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EXISTENTIAL COMMUNICATION AS THE BASIS FOR AUTHENTIC HUMAN EXISTENCE IN KARL JASPERS'S PHILOSOPHY²

The article analyzes from different aspects the conception of existential communication and its significance from the perspective of Karl Jaspers's existential philosophy. An attempt is made to prove that the need for existential communication is primordial and naturally linked with human existence. On this basis, the definition of existential communication as life communication, is formed and analyzed. Ties between existential communication and existential truth are singled out³.

Keywords: *Jaspers, existence, existential communication, Transcendence⁴.*

Introduction. At first glance, communication seems an obvious and natural phenomenon. However, the analysis and definition of the conception of communication is not an easy task. The notion of communication is very broad and manifold, its scientific investigations are always expanding, there is a rapid increase in scientific resources which distinguish between and discuss different kinds of communication: interpersonal communication, group communication, mass communication, inter-cultural communication, international communication, and many others.

The phenomenon of communication is also examined in the works of many philosophers. Such prominent existentialists as Karl Jaspers, Martin Buber, Martin Heidegger and others are associated with the theory of existential communication. "Here communication is considered in the 'pre-scientific' level as a feature of human existence" [1. P 12]. According to the existentialists, existential communication, which is based on a direct dialogue, is one fundamental condition of human life. Therefore, its understanding and investigations provide a new insight into human communication and its very essence as well as points the right way to an authentic relationship between people.

Therefore, this article attempts to reveal the mystery of existential communication from the perspective of Jaspers's existential philosophy. One can argue that Jaspers was one of those thinkers whose main concern in his philosophy was existential communication. He sought to thoroughly reveal communication and its

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² **Название статьи (рус.):** Экзистенциальное общение как основа подлинного человеческого существования в философии Карла Ясперса.

³ **Аннотация (рус.):** в статье в различных аспектах анализируется понятие экзистенциальной коммуникации и ее значение с точки зрения экзистенциальной философии Карла Ясперса. Утверждается, что необходимость экзистенциального общения изначально и непосредственно связана с человеческим бытием. На основании этого положения в статье анализируется определение экзистенциальной коммуникации как коммуникации жизни, а также выявляются связи между экзистенциальной коммуникацией и экзистенциальной истиной.

⁴ **Ключевые слова (рус.):** Ясперс, существование, экзистенциальная коммуникация, жизнь, трансценденция.

origin from the perspective of human relations and individual existence. Ronald Gordon indicates that “Jaspers was ahead of his time in his recognition of the epistemological and ontological significance of human communication” [2. Vol. 65. P. 106]. Jaspers in his works draws attention to the person’s critical spiritual condition in the modern world and observes that in the age of technology and rationalism, the individual experiences loneliness, alienation, and torment for lack of existential communication which, due to the predominant materialism and mass character of the society, is not highly regarded as indispensable and essential. It is evident that these Jaspers’s insights and investigations of existential communication are important and relevant to the individual living in the present age of communication and information.

Gordon in his scholarly article makes an attempt to substantiate the idea that Jaspers’s philosophy is particularly significant to communication sciences which, being absorbed in the objective schemes of communication, seem to forget the importance of the person’s soul and heart in interpersonal communication [2. Vol. 65. P. 105–118]. The theory of existential communication is also associated with Buber’s philosophy of dialogue, Gabriel Marcel’s, Jean-Paul Sartre’s, Heidegger’s existentialism [3], Merleau-Ponty’s theory of phenomenology [4]. It can be argued that “Jaspers more than Buber and other existential philosophers contributed most to our understanding of existential communication which is possible only in deep and authentic personal relationships” [5. P. 110].

