not build a prosperous future for everyone", which is why governments "must ensure a sustainable future for all". He also talked about her recent proposal for "a universal basic infrastructure" that provides each citizen with "a minimum level of access so that they can thrive in a digital economy".

The ceremony was brought to a close by UOC Rector, **Àngels Fitó**, who praised the choice of the new honorary doctor, saying that it is "a statement of intent for the future, which defines the university we want to be in the coming decades". She said that the UOC "is not watching the digital transformation from a distance; it is engaging with it bravely and intrepidly, and it does not separate knowledge from responsibility". As a result of these principles, the UOC is reflected in Coyle's work, which includes **major contributions, such as the limits on the calculation of GDP**. Fitó went on to stress that "Coyle has given us some of the clearest thoughts of our age, when she says that GDP is a distorted lens rather than a clear window into economic reality; our priorities ultimately fail to include what we do not measure correctly."

Coyle's career

Coyle has held a number of important posts during her career, including the Vice Chair of the **BBC Trust** and member of the **United Kingdom Competition Commission**. In her time as a journalist, she worked at the *Investor's Chronicle* and went on to be Economics Editor of *The Independent*, and she is a regular contributor to *Project Syndicate*. She is also the author of several books, including *The Weightless World*, a major study of the intangible economy, and *The Economics of Enough*, in which she reflects on how to manage resources while taking into account the well-being of future generations.

03 *Laudatio*

Given by Dr Joan Torrent, Professor at the Faculty of Economics and Business

Rector, Professor Coyle, members of the Executive Board of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya, academics from the UOC and other universities, fellow economists (a warm greeting to the economists in the room), academic administration professionals, students, ladies and gentlemen, good day to you all.

We are gathered today at this event to award our highest academic distinction, a UOC honorary doctorate, to **Dr Diane Coyle**, Bennet Professor of Public Policy and researcher at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

At a university like ours, which was created and developed in and for the digital age, with the vision of transforming and helping to develop the knowledge society (which is much more than the digital society), it is an immense privilege to today recognize her career. A career located right in the centre of the triangle formed by academia, public policy and social debate.

A career spanning academia, public policy and social debate

John Stuart Mill, a great classical economist who appreciated the need to expand marginalist postulates – today we could call these ideas neoclassical or neoliberal – to explain people's well-being, said, almost two centuries ago, that "nobody can be a great economist who is only an economist."

Professor Coyle (and not only because of her gender) perfectly represents a maxim which was already intuited by political economists, and especially by women political economists (for instance Jane Marcet, Harriet Martineau, Millicent Fawcett, and later, Mary Paley and Beatrice Webb, the true inventors of the transfer of economic knowledge), the maxim that economics must form part of the body of social sciences. This means that, in addition to the social dimension, economics must also be connected with the social sciences and humanities, especially with politics. In addition to arithmetic, ethics and politics.

Rational and calculating economists, yes, but with a dynamic, relational and interdisciplinary spirit and empathy. As **Alfred Marshall**, another great British economist

and Cambridge professor, the first great synthesizer of neoclassical economics, used to say, economists need "cool heads, but warm hearts".

Continuing in this tradition so typical of Cambridge in the UK (not to be confused with Cambridge, Massachusetts, in the USA), Professor Coyle is an outstanding economist (if you'll allow the expression, a political economist) who has dedicated much of her life to deciphering the challenges and problems that the digital transformation poses for our economies and our societies. For Professor Coyle, **the underlying motivation for all her work is the question: What does it mean for the economy to improve, and who benefits?** (I can't think of a better question than this about digital political economics). But, she has done much more than conduct research. Especially important is her search for the implications of public policy and proposals to develop better governance of the digital reality.

Professor Coyle is not just an academic, although she has produced numerous books and scientific articles (since 2019, I've counted 5 books and 44 scientific articles), she is a political economist who moves between the three lines that have defined her career: ***scientific rigour and relevance, advice on public policy and participation in public debate***. This triangle continues to inspire the path we want to follow at the UOC's Digital Transformation and Governance Research Centre (which I am proud to be the director of).

