

Maria Szymańska

Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow

Report from The Third International Conference “Thinking Symbols” Held at The Academy of Humanities in Pułtusk from 30th of June to 2nd of July 2015.

The Third International Conference *Thinking symbols* took place at the Academy of Humanities in Pułtusk from 30th June to 2nd of July. The Conference was organized by the Department of Archaeology and Anthropology Pułtusk Academy of Humanities. The Organizing Committee included: J. Popielska-Grzybowska (A. H. in Pułtusk), B. Józefów-Czerwińska (A. H. in Pułtusk), W. Duczko (A. H. in Pułtusk) and M. Szymańska (Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow).

The Scientific Committee comprised: M. H. Trindade Lopes, J. Can-deias Montes Sales, J. Cogswell, T. Dobrzyńska, W. Duczko, Á. Egilsdóttir, E. KaGlazer, J. Iwaszczuk, B. Józefów-Czerwińska, J. Karbownicze, D. Kulczycka, A. Łukaszewicz, J. Popielska-Grzybowska, I. Shved, M. Szymańska.

The Conference was opened by His Magnificence the Rector of the Pułtusk Academy of Humanities, Professor A. Koseski, Professor W. Duczko, Dr J. Popielska-Grzybowska, Dr B. Józefów-Czerwińska, Dr M. Szymańska.

Structure of the Conference: Conference Inauguration, Opening Session, two parallel sessions on 30th of June; five sessions with sections altogether – on 1st of July; four sessions on 2nd July with Concluding Discussions.

The specific feature of the Conference was that there was an open, short discussion after each talk.

There were about 80 participants from 16 countries all over the world.

The Conference themes had an interdisciplinary character covering the domains of creativity in art in light of the neurobiological aspect to be

transferred into the process of constructive, critical thinking, something which was reflected in a historical analyses of Ramesses II and the art of narrating history (M. H. Trindale Lopes – Lisbon); the symbolism and functions of Egyptian temples (J. C. Montes Sales – Lisbon); cosmogenic tattoos addressed to epistemic limits and the will to adorn (J. Cogswell – Michigan, USA).

It is worth mentioning what J. Cogswell stated – “As an artist I am fascinated by how a pattern works in accord with the human mind, mind in its most expansive sense, not just as the brain, or even the bounded body, but working through and in concert with the material world that we are part of. I question the lowly role that pattern has been afforded in our own culture, these acts of marking that are as archaic as the first human artifacts, commonly understood as frame or background to figuration and meaning, at best granted the role of establishing a sense of order in the world”. A different notion of the symbol was revealed in terms of symbols of communication (S. Szymanski – Poland). The composer claimed “Music belongs to the art of a special kind of communication. It embraces all people all over the world. It makes many traces in hearts, minds and provokes acts of doing in the light of symbolic signs that appear to be described from different angles and perspectives. Music joins people, inspires for dreams that can come true one day. Music helps people solve problems without words, seems to be an underground water stream which brings live to the death, and joy to the sad, enhances spirituality in our souls”. The art analyses also comprised the meaning of colour symbolism in ceremonial dresses based on Matejko’s and Baccio’s paintings of Polish kings by A. Skwirut (Pułtusk/Warsaw, Poland) who explained the symbolism of the most common three primary colours in the images of the costumes in paintings by Matejko and Bacciarelli.

These presentations depicted the very important aspect of individuality which is strongly engaged in the mental processes of each human being in a unique and unpredictable way. The symbolic images are varied as they are rooted in particular cultural, social and “spiritual” circumstances. This was shown, for example, in the lecture on the symbolism of the loaf in the Belarusian wedding ceremony (I. Shved – Belarus); serpents and drag-

ons (Á. Egilsdóttir – Reykjavik Iceland), where the author said: "The theme of a confrontation with a dragon or other monstrous beast is common in the folklore and mythology of numerous ancient cultures. Combat with a dragon is the most common myth in heroic tales and is its most important theme. The dragon/serpent-combat myth is a creation-myth with the monster symbolising chaos, the formless and desolate. In Old Norse mythology, the serpent Miðgarðsormr (Midgard Serpent, World Serpent) surrounded the earth and kept its forces together by biting his tail. When he lets it go, the world will end. Well-known and popular myths tell of the god Þórr's battle with Miðgarðsormr. When the world ends at Ragnarök, Þórr kills Miðgarðsormr and then walks nine paces before falling dead, having been poisoned by the serpent's venom. The role of the Miðgarðsormr is both positive, by tying the world together, and negative, by being one of the gods' most dangerous enemies. In Christian culture, dragons and serpents represent evil". The topic on Christian symbols in a pagan context also featured: from the Milvian bridge to the tomb of Memnon (KV 9) was presented by A. Łukaszewicz (Warsaw, Poland). Other themes covered the following: on Coffin Texts versus Coffin Images, where world of symbols on the ancient Egyptian Middle Kingdom Coffins are described within the case of the so-called Book of Two Ways by W. Sherbiny (Belgium).

Another way of using symbols as a way of turning the situation into a positive aspect of it was presented within the topic on the Head of State as a Political Icon during the Dictatorial Regime in Togo, 1967–2005 (J. J. Pawlik, Olsztyn, Poland). Mental symbols also included the aspect of the body of the pharaoh in the Pyramid Texts (J. Popielska-Grzybowska – Pultusk, Poland; F. Manfredi – Rome, Italy). What is more, these are strictly referred to intelligence, as emphasized in the stimulation and multi-intelligent principle of a student's functioning in the educational process – exemplification in practice (J. Karbowniczek, Krakow – Poland). Practice needs to be reflected and thus treating the word as a storage of meanings in building communicative thinking (M. Szymańska – Krakow, Poland) takes a crucial place.

The Conference topics touched many vital areas and forced us to stop and consider topics such as *Representations of Symbolic Immortality*

in The Book Thief Novel by Adriana Teodorescu (Târgu-Mureş Romania), or Symbolism of African Funeral Rituals (Case of the Mbomou Zande People from the Central African Republic) by E. Łubińska (Poland).

In conclusion, the Conference "Thinking Symbols" turned out to be a scientific interdisciplinary success, facilitating fruitful communication between the representatives of different academic centres all over the world.

Information about the author:

Maria Szymańska PhD

Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow

Faculty of Education

ul. Kopernika 26

31-501 Krakow, Poland

e-mail: maria.szymanska@ignatianum.edu.pl