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***COMMUNIO AND COMMUNICATIO:* THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN PUBLIC LIFE**

Communication is of essential and unquestionable significance for society's existence and functioning. Communication is not just the exchange of information, which has an influence on the consistency and identity of societies, but it is also a creative factor that shapes human development. Society exists thanks to the relationships that exist between the people living in community, and communication is the most perfect way for people to express themselves within a community. For this reason, a reflection on the issue of man's participation in public life in the context of communication processes is an important element shaping the consciousness of the community's functioning. Considerations on the evolution of interpersonal relationships and the way people participate in them based on communication seem to be particularly relevant. It might seem that at the wake of the information society era, man, through communication, can fully participate in all public events. Meanwhile, we stumble upon the opposite phenomenon, meaning a progressive lack of involvement, and even indifference, towards public issues. The experiences of former communist countries are especially important in this respect. For instance, Poland has created a tradition of philosophical personalism developed by Karol Wojtyła and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec.¹ Their personalism, which has

¹ We primarily refer to the following works: Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. A. Potocki (*Analecta Husserliana* X, 1979), Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Community. Selected Essays*, trans. T. Sandok (New York 1993), and Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *I-Man. An Outline of Philosophical Anthropology*, trans. M. Lescoe and others (New Britain 1983). Cf. also: Roger Duncan, "A Profile of the Person," *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 60 (1986): 120–134.

become an important and current issue in Poland, is a basis on which reflections on man's participation in public life and observations on the role of communication are carried out in this article.

The personalistic approach corresponds to the concept of participation in the *polis* based on the discourse formed in ancient Greece. Isocrates expressed this in his speech *Nicocles or the Cyprians*:

For in the other powers which we possess we are in no respect superior to other living creatures; nay, we are inferior to many in swiftness and in strength and in other resources; but, because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear to each other whatever we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and, generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish.²

This theme was also highlighted by Jean-Pierre Vernant who, in his essay *The Spiritual Universe of the Polis*, indicated that communication was an essential condition for the proper functioning of social life in ancient Athens. Vernant pointed out that: "The system of the polis implied, first of all, the extraordinary preeminence of speech over all other instruments of power. Speech became the political tool par excellence, the key to all authority in the state, the means of commanding and dominating others."³ Citizens participating in the organization of the *polis* became the basis for the new system. Not without reason, in ancient Greece in the context of the formulation of the *polis* as a community of citizens (*Politeia*), rhetoric was the primary means for the functioning of social communication. Understanding man's nature has become the basis for a revision of social life in which not force and violence, but discussion and arguments were to decide upon the social system. Contemporary reflection on the relationship between the community and communication is facing the same problem.

² Isocrates, *Nicocles or the Cyprians*, 5–6, in Isocrates, *Volume I: To Demonicus. To Nicocles. Nicocles or the Cyprians. Panegyricus, To Philip, Archidamus*, trans. G. Norlin (Harvard University Press 1954).

³ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Origins of Greek Thought* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1982), 49.

Communication as a Basis for Community Participation

Every community exists due to the social relationships between the people involved in a community. Forms of public associations play an important role in man's life, and they are a necessary part of personal development. It is thanks to society that man can achieve his personal potentials. Intellectual development, building moral relationships or various forms of creative activities take place thanks to the ability to cooperate. Man accomplishes his various life goals by participating in social life. Due to people's similar personal structures, we can have similar goals to other people. This makes the diversity of individual ways of implementing specific goods result in a multiplicity of ways of achieving the common good. Consequently, the common good is to determine the purpose and the way societies are to exist. The existence of a variety of ways to implement the good stems from the potential and the dynamics of human nature.⁴ Every kind of association is an expression of community that occurs between people and due to people. The great number of the ways of functioning in social communities thus results from the needs and activities of the people involved in them. This potential created by human nature requires constant improvement. Yet, man is not self-sufficient in this regard and therefore must be supported by various communities.