Since 2018 she has been the Bennett Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge and the Research Director at the Bennett School of Public Policy. She had previously served as Professor of Economics at the University of Manchester. Among other prestigious academic institutions in the United Kingdom, she is a member of the Academy of Social Sciences and the Royal Economic Society, and she holds honorary doctorates from the Universities of Glasgow, York, Bristol and Portsmouth.

Beyond academic excellence, she stands out for her exceptional vocation to public service. She is currently a member of the UK's Industrial Strategy Advisory Board and an academic advisor to the same country's Competition and Markets Authority. She has also been a member of other government advisory committees on immigration, natural capital and infrastructure, and of HM Treasury. For all her contributions to economic policy, she was appointed Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2023.

Emulating another illustrious Cambridge economist, the great renovator of the discipline for much of the twentieth century, **John Maynard Keynes**, Professor Coyle has also devoted much energy to public debate (Keynes said in reference to chronicling the Genoa Conference in 1922 that it was an energy-draining experience. Those of us who are involved in outreach are familiar with the sentiment. He was absolutely right). Professor Coyle has written for *The Economist*, has been economics editor for *The Independent*, and

Vice-Chair of the BBC Trust, for which she also served as acting Chair for a six-month period in 2014. She regularly contributes to the successful economic outreach initiative *Project Syndicate*, a key digital reference resource for many of us. She has also participated in one of the most important initiatives for renewing scientific economics in recent years, the London Consensus (not to be confused with the Washington Consensus, by the way). Finally, since 2001, she has been managing director of Enlightenment Economics, a consultancy specializing in digital technologies and globalization.

I would say that all this proactive work has always had a clear objective: **to reconcile economic science with its deeper social purpose**. As she states in one of her books (note the name: ***Sex, Drugs & Economics***. As you see, Professor Coyle's many virtues include the ability to choose eye-catching titles): **"Economics has its eyes firmly fixed on making this a better life, in the fullest sense and not just financially."** Indeed, one of her maxims has been critical reflection and the renewal of economic thinking to adapt it to the new challenges of individual well-being and social prosperity in the digital age.

The renewal of economic thinking in the digital age

Following in the tradition started by another giant of the discipline, **Joan Robinson**, also a professor at Cambridge (who said that "The purpose of studying economics is not to acquire a set of ready-made answers to economic questions, but to learn how to avoid being deceived by economists,") Professor Coyle is one of the leading critical and innovative minds of economic thought today.

In her acclaimed work ***Cogs and Monsters***, she warns us that mainstream economics assumes people to be "cogs", that is, **"self-interested individuals [...], interacting as independent, calculating agents in defined contexts"**. **But the digital economy is much more characterized by "monsters": "snowballing, socially influenced, untethered phenomena"**.

In fact, the digital economy is based on network and platform effects, and generates viral, socially contagious phenomena, uncontrolled growing returns, superstar platforms and companies that concentrate unprecedented market power and political power over our lives. And what's worse, and I quote again: **"by treating people as cogs, economics is creating its own monsters, leaving itself without the tools to understand the new problems it faces"**.

This lucid criticism is accompanied by a tireless call to transform the sociology of the profession. And this transformation involves more critical thinking, and greater diversity and plurality in approaches to the discipline (and I would add: to update the gloomy,

absolutely biased figure of *Homo economicus*, a kind of insensitive, totally selfish, calculating and isolated Frankenstein-agent).

In fact, Professor Coyle is moderately optimistic (I agree with her) and she tells us that pragmatism in the discipline is gaining ground and that neoliberal visions are being replaced, as she says, by "**a more capacious modern mainstream that combines the conventional emphasis on the power of incentives and the inevitability of choice with a more recent evidence-driven understanding of human psychology, the effects of technology, the importance of institutions and culture, and the long shadow of history**".

The weightless economy, the value data, and AI governance

Another of the central pillars of her thinking is the inadequacy of economic metrics for the digital age. As early as 1997, she identified the transition to the digital economy, as a step towards a "**weightless economy**" in which value creation increasingly depends on intangible and digitized assets such as ideas, data or tasks exchanged on service platforms.