Existential communication as life communication

Communication and existence become one of the key concepts in Jaspers’s philosophy. In his works *Reason and Existenz* (1997) [6], *Way to Wisdom* (1973) [7], the famous three-volume *Philosophy* (1970) [8] and other works, Jaspers developed the theory of existential philosophy in an attempt to emphasize its practical value and close ties with an individual human life. The different aspects of the philosopher’s conception of existential communication are explored in many authors’ scholarly works (Maghdouri, Mostafavi 2015 [9]; Deurzen, Iacovou 2013 [5]; Hermann-Josef Seideneck 2012 [10]; Ashman, Lawler 2008 [11] et al.) Krystyna Górniak-Kocikowska points out that existential communication “is central to Jaspers’s understanding of human existence” [12. P. 423]. A human being in Jaspers’s philosophy is understood as existence *Existenz* who is in search for his own self, the meaning of his life, who is in doubt, who questions, and experiences borderline situations. A human being as existence *Existenz* is not an empirical object that could be described or examined using scientific methods, as the depth of human existence is unique and immaterial. Drawing on Kierkegaard, Jaspers points out that the individual’s existence is not a given, – it is the aim and goal set to him. In other words, the individual himself has to create his own essence, that is, be *himself* and live authentically. This determines the importance of communication. In Jaspers’s view, a human being cannot know himself and consummate his existence by himself, – other people are indispensable to him. Jaspers writes “that a solitary man is nothing” [13. P. 28]. Therefore, communication in the person’s life assumes great importance, namely *existential communication* directed to an open interpersonal dialogue. Kocikowska observes that “Jaspers established early on that human existence as the true and authentic being-in-itself is only real and true in the process of communication with other human beings” [12. P. 423].

The overview of the aforementioned philosophical works of Jaspers shows that the philosopher discusses different possible forms of communication; however, the greatest importance is attached to the analysis of existential communication. Why? The reason is that Jaspers was concerned about a man's situation, his mental state in the modern world. He left many works in which he analyzed the spiritual and political situation of Western Europe. It is claimed that in post-war years, "Jaspers was regarded as one of the spiritual leaders in Germany" [14. P. 221]. In his book *Man in the Modern Age* (2010) [15], the German philosopher provides a critique of technological dominance, mass society, observes the ever-growing alienation of man and his mass character. Jaspers writes that "the most distinct sign of the present-day turmoil and crisis is that people understand each other less and less, they meet and part indifferently, and there is no longer any unflinching loyalty or fellowship" [13. P. 27]. This shows that Jaspers perceived the necessity for existential communication. Juozas Girnius states that "Jaspers regarded existential communication as the main prerequisite to solve the cultural and spiritual human crisis" [16. P. 38]. It is obvious that Jaspers's existential insights become particularly relevant to our contemporary society which is called a communication society. One can speak about a "digital era" and "web society" [17. Vol. 27. P. 240] in which relationships among people and their way of life are virtually changing. Many researchers analyze both positive and negative consequences of the consolidation of modern technologies [18–21]. Stasulis observes that technologies bring about "destructive changes in a man's ontology" [22. Vol. 29. P 1–5], distorts a man's relationship with the other and reality. Interpersonal communication is increasingly turning to mass communication, the widespread mobile phones as well as other consolidated forms of virtual communication determine interpersonal communication as an interactive dialogue. According to Filiz Peach, "at an individual level the skill of face-to-face communication with others seems to be deteriorating. <...> we have lost the skill of communicating with others in this age of technology and computerization" [18. P. 255]. In the age of technologies, people's relationships lack frankness, immediacy, a spiritual bond. Communication with the other is based not on being together and mutual help, but rather on the principle of benefit and calculation, seeking to dominate and control the other. However, as Jaspers claims, in order for a man to be able to develop and improve his personality, he needs an authentic, sincere love dialogue with the other. Thus the uniqueness of Jaspers's philosophical texts resides in their attempt to speak to people's souls and hearts and to encourage them to be open to authentic interpersonal communication.

Thus, what is existential communication? Salamun proposes that "the existential communication which is the highest and most valuable form of communication cannot be researched by the sciences, nor adequately described in an objectifying language. <...> It can be elucidated only by philosophy and is to be experienced in one's own life" [23. Vol. 1. P. 5]. This shows that this communication is revealed only by the subjective human experience; therefore, it cannot be strictly defined and interpreted. It is also regarded as communication of the highest level, authentic communication, absolute communication, or, communication in search of truth. Jaspers asserts that a longing and desire for existential communication lie in the heart of every human being. Thus from Jaspers's philosophical perspective, this communication is the person's primordial need, an integral part of his existence.

