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Co-participation as the Foundation for Understanding Communication Analysis from the Perspective of the Personalism of the Lublin Philosophical School

Methods of studying communication most often rely on the analysis of content and the means used in the message. However, it can also be studied from a subjective perspective, which focuses on the participants of the communicative process and their ways of moral action. This article addresses the issue of participation in communication by demonstrating the agentive and purposive personal action, which is expressed through co-participation. The basis of the considerations presented here points to the interpersonal relationship that a person creates when acting communicatively. A person can be the sender or receiver of a message, where as a sender they are the sovereign agent of the transmission, and as a receiver, they are the motive and goal for the sender. The aim of the article is to show the way a person functions through communication, especially by pointing out the key moment that reveals the meaning of the existence of communication in social relationships.

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The reference point for these deliberations is the concept of personalism developed in the Lublin Philosophical School. The essence of this stance is the understanding of the human as a person, that is, a subject in a metaphysical sense, capable of independent and free actions.¹ The methodological difference in approaching the essence of the problem highlights the aspect of human action, as it encompasses communicative acts. An additional element that completes the context of the problem is capturing the human being as engaged in a communicative situation. Addressing this aspect accentuates the self-determination of the human being, guaranteeing their constitution as the subject of the message. Furthermore, it is important to identify this subject as the agent of the act of communication. These aspects (subject, engagement, act) are part of the communal life of a human being. Therefore, the text presents Karol Wojtyła's theory of participation, reflecting precisely this dimension of human life. Wojtyła's concept emphasizes that experiencing the agency of action is a fuller way of analyzing communicative experience. The issues raised in this work are presented from the perspective of the personalism of the Lublin Philosophical School, whose solutions are based on a realistic interpretation of the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition. As a result, this cognitive realism guarantees a complementary and methodologically autonomous description of human action.

This proposal for consideration is based on three research sources. The first is the concept of K. Wojtyła regarding the communal functioning of the person, which is contained in the work *Person and Act*

¹ Arkadiusz Gudaniec, "Metaphysics of the Person: The Specificity of Personalism in the Lublin Philosophical School," in *The Lublin Philosophical School. History—Conception—Disputes*, ed. A. Lekka-Kowalik, P. Gondek (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2020), 123–, 138–139 and Arkadiusz Gudaniec, "Karol Wojtyła's Concept of Personal Transcendence," *Verbum Vitae* 40, no. 3 (April 2022): 734–736.

and Related Essays.² The next one are the reflections of Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec from the publication *Język i świat realny* [Language and the real world]³, where he explains the structure of communicative action as a decision-making process. Finally, reflections covering considerations on the structure of communication, especially in the rhetorical dimension, were presented by Paweł Gondek in *Subjective Basis for Elucidating Communication in the Personalistic Perspective* and in *Communio and Communicatio: The Role of Communication for Participating in Public Life*.⁴ The analyses contained therein, concerning the role and significance of the subject in communication and the human being as a participant in the community, constitute the primary methodological way of uncovering the specifics of the communicating subject.

The outlined research perspective of human social action through communication requires a precise definition of the title of the considerations. Therefore, the term “communication” is understood as the process of transmission using various means of expression—within the framework of interpersonal relations—of selected cognitive content. Meanwhile, the term “co-participation”⁵ covers the area constituting

² Karol Wojtyła, *Person and Act and Related Essays*, trans. Grzegorz Ignatik (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2021).

³ Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *Język i świat realny* [Language and the real world] (Lublin: PTTA, 2015).

⁴ Paweł Gondek, “Subjective basis for elucidating communication in the personalistic perspective,” *Res Rhetorica* 7 (2020): 72–85 and Paweł Gondek, “Communio and communicatio: the role of communication for participating in public life,” *Studia Gilsoniana* 4, no. 1 (2015): 17–28.

