

FROM THE EDITORS

# A TIME FOR TENDERNESS

In the wake of Polish novelist Olga Tokarczuk's Nobel lecture, the word *czułość* – meaning “tenderness,” “sensitivity,” “empathy,” or perhaps best rendered as “tender sensitivity” – has taken on a new life in the Polish language (see K. Kłosińska's article, *From Sensation to Empathy*). Indeed, given the global reach of her work, and thanks to the excellent work of her translators, even in English the notion of “tenderness” has taken on new subtleties and depth. This issue of *Academia* explores this multifaceted concept from the perspective of numerous fields of science and scholarship.

We examine not only the emotions shared by female poets and their readers (J. Lisek's *Terrified of Tenderness?*) and emotions in the workplace (Z. Ratajczak's, *Taking a Cue from Norwid...*), but also the connection some people feel with God (Fr. T. Dola's *God's Tenderness*) and the sensitivities expressed in art (R. Olbiński's *Art of Tenderness*) and in technology (M. Komosiński's *Sensitivity in Computer Science*). The motif of tender affection also appears in biology (M. Wrzosek's *Secrets of the Third Kingdom*, R. Gula & K. Bojarska's *Savage Beasts or Affectionate Parents?*), and even in the world of industrial design (M. Rosińska's *Tenderness of Form*).

The scale of irrevocable environmental damage that man has wrought (P. Koj's *Fleeting Yet Sensitive*) stands in profound opposition to the kind of tenderness promoted by Tokarczuk. For her, tenderness means moving beyond one's own ego, towards an attentive, delicate treatment of other beings (E. Kącka's *Sense and Sensitivity*). As Tokarczuk herself puts it: “Tenderness perceives the bonds that connect us, the similarities and sameness between us. It is a way of looking that shows the world as being alive, living, interconnected, cooperating with, and codependent on itself.” Such tenderness is what binds a novelist to the world, but also what binds us all to one another – the kind of mutual experiencing of existence excellently symbolized by Maria Jarema's sculpture “The Dance.”

From the standpoint of the dramatic challenges of today's pandemic, tenderness might indeed be just what we and our world need most.

Prof. **Jerzy Duszyński**  
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**Maria Jarema**  
*The Dance, 1955*  
In the collections of  
the National Museum  
in Kraków



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