The individual and sovereign way that man functions in society becomes the cause for the search for ways to organize community life. These activities are aimed at building a realm for achieving the common good. Every social relationship must be formed according to the model of a community of persons. The special action of every person is the act of decision making. Decision making is expressing the moment of human existence through actions and is an expression of man's fulfillment.⁵ It is through decisions that man expresses his freedom of choice and determines his actions. Building relationships with other people reveals the social context of the decision undertaken by a man. Community bonds are formed on the basis of openness and acceptance towards another person in an ac-

⁴ The personalistic approach to relationships that create society is comprised of factors that make it possible for man to become a fully accomplished person and understands man to be a participant in the life of society. See Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, "The Person and Society," *Angelicum* 62 (1985): 609–623; Karol Wojtyła, "The Person: Subject and Community," in *Person and Community. Selected Essays*, 219–261.

⁵ Wojtyła points out that a person most fully expresses themselves through actions, cf. *The Acting Person*, 8–11.

tion. Therefore, the act of deciding becomes the final guarantee for interpersonal relationships, since it not only determines the action, but also takes responsibility for the operation. By consciously undertaking rational and free acts, a man becomes a successful person and may set a goal by themselves and for themselves. The real existential distinction and extraordinary richness of these fulfilled actions places man as the sovereign entity in the face of all relationships.

The discovery of his own subjectivity is the basis for man to become aware of his role and place in society. However, by continuing to operate in interpersonal relationships, man can undergo the false belief that public associations exist in an independent and autonomous way. In this way, man can lose the actual proportion between himself and his creations, which leads to reducing man's sovereign participation in society. Not without significance is the fact that it is precisely in the area of interpersonal relationships that many phenomena pose a threat to humans. They consist in limiting the sovereignty of a person performing an action, especially by determining his or her decisions.⁶ Meanwhile, man as a sovereign person should not be subordinate to any form of community. Only the sovereign manner in which a person participates in a community is an indicator of its proper functioning. The free act of accepting something as one's own (the act of making a decision) and agreeing to become engaged (conscious participation in the relationship) are the foundations of every community. Therefore, the appropriate way to determine man's place in society is through participation, which is the conscious and free human act of remaining in relationship with other people.⁷ We should also consider communication processes from this perspective.

The appropriate place for communication to function is society. The transmission of contents, which possess information, personal beliefs or even reveal an inner experience (moral, aesthetic or religious), opens up the possibility for a person to be actively involved in society.⁸ Extremely meaningful in this context is the root word "communication," which comes from the Latin words: *communio*, meaning the community, as well as *communicare*, "to make common," "to become a participant," "to confer

⁶ This takes on the form of individualism and totalism in the life of society, cf. Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, 271–276; Krapiec, *I-Man*, 259–270.

⁷ For more on this subject, see the two works by Wojtyła: *The Acting Person*, 261–299, and "Participation or Alienation?," *Analecta Husserliana* VI (1977): 61–73.

⁸ Krapiec draws attention to the tri-level possibility of interpersonal communication: cognition, love and freedom. Cf. Krapiec, *I-Man*, 241–244.

together.” Based on this, we get the term *communicatio*, which in the strict sense means “to participate together.” The essence of participation is a relationship whose motive and end is man. Therefore, combining community and communication is not accidental. The community dictates how man exists in society, and communication is a prerequisite for the overlapping of community relationships and community building. Communication is therefore a tool for the proper functioning of society. The development of the means of communication also takes the form of social development, and the very possibility of any support in this process is a measure of progress.

The analysis of communication indicates the specifically personal aspect of its functioning. Therefore, communication is seen as a process that emerges from the nature of the human being, and it enables a person to create and deliver contents that do not have a purely physical sensory dimension (as in animals). Man is characterized by a multifaceted way of communicating. Communication involves man in all his personal actions (which are conscious and free). Thus understood, communication, as a consequence of man’s social functioning, is the starting point for understanding participation. The dependence of these areas is not only the basis for the emergence of social discourse, but also has an impact on man’s harmonious coexistence and development. In the context of the personalistic approach, it is an essential factor because it determines how man participates in society. If communication, as a dynamic and socially dominant relationship, takes on an autotelic form, man ceases to be a member and the goal of social discourse. Such processes are now taking place particularly in the field of mass communication. The anonymity of the recipient and a fascination with the technological development of the media can cause a loss of seeing the subject and the purpose of such communication.