In her latest book, *The Measure of Progress* (2025), Professor Coyle argues that the statistical economic framework inherited from the 1940s today functions like a distorting lens: it makes things we already knew, such as care work and domestic production, invisible but also disregards new things, such as the gains in well-being that digital goods and services provide without monetary transaction, the value we create when we carry out economic activities online or free access to knowledge. In this context, she proposes two new complementary alternative frameworks. As she says: "**comprehensive wealth – which incorporates natural, human, social, intangible (data) and infrastructure capital, ignored environmental externalities, non-monetary transactions, heritage and the value of free digital services – and time-use accounting, because we all have a 24-hour budget and no current statistics help us know if we are making better use of it**".

In this new world, what is the value of data? Professor Coyle warns us that we cannot treat data simply as "the new oil", a deeply misleading metaphor. Unlike oil, data are non-rival goods. In other words, many people can use them simultaneously without it being possible to exclude unwanted consumers. This means that we are entering the realm of externalities and public goods, where markets fail (as there is usually no way to exclude users of a road, public lighting, a digital network or the internet from their benefits, incentives for the private supply of such goods are very weak or non-existent). So without private incentives, public value and provision play a key role, especially in the context of

digital well-being. As Professor Coyle tells us: **"Market transactions alone will not bring about the maximum social welfare from data."**

So, in order to prevent big tech companies from monopolizing the benefits of data aggregation, and in line with her tireless sociopolitical spirit, she has supported the creation of new innovative institutional figures such as **data trusts**. These mechanisms seek to govern access to data reliably, asymmetrically and ethically, balancing individual rights with the enormous value and social utility that data sharing can generate in many areas, such as education, health or transport.

This same view can be applied to the governance of artificial intelligence. When we integrate machine learning into decision-making in public policy, **explainability** is often demanded of the algorithm. However, this challenge is not merely technical. It also demands profound changes in the organization of political systems. Historically, politics has resolved conflicts through what it calls **constructive ambiguity**, a kind of confused space where the incentives and objectives of politicians remain well hidden. But AI needs very specific optimization features. Therefore, and I quote: **"The use of explainable machine learning in sensitive areas of policy will force policymakers to be more specific and explicit about their objectives and, by extension, about their values and political choices than has often been the case until now."**

Finally, and in the field of geopolitics and technical regulation, and in one of her latest pieces of research, she pointed out that the organization of AI involves governing "computing power". Of the three pillars of AI, data, algorithms and computing, computing capacity is the most effective point of intervention because it is, and I quote: **"detectable, excludable, quantifiable, and is produced via an extremely concentrated supply chain"**.

In short, Professor Coyle has made decisive contributions to the economic metrics of the digital age, to the ethics and governance of data and AI, and to the tireless search for more plural economic thinking oriented to shared progress. As she often says, the radical transformation of the economy modifies society and politics, and we need new analytical apparatus for new governance. And I quote: **"Growth in living standards in rich economies has slowed, despite remarkable innovation, particularly in digital technologies. As a result, politics is contentious and democracy strained. To understand the current economy, we need different data collected in a different framework of categories and definitions."**

Professor Coyle also personifies, like few economists today, the figure of the committed intellectual who does not hide in an ivory tower. She researches, proposes and discusses, in a time of dizzying digital transformations, the role of a political economy that is useful for

people and societies. She warns us that businesses and markets alone will not invest in or create a thriving digital future for everyone. Indeed, she states: "**It now falls to governments to ensure that we build for a sustainable future.**" One of her latest proposals, the creation of a **Universal Basic Infrastructure** is intended to ensure that every citizen has access to the minimum assets necessary to prosper in the new digital economy.

Dame Professor Coyle, Diane, thank you so much for your work and your plural thought. Thank you for helping to redirect the economy toward its human and social purpose. And thank you for your ability to propose and debate public policies for digital transformation. Now that you will be a member of the UOC community, it will be an honour for us to follow your guidance.

04 Decision of the Governing Council

Read by the FUOC's General Secretary, Dr Pere Fabra

Decision to award Dame Professor Diane Coyle an honorary doctorate from the UOC

The UOC's Regulations on Honours and Distinctions states that "the honorary doctorate is the highest distinction that the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya can confer, on an exceptional basis, on individuals of note in the scientific, intellectual, cultural, artistic, technical or social fields who, within their respective areas, have demonstrated values with which the UOC identifies".

The regulations state that the conferment of honorary doctorates may be initiated at the request of any member of the Strategic Committee and approved by the University's Governing Council, in accordance with criteria of academic prudence and reason.

The dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business submitted the proposal to confer Dr Diane Coyle, economist and Professor of Public Policy at the University of Cambridge, with an honorary doctorate.

The Governing Council, in its meeting on 17 March 2026, unanimously

AGREED:

To confer upon Dame Professor Diane Coyle an honorary doctorate from the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya for her outstanding academic and institutional career, her decisive contribution to contemporary economic thought, her impact on the design and analysis of public policy, and her clear alignment with the values of social transformation, innovation and the knowledge economy that are also hallmarks of the UOC.

05 Speech by Dr Diane Coyle

Well, this award truly is an honour, and I'd like to thank my new colleagues here at the UOC for their recognition, and Professor Torrent for the very generous description of my work. Thank you.

I belong to a generation of people who came from ordinary backgrounds and were able to progress their careers and their lives because access to university began to expand. My parents, my aunts and uncles had mainly worked in the textile mills in our region in the northwest of England, near Manchester. Like this area, places that were defined by the clatter and noise of the mules and the looms, and the very hard physical reality of working in a factory. They had all left school at 14 and started work. And so for them, education was an impossible luxury and not a standard path that you could take in life.

But the proportion of young people going to university in the UK expanded from 3% in the year I was born to 14% in the year I went to university and about half now. It wasn't just the hope of a well-paid job that took me there. It was because I loved learning. It was because I was eager to get away from the quite limited horizons of my background and my family. But of course it was also because I didn't want to end up weaving cotton or being unemployed in those economically depressed times. And all of these are very valid reasons for embarking on further study.

And then, in one of the greatest strokes of luck in my life, one of my university tutors was a dedicated teacher who inspired me to see the world as endlessly interesting and to understand that learning is a lifelong occupation. The realization that navigating the world involves finding good questions and not correct answers is perhaps the greatest gift that an educator can give.

But times are changing, and in ways that mean having a senior role in higher education brings special responsibilities. And for someone like me who has been transformed by education, it is disturbing to see that having a degree or not has become one of the sharpest dividing lines in political and social views in these times.

Universities used to be seen as a ladder and now some people see them as remote institutions divided from the rest of society. And this cultural chasm has widened despite the economic importance of higher education institutions, both to their local economy as a boost to activity and jobs, and nationally through the provision of highly skilled people.

And so we're seeing at one extreme, in the United States, the administration now destroying the universities and research base that has for decades ensured that the American economy stayed strong. But the role of universities and the model of higher

education provision is contested everywhere in different ways, including in the UK and in Spain. And the arguments reflect the underlying pattern that people who do not have degrees are voting against people who do have degrees. One important reason for this has been the divergence in economic prospects among the two groups as the economy digitalizes and becomes a knowledge economy.

Higher education has become a passport to better-paid jobs in the cities, and smaller places or rural places have been left behind with worse jobs. The solid, well-paid working class jobs of the past have gone, and with them the accompanying dignity and respect. Alongside this, there has been an unfortunate tendency to disparage people with less education or to imply that it's somehow their fault if they haven't done well in a system that's not designed for them. So not getting a degree is portrayed as a personal failing, but it isn't. It's a systemic one, if so many of our institutions feel remote and closed off to many people.

And so, for whatever reasons, the universities that played the most important role in social mobility when I was young have become a source for polarization. And yet modern technologically advanced economies need a cadre of highly educated people more than ever. So universities are more important. And access to the intellectual horizons of an education and the time to study and be curious is a privilege that should be available to anybody who wants it.

So, what can be done? First of all, higher education must be loudly defended. And the need goes beyond focusing on its role in the economy as a factory churning out human capital. These are cultural and social institutions too. It provides an environment in which people can disagree constructively, can explore complexity and nuance, can learn how to listen to other viewpoints and change their mind.

The research is important too. The story of human progress has been one of information technologies enabling cognitive and cultural development. It's been the case since the invention of the alphabet, of printing, of radio and television, of the internet and now AI. And although a massively disruptive process, it has always gone hand in hand with increasing literacy in education. So this is the moment to make sure that the role AI plays in our societies is understood and shaped by everyone, not just by an educated elite, and certainly not by a small number of brilliant and affluent men in the tech companies.