⁵ There are two terms for “co-participation” in English. The first is the one chosen in this text. The second is “to participate together.” It emphasizes the act of engaging in action, focusing on the aspect of experience. On the other hand, the chosen term “co-participation” emphasizes the process of engagement in communicative action—it does not stop at recognizing the act.

the essence of subjective communication, and in the course of the argument, I will point out its structure and functions.

The personal dimension of communication

Human action can be considered in theoretical, practical, and artistic dimensions. In all of these, the human being is the agent, which means that they are dependent on the human being's will. Agency is both the limit and the beginning of acts characteristic of humans.⁶ Krąpiec recognizes in it the presence of personal acts—intelligible (cognitive), amiable (volitional), and decisional acts. In these three groups of acts, interpersonal communication is embedded. Cognitive-volitional acts are fundamental for communication, and their culmination is the decisional act, understood as the cooperation of reason and will. Through the understanding of a specific aspect of cognitive content, reducing them to concepts, and communicating them to another person through a sign system, a person performs an act preliminarily defined as a “communicative act.”⁷ Considering only communicative activities, the human being becomes a unique entity, capable of acting for non-biological purposes and consciously organizing their life. In the tradition of classical philosophy, this state of exceptionality is most fully expressed through the concept of “person.” The fact that a human being is a person not only opens the richness of their understanding but

⁶ Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, *I-man: an outline of philosophical anthropology*, trans. M. Lescoe, et. al. (Duncan, 1985): 91–94.

⁷ Cf. Krąpiec, *Język* [Language], 39–44. The term “communicative act” is my proposal to capture the conscious shaping of a communication and does not come from Krąpiec's considerations. The neologism arose during conversations with Prof. Paweł Gondek.

also accentuates the teleological, or goal-oriented, perspective of their actions, including the process of communication. The teleological dimension of communication is expressed thanks to the person playing the role of the sender, whose goal is the receiver and the bond connecting them. The goal is what motivates action and simultaneously becomes the beginning of the communication process. The appropriate consideration of cognitive content in the message involves reflection on the means, from which the suitable way of realizing the good will be chosen through a decisional act. This process is not limited to cognitive-intellectual acts, although they are fundamental. Equally important is the group of volitional-emotional acts, allowing for non-rational forms of justification.⁸

Through intellectual-cognitive acts, the subject creates a concept, which is a generalization of a previously captured aspect of communicative content. However, these formed concepts are not communicated solely through the expression of general statements. In addition, there are specific assertions—containing emotional content. It is this kind of assertion that is often dependent on factors of authentication. This lies within a scope that extends beyond purely rational aspects: it includes the emotive and volitional sphere of the human being. The range of authentication is broader than the logical derivation of a conclusion from premises, as it engages not only the intellect but also the inner senses (imagination and memory) and external senses (taste, smell, vision, hearing, and touch), emotions, and the will. As a result, authentication becomes a fundamental condition for the functioning of communicative content. Ultimately, authentication is an act of faith with rational foundations, and as a conscious act, it imparts agency to human action. The process of cognition itself does not lead to the elim-

⁸ It is a type of proving that is referred to as authentication [Cf. Gondek, “Communio,” 24 and Gondek, “Subjective,” 78].

ination of doubts in the message. Therefore, at the colloquial level, authentication is necessary, which, by engaging the will, can lead to the clarification of inaccuracies and, consequently, to the acceptance of the message as one's own.⁹

The process of shaping a message culminates in the selection of specific content and form of transmission. In this way, a communicative act is created, the result of which is a message directed to the recipient. The human being as the sender in the message leaves an individual trace of their presence, which can be studied through the analysis of the message and its decision-making context. This context is most crucial, as decisions become the center where other factors participate—from self-determination to the transmission.¹⁰ In communicating the selected cognitive content, the person also conveys an intentionally present personal experience.

In communication, what remains after the transmission is the recipient's reaction. Then the sender is able to evaluate how his message was received. The best form of reaction is a Response, and its function lies in the interaction of the communication process between the participants. Through interaction, the recipient can become the sender, as the motive contained in the message guarantees this, and the original sender can become the target of the recipient and the motive for their response.