Jaspers understood that a man's "soul and heart" are called for communication, and his personality is formed through existential communication [2. Vol. 65. P. 107]. Thus, in Jaspers's philosophy there is an inextricable connection between communication and human life. Jaspers obviously adopts this essential attitude from Kierkegaard's philosophy. In his work *Reason and Existenz* (1997) [6], Jaspers speaks about three modes of being. In this context one can discern the obvious parallels with Kierkegaard's three stages of life. According to Salamun [23. Vol. 1. P. 4–5], each mode entails a different kind of relationship and communication. The first is the *empirical or biological mode of existence*. This dimension of being characterizes the person's life as primitive, governed by spontaneous instincts, and unstable emotions. To this stage Kierkegaard ascribes the lowest – aesthetic stage, when communication with others is based on selfish motives. The second mode is *consciousness* – a "world of thinking and rationality." Like Kierkegaard, Jaspers remarks that in this stage, communication is based on logical thinking and rules. People communicate among themselves to achieve concrete results and common aims. The third mode is *Geist (spirit)*. This mode of being reveals a man's inner spiritual world and it is related with moral norms and religious faith. Therefore, communication is based on a human being's subjective beliefs, his world outlook and set of values. In contrast to Kierkegaard, Jaspers points out the fourth – the highest – mode of being which is closely connected with religious freedom. A man's existence rises above the primitive needs, limitations of the mind, and religious dogmas. Communication in this stage of being is based on an authentic and intimate interpersonal relationship.

Jaspers in his texts often asserts that human existence is oriented unconditionally to communication, stressing that "a human being's greatest achievement in this world is communication of one personality with another one" [7. P. 71]. Here Jaspers means existential communication which is presented as a man's chief aim. Jaspers's philosophy is full of propositions which point underline special importance of existential communication in human life. It can be claimed that Jaspers tries to prove "the primacy of human communication to human becoming" [2. Vol. 65. P. 111]. In the philosopher's words, every new human being begins in communication. Thus, existential communication enables the "birth" of human personality and his existence. In addition, Jaspers, like Kierkegaard, stresses the person's constant being in communication. First of all, a "man exists as being-in-the-world who has a relationship with himself. Secondly, a man exists as existence which is in a relationship with other people as existences" [24. P. 114]. This shows that Jaspers perceives people as relative beings, as *homo communicativus* whose authentic existence and identity result from existential communication. Thus it can be argued that existential communication is an inextricable part and the mystery of human existence. In analyzing this approach, Gordon states that "Jaspers sees communication as the "universal condition" of a human being, so much our "comprehensive essence" that what we are, and what is for us, are "bound up with communication" [2. Vol. 65. P. 106].

In summarizing briefly the provided insights, first, it should be noted that existential communication is a certain mystery of human life, his existential need. Second, this communication is the foundation of authentic existence and its main goal, as only through this highest form of communication a human being can perceive the purpose of his existence and become himself. It can be argued that this

kind of communication reveals unique “horizons of existential creation” [25. Vol. 21. P. 18]. Therefore, “for Jaspers existential communication is the fullest, most fundamental, and most effective form of relations” [12. P. 423]. Third, existential communication is not a process of a mere exchange of words, it is communication in which two people’s worlds and their innermost self meet, when “*existence communicates with existence.*” Thus, existential communication can be reasonably called life communication.

The second aspect which reveals itself in discussing existential communication, is the truth. In his book *Way to Wisdom*, Jaspers writes: “The truth begins with two” [7. P. 124]. Elsewhere it is stated that existential communication is a “truth-loving struggle” [13. P. 28]. What does this proposition imply? According to Girnius [16. P. 33–34], Jaspers, referring to existential communication as a “*truth-loving struggle,*” attempted to highlight a distinction between *existential truth* and *logical cognitive truth*. If the truth of scientific knowledge is objective and universal, then existential truth for Jaspers is essentially inimitable, subjective, related with a human right to self-determination. The essence of truth is freedom, – asserted Heidegger [26. P. 298]. This position was also adopted by Jaspers who remarked that freedom is the necessity of truth. It is evident that logical cognitive truth is related with the second mode of human existence, whereas existential truth signifies the existential mode of being. From the comparative point of view, if logical truth states facts and appeals only to the human mind, then *existential truth is what we must be, i.e. it is our human mission*. Therefore, it is evident that existential truth is closely connected with human life as it illuminates human possibilities and the meaning of existence. Thus viewed in this context, existential communication “is the communication of *truth* that draws the individual into the realization of *Existenz*” [11. Vol. 4. P. 253–269]. In this way, existential communication liberates a human being in his search for truth and personality growth.

