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## A Report of the 4th International Congress “Word in Education. Moral Upbringing through Arts and Literature”, Krakow, October 27–28 October, 2016

The 4<sup>th</sup> International Congress “Word in Education. Moral Upbringing through Arts and Literature” was held at the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, Poland on October 27–28, 2016. The Congress was a continuation of a series of conferences initiated in the Abat Oliba CEU University in Barcelona by Dr. Marcin Kaźmierczak and other members of the Research Group “Family, Education and Inclusive School (*Trivium*)”: Dr. María Teresa Signes, Dr. Amparo Acereda and Dr. Laura Amado. The previous congresses were held in 2012, 2013, and 2015 in Barcelona ([blog.uao.es/congreso-palabra](http://blog.uao.es/congreso-palabra)). The 2015 Congress involved the cooperation of the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow and the University of Namur. This cooperation was continued, with Ignatianum, represented by the Dean of the Faculty of Education Dr. Krzysztof Biel SJ, taking over the role of the host of the 2016 event.

The focus of the 2016 two-day conference was on the role of arts and literature in moral education. The importance of literary role models in moral education and in the public sphere was recognized, among others, by Alasdair MacIntyre and other neo-Aristotelian virtue ethicists. Whatever the perspective adopted, the important aspect of the contributions was the reference to the role of literature or arts in stimulating moral development. While continuing the line of the first three congresses in Barcelona, the

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members of the Congress also aimed to draw inspiration from the Jesuit educational tradition, which has always emphasised combining rational reflection with the lived experience, engaging imagination, feelings, and senses. Therefore the role of the school theatre, which was once at the heart of Jesuit education, was explored.

The Congress was an interdisciplinary enterprise, bringing together education experts, philosophers of education, literary scholars, art historians and theatre scholars to explore the experience as well as the practice of moral education. It was a really international event. 41 participants from 13 countries signed up, and most of them actually turned up for all the sessions. All the papers were delivered in English, with the exception two presentations in Polish on Friday afternoon. The schedule was rather packed up, since there were no concurrent sessions—it was possible for all the participants to listen to all the speakers.

The conference was opened with the welcome addresses from the Rector of Ignatianum, Prof. Józef Bremer SJ, the Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Krzysztof Biel SJ, and the former Vice-Rector of the Abat Oliba CEU in Barcelona, Dr. Marcin Kaźmierczak.

The first keynote speaker on Thursday (October 26, 2016) was Prof. David Carr from the University of Edinburgh and University of Birmingham, where he belongs to the research team of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues. In his talk, *Literature, rival conceptions of virtue and moral education*, he criticised MacIntyre's approach for its allegedly social constructivist, and therefore relativist approach to the concept of virtues, contrasting it with the naturalistic Aristotelian perspective. The bone of contention between the two stands of neo-Aristotelianism remains the question of the universality of moral values and consequently, of moral education systems.

The second speaker, Tadeusz Sławek, Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Silesia in Katowice, presented the text "*Gods are just.*" *Literature and the question of hope*. Drawing on Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* and *King Lear* he argued "that the role of arts and its pedagogical value consist in raising anxiety which disturbs the accepted ways of organizing and comprehending reality."

The last keynote speaker on the first day of the Congress, was Prof. Helena Ospina, who flew to Krakow all the way from Costa Rica. Apart from being a university professor, she is also a poet and

the owner of the Editorial Promesa publishing house. Her talk entitled *A poetics of unity between art & person. The role of arts and literature in the artist's personal formation* was a personal testimony constructed in the spirit of the autoethnographic research method.

The second morning session was focused on educational relationships. Prof. Walter Van Herck, a philosopher from the University of Antwerp, discussed the relationship between the master and the disciple, claiming that it “is unique and can never be replaced by coaching or by any form of distance learning or (digital) self-study.” Dr. Sylwia Wojciechowska, a philologist from Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, gave a talk entitled *Judgement but no justification: Henry James's criticism of family and education* in which she discussed the way James portrayed family relationships in his novels. Finally, Dr. Paweł Kaźmierczak from the same university explored the complementarity of the two accounts of theoretical and practical moral enquiry (contained in *Summa theologiae* and *The Divine Comedy*, respectively) as interpreted by Alasdair MacIntyre, with the characters of Thomas Aquinas and Dante Alighieri perceived as masters within the tradition of moral enquiry.

The first afternoon session was entitled “Moral Education through Arts.” The first two papers in this session were presented by the professors of philosophy from the University of Barcelona. Misericòrdia Anglès analysed the role of art and work in Iris Murdoch's altruistic conception of moral development. Margarita Mauri gave a talk *Moral perception through painting*. She argued that a painting can expand the viewers' perception of reality and develop their moral sense.