The Response is closely linked to the degree of engagement of the participants in the relationship. This engagement is influenced by specific factors, which consist of two complementary directions: cognitive-intellectual and volitional-emotional. The participants' engagement will be conditioned by the intensity of cognitive-volitional factors experienced in the relationship. The number of factors (cognitive, amiable,

⁹ Cf. Gondek, "Subjective," 76.

¹⁰ Cf. Gondek, "Subjective," 76 and Krąpiec, *Język* [Language], 39–44 and cf. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 207–208.

decisional, or social) stabilizes the relationship through its multi-aspect impact on personal faculties. The participants' engagement directly stems from the adequacy of the given response, which results from the degree of their interaction. In turn, the structural reference for interaction is the interpersonal relationship as the basis of the social context. Therefore, attention should be paid to the result of human social functioning in this relationship, which originates from the engagement experienced together with others through communication.

Communication as a form of participation

The will of a human being is the source of their sovereign action. In this context, a person, when cognizing, is externally stimulated to act. This stimulation is particularly evident in communicative action, as it is evoked by the presence of another person. This other becomes the motive for the sender's action, and in turn, the sender becomes the motive for the recipient's response. This mutual interaction is a significant and engaging space, hence the focus on the nature of the relationship connecting these people in a communicative aspect.

The relationship becomes a plane in which a person can create a new quality, something more than "I" and "You"—the novelty is "Us." This resides in the context of communal action, which Wojtyła shows from both a subjective and objective perspective. The objective aspect pertains to membership in a given community, striving towards a specific goal. The subjective aspect is called participation, in which a person fulfills themselves through acts.¹¹ In the person, there emerges a certain tension or engagement, through which we can speak of partic-

¹¹ Cf. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 383–385.

ipation. Participation does not arise from passive presence but from active action within the community. Moreover, it is precisely this engagement that leaves a mark on the person, which ultimately leads to self-fulfillment. It follows that the greater the person's engagement in the community, the stronger their participation. Thus, participation denotes a structure of action that realizes what stems from the community's goal. Realizing the community's goal contributes to the self-realization of the person as a participant of that community, hence Arkadiusz Gudaniec, in concluding about participation, defines it as a way of the communal self-realization of the person.¹²

Key here is engagement, which influences participation. It is caused by the desire for personal self-improvement, as opening up to reality also opens up to another person. Rocco Buttiglione states that man fully discovers himself only in relation to another person, that is, the human personal self acquires self-consciousness and begins to exist in a fully personal way only in relation to others.¹³ The experience of one's own perfection is the result of self-determination, and to self-determine means to constitute oneself in relation.¹⁴ In this way, one receives a complete picture of a person functioning (acting) in a community. The scope of this action is the interpersonal relationship, in which self-determination is the basis of the person's presence as a participant in the community. The act of self-improvement enables engagement, which

¹² Cf. Arkadiusz Gudaniec, "Ku integralnej wizji człowieka-osoby. Elementy antropologii Karola Wojtyły" [Towards an integral vision of the human person. Elements of anthropology of Karol Wojtyła], *Studia Elbląskie* XVIII (2017): 521.

¹³ Rocco Buttiglione, *Karol Wojtyła. The Thought of the Man Who Became Pope John Paul II*, trans. P. Guietti and F. Murphy (Grand Rapids, Michigan and Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 140–141 and see Gudaniec, "Ku integralnej wizji," [Towards an integral vision], 520–521.

¹⁴ Cf. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 295–296.

affects participation, the realization of the community's goal, and self-fulfillment.