Universities must play a key role in illuminating and engaging with this emerging social order, and I strongly feel that this responsibility rests on our shoulders. And to do so effectively in such polarized times, this means having the grace to listen carefully to people who at present feel excluded from social progress and respecting what they say. It means more engagement with the rest of society. And this is why I was particularly thrilled to be awarded this honour by the UOC.

This is a role that institutions like this can play more effectively than traditional universities like mine. Its students are of their communities, they're at different life stages, they have considerable experience behind them, they're diverse in many different ways. Indeed, this institution specializes in the most important questions of our time: the interaction between the new technologies and the human and social sciences. And my own research focuses on exactly this intersection. All technology is fundamentally social, and innovative technologies are shaped by society and shape it in turn.

The UOC also values the kind of interdisciplinary research that is needed for universities to contribute positively to our societies whose problems are not single discipline problems. Traditional universities, even ancient and distinguished ones like Cambridge, have a lot to learn from the approach taken here. And in my view, we are facing an existential crisis unless we become more like you. The US universities are the canaries in the cage that used to forewarn miners of lethal gases.

So I want to end by reaffirming my thanks for this honorary degree awarded by a university that's very much fitted for our times and putting me in the company of some very distinguished previous recipients. So I look forward to us working together to ensure that there are ladders of opportunity for everyone and that those of us with the privilege of a higher education serve the whole of our societies in these extraordinarily turbulent times.

Thank you so much.

06 Speech by the rector, Àngels Fitó

Good morning. Authorities, friends, colleagues from academia, members of the UOC community, welcome, and a very special welcome to Diane Coyle.

Today we are gathered together on this solemn occasion to celebrate an exceptional academic career. But I would like to start by saying that this recognition is much more than a tribute to an individual. Today, as we award Professor Diane Coyle an honorary doctorate, we are also making a statement about the future. We are defining what kind of university the UOC wants to be in the coming decades: an institution that does not observe the digital transformation from a distance, but engages with it courageously; a university that does not separate knowledge from responsibility, or technology from social justice.

As our friend Professor Joan Torrent pointed out in his oration, Professor Coyle offered us one of the most lucid perceptions of our time when she said that GDP (gross domestic product, i.e. the total monetary value of the goods and services produced by a country in a period...) is a distorting lens rather than a window that gives a clear view of economic reality. This idea reminds us that if we don't measure things well, we can end up failing to prioritize them.

In her work, Diane Coyle warns us that traditional statistics often fail to show what really makes us grow as a society: the value of time, care, non-monetary well-being and intangible goods that we consider basic today but do not know how to account for. And I should point out how many of the areas I just mentioned tend to be dominated by women.

It's no coincidence that there is a clear gender bias in this omission, or that a woman economist is the one to correct it. Historically, economics, like many other disciplines, has suffered from a predominantly male chauvinist approach. Correcting it is not only an act of justice (which indeed it is), but a way to extend and improve our knowledge, since it is only through a diversity of voices that questions, perspectives, metrics, policies and, ultimately, priorities can be changed.

This is a lesson that we at the UOC deeply identify with.

We often live under a tyranny of indicators that only value what is easily quantifiable, leaving those things that truly give meaning to our collective life in a blind spot. Today I would like to champion the value of what we call "immeasurable".

In academia, the real value of a university goes far beyond rankings. Knowledge extends to teaching, research and management; to leisurely conversations between colleagues that generate new ideas; mentoring that changes a student's life. While we

don't underestimate the rigour of research and production indicators, we must recognize that knowledge has an interdisciplinary dimension that we must defend as the heart of our activity. There is a wisdom in dialogue and human relations that no index can ever fully capture.

However, the danger of failing to account for these dimensions is not only intellectual; it is, above all, political. Because when there is no clear measure of value, when the value of our data or our privacy is left in a kind of no-man's land, that is where the cracks that lead to inequality open.

This concern about who benefits from progress is not exclusive to our honorary doctor. Recently, Nobel laureates Daron Acemoglu and Simon Johnson warned us that technological innovation does not necessarily automatically benefit society. History teaches us that technical progress has often served to help concentrate power in the hands of a few, unless there are institutions and policies that correct its course.