The third aspect which stands out in analyzing Jaspers’s existential communication, is existential ethics that can be associated with the ethics of communication. Speaking about existential communication, Jaspers specifies the individual’s ethical position and values with regard to another person when we want to communicate authentically. It is significant that Jaspers is a moralistic existentialist who places a high value on such virtues and moral attitudes as “courage, patience, dignity, integrity, fidelity, solidarity and, in particular, responsibility” [27. P. 151]. Girnius states that for Jaspers, one of the main ethical principles is love. Love as the fundamental principal of communication shows that an authentic dialogue between two persons must be mutual and disinterested. Existential communication is not a struggle between two personalities which should result in subjugating the other or destroying his truth, this communication is only possible as a “*loving struggle,*” “where all kinds of power and superiority, prejudice and calculating strategic reserve against the other, are eliminated” [23. Vol. 1. P. 6]. Similar to Buber’s concepts of the *I-Thou* relationship, Jaspers emphasizes that a man must be frank and sincere if he wants to be engaged in a considerably deeper and closer dialogue, “a trusting and deep personal relationship facilitates existential communication” [5. P. 110]. Jaspers also sought to ground the principle of existential equality on the principle of love. Existential equality implies that a man must respect another man as a personality, his freedom and truth, regardless of sex, social status, and cultural differences. Such an impartial stance in communication shows

the individual's readiness to hear the other. Thus existential communication can reveal itself only as an open and free dialogue between two personalities. In this relationship, everyone accepts the existence of the other and sees himself in the other. This shows that Jaspers attaches the greatest importance not to the final result of existential communication, but to the very process of communication and its existential quality (it comes from the individual's soul and heart). In other words, the meaning and value of existential communication lie in its continuous process rather than in a concrete result. A human being in the process of this communication evaluates himself anew and develops himself, testifying his existential truth.

However, the "truth of existence" is not ultimate, – the highest truth is the "truth of transcendence" [11. Vol. 4. P. 5]. This transcendental truth is related with God, it makes one transcend the objective existence and open himself to Eternal Being. Having been influenced by Kierkegaard's works, Jaspers stressed the importance of Transcendence in communication, stating that Transcendence alone substantiates the deepest existential communication. Jaspers argues that every existence is rooted in Transcendence. What does this connection mean? It shows that finite human existence can never attain the full credibility and security of its being, as its foundation and mainstay reside in Transcendence. Hence, a man is related with God: "if there was no Transcendence, there would be no existence" [16. P. 83]. Jaspers urges the individual to search for God not as the object of knowledge, but by coming into contact with Him, experiencing Him existentially in his soul. And in order for this to happen, a free philosophical belief is necessary. Jaspers explains that existential communication is inconceivable without Transcendence because God, as Absolute Being and Eternal Truth, is the inexhaustible source of existential truth, a guarantee of the continuation of people's communication. Therefore, the individual's existence, his existential communication and existential truth is authentic and significant, free and moral insofar as it is rooted in Transcendence, is oriented to Transcendence and testifies it.

Conclusion

To sum up, it can be stated that Jaspers's philosophy attached great importance to the problem of existential communication. From the perspective of Jaspers's existential philosophy, this communication becomes one of the highest forms of communication which is of crucial importance in human life. Only through this direct interpersonal communication a man can know and realize himself, i.e. become himself and live a life of full value. Jaspers explains that this communication does not seek any material profit or final results. The goal of this communication is simply to be in an open and sincere relationship with the other. Existential communication reveals itself as a direct dialogue when two people's inner worlds and their innermost self meet, when "one's existence communicates with another's existence." Therefore, this communication can be rightly called life communication. It is very unique and subjective. Therefore, it cannot have any definite model of how it works. Jaspers claims that its beginning lies in religious freedom, and its precondition is mutual frankness, mutual equality, and love, and its aim is a search for existential truth. It is notable that this communication entails not only human relationships, but also directs a human being to God as Absolute Being – Transcendence. Thus, it can be concluded that this interpersonal existential communication is the mystery of man's life and the foundation of authentic human

existence which facilitates the individual's development, his knowledge of reality and experience of the meaning of human existence.

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