In this space, communication shapes itself as a form of participation, as people participating in the realization of a common goal co-participate with each other in relation to each other—expressing this through communication. The perspective of co-participation is more fundamental than cooperation, as it is conditioned by correlation with the act and the experience of the interpersonal relationship.¹⁵ An important addition is that co-participation simultaneously introduces a certain concordance in understanding communication. The context of this concordance is the integration of the person in the act proposed by Wojtyła. Integration involves the realization and manifestation of wholeness and unity on the substratum of a certain complexity.¹⁶ Wojtyła perceives in the complexity of human action another moment, which also participates in realizing action—termed as “enaction.” By this term, Wojtyła indicates that a person not only expresses themselves through sovereign acts but also fundamentally expresses psychic and somatic aspects. Through psycho-somatic compositions, Wojtyła aims to show the entirety of man, i.e., corporeality, reactivity, impulse (somatology), and emotions (psychology) as areas of “being,” through which the person experiences being wholly themselves in action.¹⁷ Integration is the plane defining the unity of human action as a subject participating in the interpersonal relationship. In communication, this is revealed in the conscious transmission, i.e., in aspects of cognitive-intellectual apprehension of reality, which will be expressed through the form and content of the message. The next con-

¹⁵ Paweł Gondek writes that the essence of participation is a relationship whose motive and end is man. Gondek, “Communio,” 21.

¹⁶ Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 298.

¹⁷ Cf. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 171, 301–302 and Gudaniec, “Ku integralnej wizji” [Towards an integral vision], 511.

text is non-verbal content, mainly related to the human body and its communicative character. It is expressed through “personal signs,” which can be primary or secondary. The foundation of primary signs is based on the biological reactions of the human body, such as smiling or crying. Therefore, the meaning of primary signs involves interpreting the significance of these reactions of smiling or crying, rather than merely focusing on the actions of laughing or weeping. Personal signs can also be secondary, i.e., cultural, realized through gestures, e.g., horizontal head movements in certain communities signify non-verbal acceptance of the presented contents—and in other cultures—the opposite (negation) of these contents. Secondary signs are conditioned by context, as a smile can be mocking, and one can cry from happiness. This entirety (verbal and non-verbal) of the message is registered by the recipient as a unity of communicative transmission.¹⁸

Functioning of a participant in communication

Although every human being experiences communication in some way, its function as co-participation is not self-evident. Wojtyła noted that participation leads to self-realization, self-fulfillment, and the realization of the community’s goal. In this context, we see two goals: the goal of the community and the goal of the community participant. These may differ depending on the motive of action. If the goals of the participant and the community align, it may indicate a Solidarity

¹⁸ The term “personal sign” is my proposal to capture the communicative aspect of the human body. It is inspired by the structure of Krąpiec’s sign (Cf. Krąpiec, *Język* [Language]: 30–31). However, pointing to the somatic does not exhaust the richness of non-verbal messages. In addition, there are psychological factors, which are expressed mainly in the human voice [Author’s Addendum].

Attitude of the participant towards the community.¹⁹ According to Wojtyła, this is the best attitude one can adopt in this context.

If maintaining a Solidarity Attitude in the community is the priority, then the only option is to treat the co-participant (recipient) as the goal of the communicative act. Communication is not an end in itself but ultimately serves the community's purpose—the common good.²⁰ The primary reference for the sender is the recipient, even more: the recipient becomes the motive for their action. Setting the goal of communication in this way results in at least two outcomes: it clarifies the natural communicative process experienced in everyday communication and fosters the maintenance of a Solidarity Attitude in the community.

As the communication relationship deepens, communication becomes “stronger.” However, this is not necessary, as the communicative act is a sovereign and free act. The source that may cause a lack of engagement in the relationship is openness to the other, a factor stemming from self-improvement. If openness is lacking in the relationship, we cannot speak of participation. Without participation, a person cannot fulfill themselves, as there is no way for them to do so. Lack of participation also means a lack of co-participation, the basis on which communication functions. One of the outcomes may be an inauthentic attitude, where the recipient does not become the motive of the

¹⁹ Cf. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 396–398, 401–402.