Communication gives a person a unique opportunity to participate in social life. It allows the transmission of contents that are valuable in forming man’s decision-making moments. The core message is formulated within each community at this level. Here, there is agreement on a level beyond the material order. Man through communication “discovers” another man with his personality characteristics. This makes society something more than a collective. Society as a community of people creates its own proper dialogue, which is not simply a formal communication structure. This is a reflexive relationship where the exchange of contents creates communicated agreements on a totally different level. The sphere of the community is defined by real participation which results in a relationship

founded on the basis of the “exchange” of personal human experiences. Communication as participation creates interpersonal social discourse, which is based on the mutual affirmation of persons through the communicated contents. Social discourse is an interpersonal relationship, which determines not only the existence of the functioning social relationships, but primarily the participation of the people involved in it.⁹ Therefore, there is a close functional relationship between society and communication, whose specific expression is the community (*communio*).

The Specifics of Communication in Society

Reflections on the social aspect of communication are constantly evolving, since new social media phenomenon are also appearing.¹⁰ The dominant issue is communication through digital media, especially the Internet. However, in every type of communication, the essential variable for its social impact is to capture the functioning moment. It should be emphasized that communication is an interpersonal relationship, in which by deliberately choosing signs, the selected contents of cognitive experiences are presented. Thus, the selection of signs determines how the message exists. Indeed, communication can take on many forms. In the era of audiovisual and computer technologies, these capabilities are exceptionally important. Media, by technically improving the structure of messages, make it possible for the message to “reach” the potential recipient capable of receiving it. We see, therefore, that there are no pointless messages. Whatever the situational context, the recipient is always the motive for relating the communication. The media used are subordinated to the recipient, the reason for whom the message is created. Even if the recipient is not present at a given moment or directly recognized, the message is formulated so that it can be successful with respect to the hypothetical recipient. That is why communication is a process that in the social area possesses signs of a moral action, intention and act characterized by decision making. The moment of the sender’s decision making as to the form and contents of

⁹ Wojtyła underlined that “the common good has to be conceived of dynamically and not statically . . . In fact, it must liberate and support the attitude of solidarity but never to a degree such as to stifle opposition. It seems that the principle of dialogue is very aptly suited to that structure of human communities and participation which satisfies these needs” (*The Acting Person*, 287).

¹⁰ Cf. Graeme Burton, *Media and Society: Critical Perspectives* (Berkshire 2005).

a communication becomes the essence of communication in interpersonal relationships.

Taking into consideration that communication is a social media process characterized by an intention, we must remember that not all forms of communication are the same. This is proved by both the methods of creating messages and their goal. In the interpersonal context, the message's goal becomes particularly important. This is because the action in the communication is due to the goal and involvement of the sender in the discourse. For this reason, Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell identify two types of communication: informative and persuasive.¹¹ Social discourse is created within these two types of communication. Providing information, although it seems to be essential, from the side of participating in social discourse has a limited ability to make an influence. Information as a message serves as the structural "organizer" of communication. In social life, information is the basis for the development of community relationships. Often, knowledge obtained based on it becomes a prerequisite for participating in the community. The lack of information limits the ability of a person to function in society, and can even lead to social exclusion.¹² However, communicating information is the basis only for such forms of discourse whose aim is to obtain knowledge about something. The reliable communication of information is based on consultation and the exchange of information as well as the lack of persuasive measures used in this process.

However, not all communiqués should be treated as informational communication. Man is not a simple transceiver "mechanism." Extensive cognitive and volitional spheres are present in a man, additionally assisted by the sphere of emotions. Each of these spheres is involved in the processes of communication and has an impact on its course and form. Using these powers broadens the impact of communication. Therefore, interpersonal relationships also include persuasive communication, which in addition to information transfer also introduces an element of persuasion. Persuasive communication is based on the authentication of the communicated contents, where information alone is insufficient. The methods of

¹¹ Cf. Garth S. Jowett, Victoria O'Donnell, *Propaganda and Persuasion* (London: Sage Publications, 2012), 28–33.

¹² The issue of excluding society in the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sphere is becoming the cause of diversified social and economic development. Cf. Michelle W. L. Fong, "Digital divide: The case of developing countries," *Issues in Informing Science & Information Technology* 6 (2009): 471–478.

authentication are a powerful group of argumentative forms in which there is a persuasive moment. Authentication is a kind of commanding based on discovering what is convincing. In the process of trusting someone, a man considers something to be reliable, without empirically verifying the nature of that thing. The specific feature of this process is the decision to declare something to be true. However, the dominance of the volitional factor in this process concerns determining that whatever is true is also trustworthy. Thus, the consequence of trusting is the intellect's recognition of the cognitive contents as acceptable without their rational verification, but only under the pressure of the will.