In the light of the revolution we're going through right now, we have a duty to find appropriate responses and timely policies that ensure a real redistribution of digital wealth. We must zealously protect both intellectual property and people's rights, freedom and future, because our privacy today is in a legal limbo where data can only be harvested by those with a deep understanding of the technology, generating new and profound inequalities.

In this scenario, Europe emerges as an example of success because, despite everything, despite the obvious room for improvement, we are the region with the narrowest spread of per capita income in the world. European initiatives in the field of digital regulation have opened up paths that give us optimism, and our task is to continue working on them to ensure that the technological future is, first and foremost, a human future.

For thirty years, the UOC's mission has been precisely to bring to the fore something that traditional structures ignored: the talent of thousands of adults who study while working or caring for others, who find time where there is none and who have made it possible to learn not at a distance but without distances.

Because, to paraphrase our new motto, the UOC is open to the future, to the future of talent, wherever it may be. Because, like Professor Coyle's theses, the UOC was born from taking a "second look": from looking at the system and wondering who had been left out.

The social impact of a university is, by definition, immeasurable. It is not limited to the walls (physical or virtual) of a campus, the number of qualifications issued, or the theses and patents produced. Programmes such as UOC Rural are a prime example of this. It combats the population drain in rural areas by taking knowledge to places

where geography seemed a barrier. Our citizen digitalization initiatives to develop people's skills and bridge gaps are another.

These impacts don't usually immediately translate into macroeconomic figures, but they are the ones that truly build the invisible infrastructure of well-being and dignity. As Professor Coyle says, we need to move from measuring only output to measuring what really matters for human prosperity.

This search for a more human balance leads us to one of John Maynard Keynes's most famous reflections, which Diane Coyle has revisited with a contemporary perspective. Keynes said humanity's political problem is understanding how to combine "economic efficiency, social justice and individual liberty". Efficiency needs criticism, precaution, and technical knowledge, while social justice requires "an unselfish and enthusiastic spirit" towards ordinary people. Liberty, for its part, requires tolerance and breadth of appreciation to prioritize giving "unhindered opportunity to the exceptional and to the aspiring."

These three factors are precisely what Diane Coyle helps us rethink for the digital age: how to uphold freedom and justice in a world governed by algorithms that often only seek efficiency devoid of human meaning.

And here we come to another immeasurable value: democracy itself. A just and equitable society is an asset that we often only fully value when it is degraded or endangered. Diane Coyle warns us that, if we treat people as mere cogs, the economy ends up creating its own monsters.

We find ourselves in one of the "interregnums" described by Antonio Gramsci: a period of chiaroscuro, in which the old world is dying and the new is yet to be born. We are caught between two overlapping revolutions: the digital revolution and artificial intelligence. And the danger is that, in this interregnum, the monsters of dehumanization may appear.

The UOC's position is that technology is a tool to expand human intelligence, not to replace it.

In her work *Cogs and Monsters*, which Professor Torrent also referred to, Professor Coyle reminds us that the economy is born out of trust and institutions. This humanist perspective is what we advocate at the UOC: a university that understands that its most precious asset is its students' time, and that online education is a way of restoring freedom to people who had been excluded from the rigid calendars of learning.

Diane, your work offers us the compass we need: measuring better in order to govern more fairly, but above all, knowing how to protect those things whose worth cannot be counted.

The UOC's desire is to be part of this open infrastructure of knowledge for freer, more equitable and more humane societies. Thank you for helping us to see that technology and economics only make sense when they respect the immeasurable dignity of each and every one of us.

It is a great honour for this university to have you, as of today, among our honorary doctors.

Thank you very much!

Àngels Fitó
UOC Rector

07 Appendix

- [Video of the ceremony \[YouTube\]](#)
- [British economist Diane Coyle, the UOC's next honorary doctorate \[news item in Catalan or Spanish\]](#)
- [Diane Coyle: "Universities must play a key role in the emerging social order" \[news item\]](#)
- [Honoris causa 2026, Diane Coyle \[website\]](#)
- [All the UOC's honorary doctorates \[website\]](#)
- [Photos from the ceremony \[Flickr\]](#)
- [Diane Coyle's ideas: the limits of GDP and economics as a social science \[YouTube video in Catalan\]](#)
- [Library guide on Diane Coyle](#)

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