²⁰ The goal of relationships in community action is the common good. Following Aristotle's first sentence in *Nicomachean Ethics*: “Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim.” [cf. Aristotle, *Ethica Nicomachea*, trans. W.D. Ross, (Great Britain: Oxford University Press, 1954): 1094 a], it should be noted that the good is desired by man, it means something more than an end (object-oriented—in Wojtyła's understanding). Krapiec, on the other hand, when speaking of the goal, points to the object of the appropriate inclination of a given being [cf. Krapiec, *I-man*: 252–253] and the goal of desire is the good.

sender, but instead, the sender establishes themselves or another object as the motive. The recipient cannot respond appropriately, i.e., cannot give an adequate response, because the message is not constructed with them in mind. Due to the lack of openness, communication does not function naturally in the relationship but merely rests on the transmission of information. The subject of the message may remain the same, and the content will be conveyed to the recipient. The difference lies in the fact that in the absence of affirming the other, i.e., the recipient, the message is incomplete due to the lack of authenticating factors. The participant's registration of an incomplete message indicates that mere knowledge of the communicative content does not eliminate doubts. Moreover, reducing a person to merely an unreflective observer is not the goal of interpersonal communication.

The functioning of a human being within a community means that communication also affects the participants. The task of the message is to convey a specific cognitive content to the person and stimulate them to respond. The message, as a form of human action, has a teleological character. In this context, Wojtyła observes that in communal action, any activity (especially communicative) can be reduced to cooperation or agreement. These are two paths for creating an interpersonal relationship, where agreement indicates the person as the goal of the message, and cooperation indicates the common good as the result of the action of these people. Agreement does not reduce them to cooperation, as they are two distinct causes of interpersonal relations in communication. If the transmission of content through dialogue leads to agreement, then in the context of cooperation, there is a concordance of attitudes of participants realizing the common good.²¹ Thus, communication *sensu stricto* involves achieving the agreement of participants through dialogue. However, communication *sensu largo* involves the concordance of authentic communal (solidarity) attitudes

²¹ Cf. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 396–398.

and cooperation to ultimately realize the common good. In these meanings, communication becomes the plane organizing communal action, without which human beings could not begin acting together with others. Then a dialogical situation would not be formed (in the linguistic perspective—*sensu stricto*), nor would identification factors (in the cognitive perspective—*sensu largo*). The moment communication influences the participants means that it is not only shaped but also shaping. This occurs when the sender registers the recipient's response and themselves becomes the recipient, the motive for The Response.²²

Achieving agreement is possible in dialogue, as it expresses the impact of communication on the community, meaning communication binds the community in dialogue. Wojtyła, speaking of dialogue, indicates that it involves separating subjective biases and jointly striving for the realization of the community's goal.²³ Agreement becomes a condition for achieving the good by participants as the goal of their communal action. The agreement, which is the aim of dialogue, occurs under the conditions of co-participation.

Communication seen as co-participation is an interpersonal relationship that creates an entirely new quality. It aids in deepening this relationship, i.e., satisfying needs expressed in intentions. Mutual communication of participants unleashes the engagement of their personal faculties, allowing the message to become a way of rational and free action. Authentication is an act of faith with rational foundations, which finds its justification on the volitional-emotional plane. Engagement shifts attention to what happens between persons, i.e., community participants. Therefore, the most perfect form of communication is dialogue, and its space is the "we" relationship, where indi-

²² This process similarly functions as the problem of objectification of the self in the context of fulfillment of deeds. The person does not literally become an object, but only the subject of that act, the one to be shaped. Cf. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 168–170.

²³ Cf. Wojtyła, *Person and Act*, 403.

vidual personal experiences are exchanged. The attitude for dialogue is co-participation, whose limits are the persons participating in the communication. Essentially, a human being performs a communicative act (verbal and non-verbal), i.e., a message, from which all community participants benefit and thus can express and fulfill themselves. Within co-participation, community members have equal access to the “my” content, i.e., the message. In the personal experiential realm of the community, the cognitive result of co-participation as the basis of interpersonal communication is the acceptance of the transmitted content as one’s own without any manipulation by the sender.