In this perspective, rhetoric is performed as an essential way for persuasive communication to function in society. The primary objective of rhetoric is such a formulation of communiqués that makes them convincing.¹³ However, convincing someone is not only influencing them to change their attitude, or to impose one's views or positions. Persuasion methods used as part of rhetoric are based on authentication, because they concern what is most probable. The communicated contents do not refer to obvious or directly given facts and require authentication. The appropriate field of rhetorical communication becomes whatever can attest to the certainty or guarantee the media contents. The credibility of the communiqué depends on the credibility of the argument, which acts as the authenticator of the message's contents. However, the argument is not based on the random arrangement of the contents, but is determined by what the message directly concerns.¹⁴ Therefore, the communication process, on the basis of social discourse, must be accompanied by the ability to respond to the arguments, as well as to refer to the facts which form the basis for reaching an agreement.

In social discourse, rhetoric is mainly carried out as advisory speech, in which the majority of communiqués concern the future.¹⁵ Advi-

¹³ Cf. Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley 1969), 49–65.

¹⁴ Aristotle formulated the following definition of rhetoric: "Let rhetoric be [defined as] an ability, in each [particular] case, to see the available means of persuasion" (*On Rhetoric. A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. G. A. Kennedy (Oxford University Press 2007), 1355b). Aristotle did not understand rhetoric simply as knowledge, but perceived in it the functioning of interpersonal relationships in society. Rhetoric is to assist the *bios politikos*, which is striving for the common good. Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. H. Rackman (Harvard University Press 1926), 1094a28–b10.

¹⁵ Aristotle introduced a division of three types of speech that appear in persuasive communication: deliberative, judicial and demonstrative. The most significant in forming social life

sory speech becomes particularly important in politics broadly understood, where the intended activities take on the form of achieving the common good. In the absence of the possibility of verifying the intended acts, we have to trust specific ideas based on achieving political activities. This is also what the value of our choice is based on, which is the essence of democratic processes. The choice must be based on the belief that submitted proposals are trustworthy. This decision-making process requires not only political preparation, but also sophistication in terms of rhetorical argumentation. Persuasive communication without proper factual contexts merely becomes a set of persuasion techniques. The hypertrophy of persuasive techniques over the cognitive relation concerning the facts and the moral relationship with the recipient may even lead to manipulation. The danger exists of unconsciously being influenced, which—in the form of carefully prepared propaganda—is able to turn society into a mob.¹⁶

Today, social discourse mostly operates in the area of audio-visual persuasion. Technologies allow the creation of more and more sophisticated audiovisual media whose persuasive power increases disproportionately in relation to the ability to consciously and freely participate in social life. The audiovisual form of persuasive communication takes on the form of mass communication, which has an impact on the social identity of the media message's recipient. The mass media create a one-way communication impact on the recipient, which eliminates the possibility of personal participation. Factors regulating the functioning of mass communication are measured by viewing statistics or pageviews websites. Yet, this does not allow judging the qualitative impact on the recipient. In addition, this form of communication in the mass media is generally restricted to persuasion aimed at the recipient's emotions that produce reactions, but does not verify the social consequences.¹⁷ Multiplying the mass media's ability to influence people can be an obstacle to the functioning of social solidarity.

Concerning their interpersonal communication processes, the mass media can create a barrier consisting in the unification of all forms of me-

is deliberative speech, which most broadly relies on encouraging or rejecting. Cf. Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 1358b. This division is used in the theory of rhetoric till present day.

¹⁶ Anthony R. Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson in their work *The Age of Propaganda. The everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York 2001) recall the mechanisms and examples of how persuasion functions in social life, at the same time pointing out the dangers that appear.