Then, Dr. Paula Wiażewicz-Wójtowicz from the University of Szczecin discussed the educational context of the interior arrangement of the Corpus Christi Church in Szczecin. Her paper was followed by Dr. Pantelis Komninios from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, who examined the process of construction of an educated ethnic identity through the Aegean wall-painting in the Late Bronze Age. After that, Dr. Silvia Carrascal Dominguez and Dr. Marta Carrasco Ferrer, both experts in art from the Universidad Camilo José Cela in Madrid, dealt with the social role of female artists in the paper entitled *Ethics and aesthetics: moral warnings by different women artists*. The final paper in this session was delivered by Aleksandra Batog, a practising musician and organizer of musical events, representing the Silesian Music



Society. She shared her reflections on the rationale and means of moral upbringing through arts.

The title of the second afternoon session was “Philosophical Perspectives on Moral Education.” It was inaugurated by Dr. Carmen Klohe from St. John’s University in New York. She argued that the Spanish writer Javier Marias, although generally characterised as a post-modern author, conceptualizes women according to the earlier androcentric paradigm.

Dr. Maria Hernandez-Sampelayo and Dr. Juana Maria Anguita Acero, Kissy Alejandra Diaz Osorio, from the Universidad Camilo José Cela in Madrid, discussed the role of women in the authentic human development. They focused on the two women protagonists: the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum and the Spanish poet Ernestina de Champourcin.

The next speaker was Dr. Jaime Vilarroig Martín, a philosopher from the Cardenal Herrera CEU University in Valencia. His exposition was entitled: *The humanist and Christian pedagogical ideal of Joannes Ludovicus Vives*. Afterwards, Magdalena Filipczuk from Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow introduced a cross-cultural perspective by focusing on the moral value of literature in ancient Confucianism.

The final paper of the day was delivered over Skype by Kyla Bruff from the Memorial University in Newfoundland, Canada. The speaker elaborated on the role of the aesthetic in moral education in the writings of Schiller, Plato and Read.

The first keynote session on Friday (October 28) comprised four papers. Professor Inger Enkvist from the University of Lund, who specializes in Latin American literature, examined the ethical content of Jane Austin’s novels and argued that it is the reason for the recent revival of interest in her work. The second keynote speaker, Professor Gerard Kilroy is a reader of Classics and English literature at University College London and visiting professor at Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow. His paper *Sacred speech: saying the word* was an argument for the priority of the spoken word which is dialogical and thereby creates a community of speech. Dr. Annalisa Sacca, a Professor of Italian at St. John’s University in New York drew audience’s attention on the writings of an Italian author, Erri De Luca, to assert the power of words which “make things happen” and

carry a moral value. Professor Giuseppe Mari from the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore in Milan discussed the contribution of literary utopias to moral education.

The second Friday morning session was devoted to the theatre and music in Jesuit education. Jerzy Kochanowicz, Professor of Education from the University of Lower Silesia delivered a paper entitled *Moral education in Jesuit Music Seminaries in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth*, in which he discussed educational methods used in the seminaries, emphasizing the role attributed to religious education. Professor Jan Okoń from the Tischner European University presented his interpretation of the Jesuit school theatre in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries as a common European attempt to provide mental and moral formation of the young generation through art. Dr. Clarinda Calma, also from the Tischner European University, examined Jesuit school playbills in order to show “how the Chinese culture was accommodated to suit the aims specific to the Jesuit civic education in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.” The morning proceedings were concluded by Dr. Jolanta Rzegocka from Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow, who discussed the way in which time, space and knowledge were reimaged in the Jesuit school theatre of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with the use of the motif of book.

Both afternoon sessions were centred around moral education through literature. The first two papers demonstrated the moral impact of the biblical narrative. Professor Renata Jasnos from Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow discussed the history of the prophet Jonah as an example of a moral dilemma portrayed in the Bible and essayed its application to the current intercultural problems. Dr. Barbara Surma, also from the same university, elucidated the use of the biblical history as the *locus ethicus* in Sofia Cavalletti’s practice of religious education. Dr. Magdalena Sikorska, from the Kazimierz Wielki University (Bydgoszcz) spoke about ethical insights to be found in two war-related children’s picturebooks. The last speaker in this session, Professor Krystyna Zabawa from Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow analysed the question of education to responsibility for words in Janusz Korczak’s *Kaytek the Wizard*.

After the break, Cintia Carreira from the Abat Oliba CEU University in Barcelona examined the presence of theological virtues of hope, faith and charity in C.S. Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia*. Then Dr.



Maria Szymańska from Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow applied transactional theory to upbringing through fairy tales. Dr. Marcin Kaźmierczak from the Abat Oliba CEU University in Barcelona discussed the subject of resilience and how it can be fostered through fairy tales, taking *The Girl Without Hands* by the Grimm Brothers as an exemplary material. He was followed by the last speaker, Dr. Krzysztof Korzyk, affiliated with the Institute of Slavic Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Jagiellonian University, and the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow. He criticised the profit-oriented model of contemporary education and proposed some current alternatives to it. The last session was followed by a discussion chaired by Prof. Inger Enkvist and the final remarks from the organizers.

In sum, the Congress provided space for a very lively and fruitful discussion in a congenial atmosphere. The participants expressed the desire to continue the co-operation in the future, which hopefully will materialize in the form of publications and further meetings.

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