

Laudatio to honorary doctor Prof. Kristján Kristjánsson

by Prof. Doret de Ruyter, professor of Education

University of Humanistic Studies, 29 January 2024

Dear professor Kristjánsson,

Let me begin with a quote from the Icelandic author Halldór Laxness:

“Those were good days. They were serene days and quite undemonstrative, like the best days in one’s life... Nothing happens; one simply lives and breathes and wishes for nothing more, and nothing more.”

Well, this is certainly not one of those days, but I do hope you will remember it as being a good one. For it is a very special day – it is not often that one is given an honorary doctorate, if one receives one at all! I am proud that the University of Humanistic Studies is the first foreign university that grants you this title and feel honoured that you have accepted our invitation. In the coming minutes I will explain our reasons for wanting to promote you to honorary doctor.

The mission of the University of Humanistic Studies is to contribute to the possibility that people are able to live a meaningful life in a humane society. This is precisely your mission. Actually, your work is a wonderful example of how the themes of meaningful living and the humanization of society can be combined in an ethical theory of the good life.

Furthermore, your work is a fine example of transdisciplinary research that we aspire to do as well. You combine moral philosophy and philosophy of education with theoretical and empirical studies in moral education, educational psychology and educational studies. And this leads to innovative insights about how humans can live a good life that you defend with lucid and high-quality argumentation and academic zest.

This makes you successful in not only spreading your mission, but also in making people listen to what you have to say. And you do have a lot to tell us! You have written or edited 13 academic books, for instance, *Virtues and Vices in Positive Psychology: A Philosophical Critique*, *Aristotelian character education*, and *Flourishing as the Aim of Education: A Neo-Aristotelian View*, you have published around two hundred chapters and articles in prestigious philosophical, psychological and educational journals and have given countless lectures to academic audiences around the world. And as editor-in-chief you have turned the *Journal of Moral Education* into the best journal in that area.

As deputy director of the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues, you’ve ensured a high academic quality of the centre’s impact plan to foster the attention to virtue, character education and flourishing in professional fields and society at large. With your colleagues you have conducted many studies among various professions (e.g. nursing, teaching, law and military) that have resulted in reports for professionals that are freely available. Next to that you have overseen the publication of practical guidelines for professionals and parents, you publish in professional journals, give talks to

professionals and lay audience, have helped the establishment of a character education association for teachers, and have contributed to the development of a new Master in Character Education and a recently launched online course on practical wisdom in professional practice.

Dear Kristján,

my attempt to bring you to the Netherlands as *regular professor* some 15 years ago failed. And in hindsight it's quite fortunate it did, because your later position at the Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues has given you many more opportunities to further your talents than the regular chair would have given you. Many academics and professionals have benefited from your intellectual labour and with that all the people for whom the professionals work.

I am glad that my attempt to bring you to the Netherlands as *honorary doctor* has been successful. It seals the collaboration between you and several people in the department of Education and I hope it will be the start of a successful cooperation with the other departments of the university, with which we begin tomorrow at a seminar on practical wisdom (the topic of your latest book, with Blaine Fowers).

I end with an Icelandic proverb:

Sá fær opt æruna virðinguna sem minnst is fær opt æruna sækist eptir henni.

For the non-Icelanders among us, it means:

Follow glory and it will flee, flee glory and it will follow thee.

Congratulations!