¹⁷ Gabriel Weimann describes this phenomenon as “media effects” (*Communicating Unreality: Modern Media and the Reconstruction of Reality* (Thousand Oaks 2000), 15–38).

dia which is difficult to overcome. For this reason, holding social discourse on the basis of mass media becomes practically impossible. The whole process of social communication requires special credibility, and this not only concerns the interpersonal order, but also the subjective order. The subjective context is an exceptional criterion for message authentication because we always persuade someone to do something. This form of communication is generally unattainable by using the mass media. Yet, the development of information technology makes it possible to create newer forms of communication. In the face of the mass media's one-way transmission, there is an increase in the demand for interactive communication. Social discourse is constantly looking for new ways of understanding, an example of which is the use of internet-based social-site media.¹⁸

Since communication is the dominant factor for participating in social life, narrowing the forms of communication to the mass media may cause man to become the instrument of reception. Only a conscious and voluntary decision guarantees man's autonomic functioning in society. That is why the credibility of messages must be based on the perspective of man's personal actions. Shaping the attitude of participation is most fully accomplished on the basis of communication processes, whose basic model is dialogue. Openness to other people's arguments and focusing on the common good are the conditions for dialogue.

Participating in social discourse will depend on the confrontation of positions and forms of dialogue to resolve disputes. Dialogue possesses a special community building ability because it requires the affirmation of all the participants in the dialogue in terms of personal acts of cognition and decision-making. At this level, there is a real affirmation of man as a person, while at the same time it creates community bonds. In this perspective, dialogue enables the creation of a unique community of people.¹⁹ Its impact on communication processes has consequences in social discourse. Therefore, attention paid to the method and level of communication in society is at the same time caring for the common good.

¹⁸ The role of public media in the processes of creating and participating in the community requires a separate report. See more on this topic in the articles by Andreas M. Kaplan and Michael Haenlein: "Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media," *Business Horizons* 53:1 (2010): 59–68 and "Social media: Back to the roots and back to the future," *Journal of Systems and Information Technology* 14:2 (2012): 101–104.

¹⁹ Wojtyła points out that through dialogue we obtain the attitude of solidarity thanks to which "human beings live and act together" (*The Acting Person*, 284).

Conclusions

Man as a personal being possesses a special kind of need to live in a community. Man's public activity is shaped in relation to all factors that improve his personal potentials. Among these, communication is of particular importance for a person's fulfillment in society. Through communication, man expresses personal cognitive and decision-making acts, which have a significant influence on the existence of all interpersonal relationships. As a result, this creates public discourse, which is the common basis for understanding between parties. It is described by dialogue based on personalism. Acceptance of others, which constitutes the highest form of affirming personal authority, is most fully realized through dialogue. Therefore, dialogue is not only a form of communication, but above all it is a model for the proper functioning of society. Awareness of these issues is what allows man to actively participate—meaning to personally participate—in public discourse. By getting to know the workings of communication in society and how to formulate the contents of messages, a person becomes more sovereign in decision making and more resistant to manipulation.

At this point, we cannot forget that communication is carried out in various ways. Communication processes occurring in public discourse primarily rely on persuasion. The functioning of persuasive communication methods is based on methods for authenticating media contents and needs a skill that requires preparation. The ancient Greeks were aware of this, and for them, rhetoric was the main skill required for participating in public activities. Forms of persuasion developed on the basis of classical rhetoric are used today in the media. By applying specialized audio-visual means, persuasive communication appearing in the mass media becomes particularly effective in action. Especially when the potential of technological change is used to override the realism of public life, mass persuasive communication can get control over any public discourse. Therefore, there is a need for being educated about the public media in regard to learning not only to use modern technology, but also rhetorical skills, meaning learning about the mechanisms of creating persuasive messages and their impact on us. Possessing rhetorical skills is today becoming an essential tool for the real—meaning conscious and free—participation of persons in public life.

COMMUNIO AND COMMUNICATIO:
THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION FOR PARTICIPATING IN PUBLIC LIFE

SUMMARY

The article discusses the issue of man's participation in public life in the context of communication processes which play an important role in shaping the consciousness of community. Every community exists because of the relationships between the people involved in it. Thus, communication is the most perfect way for people to express themselves within the community. This relational dependency between the community and communication becomes the core of public participation. Persuasive communication plays the dominant role there, which is significantly important at the moment of message authentication. Persuasive communication has its foundation in the art of rhetoric and has been present in public life since the ancient Greece. Today, however, the mass media seem to dominate the communication in society by using means of persuasion and the public discourse detached from the context of interpersonal relationships.

KEYWORDS: personalism, man, community, communication, participation.