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The Internet communication in the perspective of personalism of E. Mounier

In our days we are witnesses of tremendous development of the Internet. There are many, various ways of using it for example as a communication tool. People can keep contact by e-mails, chatting or IRC, in spite of staying in a long distance, even in an opposite site of the Globe. It may be interesting to throw some light of the idea of personal communication on the marvel of modern technology.

The idea of human communication was discussed among the others in the personalistic philosophy of **Emmanuel Mounier** (1964, 34-41). What is a personal contact in his conception? It is a primordial reality of personal life. The basic experience of human person is an experience of other person. In the very act of his Being a person approaches outwards to the outer sphere of his existence. He is the only one kind of Being which is communicable in his nature. The ability of **communication of the person is a fundamental fact**. A child finds himself in the other man or woman, he or she learns how to behave by the influence of the grown man. A mutual connections between people are so essential that a doom of a man occurs when the relationships are broken up or just seriously run-down.

Mounier distinguishes two kinds of communication: **empirical** or **objective** and **existential** or **personal, subjective communication** (Czarkowski, 1994, 215-222). In the last, „I" seizes the „I" of the other man as a person immediately. In the first meaning the communication is based on giving information. A main mean of informing others is language. It belongs to the world of objects as a necessary mediation for personal bonds. An undeniable condition of interpersonal relationships is a possibility of objectification of what is subjective. But empirical communication is derivable and dependent on immediate existential communication, which is deeper than the former and is realized, as it were, „beyond" things. If the relationships between people are limited only to the sphere of objects, then they turn into something which is not a proper, human

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communication. People treat others and themselves as a source of information, as a things, and not as a personal Beings. Such a communication begins a tool of **depersonalization**. A bond between two people is not a bond of two hearts any more.

The objective reality mediating in existential communication can not be understood literally, but as a key symbolizing quite different reality. The essential moment of interpersonal relationships Mounier finds not in intellectual act but in **emotional act**, especially in positive emotions, such as love, liking, friendship, sympathy or brotherhood. Here **love** is regarded as a fundamental act of constituting a person and a community at the same time. He says that for a man, who loves, a Being exists and life is worthy of an effort of living. 'To be' means 'to love'. Mounier describes love by definite attitudes. It means going outside myself and giving myself to dispose to others, understanding, an offer without any limits and without expecting a reward, giving, generosity, accepting, carrying joys and suffers of another man, fidelity.

The most essential feature of love is **understanding** which Mounier regards as a necessary condition of the other acts. For instance carrying worries and joys of the others is only possible if they are understood. Generosity, giving is depend on what we know of my neighbor's expectations. Understanding is not just knowing another person but grasping his/her exceptionality, his/her uniqueness. It is essential to 'become' himself. It occurs if we do not look for ourselves only but treat him/her from his/her point of view, like from inside. Such understanding is identical with intellectual feeling, coexistence with another. In the view intellectual considerations are on the background.

On the other hand the question, how it is possible to seize another person from inside, how I can achieve the existential sphere of his experiences, still remains. Any attempt to grasp my existence by another one, and vice versa, is an attempt to seize a subjectivity from outside, and this 'outside' is not transformable to 'inside'. Mounier couldn't find the possibility of any movement understood as going outside myself in order to identify myself with somebody else.

According to Mounier, the resolution is possible only by heading for **the deepest, inward and spiritual life of myself for finding the presence of the absolute 'You'**, discovering somebody who transcends myself. By this unique relationship with the absolute Being a man learns to know his own person and a person of the other. Thus if the same God is present in the deepest spiritual, inner life of every man then contact with my own interior is in some way a relationship with another person. Mounier as a Christian philosopher maintains that reality of my neighbor is not only his own reality in the presence of me, it is we both. A bond which connects us in one human community is my unique relationship

with a human Being about which I do not speak in the third person as a thing anymore, but I begin to speak to him in the second person – 'you'. The intimate relationship between persons, their pure spiritual communion is a discovery of a community with God, which appears himself in the deepest interior of a person. The ultimate source and the base for feeling of love, which is essential for existential communication, are not impulses and instincts connected with natural human needs, but the feeling comes up from bonds between two persons. It expresses human transcendence in the face of nature. Hence an attempt to establish a possibility of immediate communication between subjects was substituted by searching God in the mystery of a person. Authentic experience of love means finally for Mounier going towards God as a Person of persons.

In the conception **the Internet emerges as an objective tool of human communication**. Obviously there are many ways of using it. In the perspective of personal relationships it seems worthy to take into consideration three kinds of using the Internet: e-mails, newsgroups, and chatting. In the confrontation with other kinds of communication tools it occurs more global and more personal. More global, because it is one of the cheapest and quickest (and in some way easiest) ways of transmission of information, especially for very distant areas. More personal because the rate price-to-speed is better than for any other kind of communication (e.g. correspondence or telephone). The rate becomes essential for poorer areas of the World and for the most inaccessible places on the Earth e.g. on Antarctica. What is more, it can transmit pictures and sound.

This is a quite specific tool. Typical way of using it is keyboard. As it stresses P. Wallace, which makes psychological analysis of the Internet communication in her book *The psychology of the Internet* (1999), there are some disadvantages of it. A language of the net is frosty, makes some identity problems (e.g. sex identity) and is liable to any kind of lies and using masks causing many misunderstandings. **The Internet may be easily a tool of various kinds of manipulation** and thus it can become a mean of depersonalization.

Another danger is avoiding immediate contact with other people for the benefit of chatting in the net. It refers to the people called 'Internet-addicted', often young, who can spend hours before the screen. Such a people are characterized by weakened emotional relationships with theirs human environment. The meeting people in the net may be found easier than „in real life", because meeting a new „friend" and breaking the contact is very simple. Such a communication is not essentially personal, since it requires reliance, trust, and fidelity, which are not possible without responsibility. Chatting is free from responsibility, everybody can easily lie and cheat without any consequences. This makes such kind of contact in the net not real, because it does not built personal relationships based on mutual trust and liability.

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In spite of the dangers the Internet can fulfill a desire of human being for **personal communication, where it was not possible before**. Maybe the development of the Internet nowadays is a symptom of the rush of transcending a threshold of independence and inward life by a man in order to meet another person. Subjectivity of a person demands passing on thoughts, considerations and love to others as his own special privilege. More than having a free choice the most important need of a human person is communication with other person by a community of understanding and a community of emotions.

In the view of the short analysis made before the rush for personal relationships has more significant undercurrent. It goes toward discovering a Person of persons, God in the mystery of inner life. Being understood by somebody Who transcends me and knows me as nobody else pushes me to keep up real community with others, even they are on the end of the Earth, and if the communication is accessible only by keyboard.

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SUMMARY

In the paper it is discussed the communicative role of the Internet in the view of Mounier's conception of personal communication. E. Mounier distinguishes two aspects of human communication: objective and subjective. The first one is reduced to the function of giving information, the second one – is specific for a man as a person. It is presented most essential features of subjective, existential communication, that after all requires understanding of other person. This attitude, according to Mounier, is not possible without opening to the transcendence.

In the view the Internet is regarded as an objective tool of communication. It is briefly discussed main ways of using the Internet in keeping up human relationships, the specific features of the tool, its advantages and disadvantages for personal contact. Finally the development of the Internet is understood as a symptom of the need of passing on thoughts, considerations and love to others as human special privilege.