Conclusion

The understanding of the message as an act stems from the moral action of the subject, which is interpreted through the prism of the personalism of the Lublin Philosophy School. The article has highlighted the teleological dimension of communication, that is, the person in the role of receiver or sender who constitutes the motive and goal of communicative action. Participants engage in communication not only cognitively but also decisively. Taking into account cognitive-volitional factors forms the basis for rationally justifying the sense of the communicative content. The process of shaping the communicative act concludes with the choice of content and form of transmission—it is here the sender leaves an individual trace of their presence, interpreted by the recipient. Among the many reactions to the received content, the most appropriate is the response of the person to whom the message is directed. The quality of this response affects the degree of the recipient’s engagement in communication. The greater the involvement in communication, the more the interpersonal relationship becomes “more ours.” This translates into the degree of personal satisfaction from self-fulfillment. Satisfaction is cognitively registered as a

response to the content experienced in the communicative acts of community participants. In the discussed context, the presence of this response is guaranteed by its interactive function.

Communication is rooted in participation as an aspect of the subject's communal action. Participation allows for the realization of both the community's goal and the participant's goal. The human being constitutes themselves within the community by expressing this through sovereign and free acts. The transition from being in the "we" relationship to engagement in it occurs through interpersonal integration, which becomes the source of this engagement. This intensity of experience, or engagement in communication, conditions the structure of action realizing the community's goal, the result of which is self-fulfillment. This whole process from the "we" context, through interaction, the degree of engagement, deepening the relationship to "more we," leads participants of communication to co-participation. The person experiences that their action has a moral character, and through the integration of factors—verbal contents of the message and non-verbal elements—the message is received as one, albeit internally complex.

A human being can adopt many attitudes towards the community; the most appropriate is defined as a solidarity stance. It expresses itself in treating the recipient as the goal of the communicative act. This attitude is expressed not only in the cognition of the communicative content but in its appropriate reception (to a certain extent). The acceptance of this content is effected under the impetus of the human will, which finds its expression in the decision. The person expresses their presence in the interpersonal relationship through interaction, which, when intensified, causes engagement and ultimately leads to co-participation. Ultimately, the result of this joint action is self-fulfillment, which will be received by the participants with a certain level of satisfaction conditioned by engagement. Co-participation is realized in achieving the communicative effect of the sender and receiver direct-

ed towards the realization of the common good. This communicative effect is cognitively expressed in the acceptance of the message content as one's own. The action aiming at the acceptance of content is not imposed by the sender but must be free from manifestations of manipulation.

The personal structure of the human being reveals itself in communication through their decisions, i.e., the result of cognitive-volitional actions. We recognize human decision through the communicative act as a common content, from which all community participants can benefit—having equal access to it. Sharing one's experiences with the community through the message enables exchange, thus also the acceptance of another message as one's own. This specificity of human functioning in the community indicates a subjective way of studying communication, which differs from the analysis of the content of the message and the means used for its construction.



**Co-participation as the foundation for understanding communication.
Analysis from the perspective of the personalism
of the Lublin Philosophical School**

SUMMARY

Communication can be studied from a subjective perspective, which focuses on the participants of communication and their decision-making. Human action can be considered in theoretical, practical, and artistic dimensions. In all of these, the human being is the agent, which means that they are dependent on their will. Therefore, communicative actions, which particularly distinguish humans from other actions they undertake, deserve attention. In communication, various aspects of individual and social life are concentrated, expressed in human decisions. These decisions can be understood through the message, which contains individual personal experience. The interpersonal relationship

that forms in this way can deepen through communication. Then, the concept of “co-participation” becomes significant, indicating the structure of this process. Co-participation thus becomes the key to understanding interpersonal communication. The goal of the article is to show the way humans function through communication, especially by highlighting the key moment that reveals the meaning of communication in social relations.

Keywords: participation, communication, personalism, person, decision

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