



**The Defense of the Humanities in the Twenty-First Century:
Communication in the Literary Laboratory with a Focus on the Verse
Narratives by Heinrich Kaufringer**

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Abstract

Many times, even scholars in the Humanities do not know how to deal with literature because they work only in the field of language acquisition, linguistics, or other data-driven study areas. Not surprisingly, when the issue emerges how to explain and to defend the Humanities, the literary areas seem to be the first on the chopping block. On the one hand, we can certainly argue that there is a specific literary canon that provides the readers/students with a sense of cultural identity and history. On the other hand, it seems more significant and effective to consider literature from whatever period or written in whatever language as a kind of laboratory of human behavior. The fictional framework makes it possible to experiment with unique types of situations in human life, often in an extreme fashion, which facilitates, as any scientist working in a lab would confirm, the critical analysis without too many outside distractions. The present paper argues that we can learn much about human communication through the study of literary texts. This finds an excellent illustration in the works of the late medieval German poet Heinrich Kaufringer (ca. 1400), in whose verse narratives we encounter a plethora of various situations and conditions reflecting on ordinary cases in people's lives, with all the shortcomings and potentials pertaining to the human language and the social community.

Keywords: Literary Laboratory, Literary Texts, Medieval Literature, Communication.