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A person – a creature that listens and is listened to. The anthropological aspect of quiet and silence

Listening is a great skill.

Introduction

We are in the period of heated discussions that determine the scope for important issues related to interpersonal communication, both in family, work and society, and among nations. We will try to address this subject in a broad, multi-aspect manner, pointing to the meaning of the element of quiet in interpersonal relations.

A reflection on both quiet and silence has been an inspiration for philosophical thought of all times. Therefore, it is sometimes difficult to meditate on these two terms – states of human existence – separately, on the basis of exclusivity, and on their mutual relation. Quiet is an element of communication. It includes many non-verbal messages and is a prerequisite of building good, healthy relations. It requires some effort from us.¹

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¹ A. Wieja, H. Wieja, *Małżeństwo, o jakim marzymy*, Ustroń 2002, p. 136.

This text is an attempt of handling the problem of quiet in an interpersonal relation (dialogue) – its meaning, both for the person who listens and the person who is listened to, for their personality; the obligations arising from their humanity, not only from formal correctness. This issue should be looked at from the personal side, reflecting on the person's responsibility for the performed task and undertaken activities, as well as for personal development in contacts with others.

It is difficult to casually judge the moral value of the person's silence. We need to know a context, a distance and a lapse of time, which are a test of human acts and the intention of human activities. Quiet and silence often help to offer ourselves maximum sincerity. They also help to look reflectively at the other, different person.

Quiet is the key to many issues, also educational ones. The times we live in make the issue of both quiet and silence and an opportunity to use them in the educational process more prominent. It is much more difficult to help silence ensue, and even more difficult – to grasp the sense of activities undertaken in quiet.

1. Communication, dialogue as a meeting with the Other

Each contact and especially the one between two people becomes not only an opportunity, a possibility to meet in the physical sense but also to touch and influence inner lives of people who meet. It offers a chance to meet yourself (your inner self) and to get to know yourself in relation to others.

The most crucial elements of an interpersonal relations is the readiness for listening and the will to understand the other person. Tact and discretion are extremely important here.

The following question should be also posed: What are the limits of the personal involvement in a conversation, communication or a dialogue with the other person? Is the notion of an obligation equivalent to involvement? Is the communicated message true, sincere, authentic and clear or veiled, hypocritical, and with an incomprehensible subtext. What is the context of the conveyed content, the way of communication and its purpose.

2. Responsibility for relations with others

Here comes a reflection on **responsibility for relations with the other person**, for words spoken, for a true or false message, for how we treat the meeting itself, words said and heard and the consequences that the meeting will ensue. I mean responsibility towards one's own conscious, law and society. Here in turn the following questions appear: What can and what should I convey? How to listen and why? How are the heard words, contents and information used?

No doubt listening is a great skill. Sometimes it is difficult, requires concentration and discipline, whilst both quiet and silence can help acquire this important and binding skill.

3. Diversity and ambiguity of silence

Silence is one of the ways of communication between people in direct daily contacts. All human actions are connected – in a reflective way – with the direct situation in which they take place. **Silence** is not only an individual issue but has a broader social dimension. Today, it has become an issue that falls within the environment protection. In urban agglomerations, noise measurements are taken, setting its decibel limits whose transgression puts society's physical and mental health at risk.

Silence is an individual acting (of a person, an individual who is silent). Quiet is, as it were, a consequence of silence around us. Quiet is usually around us but sometimes in us. (It is then a kind of inner discipline).

4. The diversity of meanings of silence

- Silence – concentration on the speaker, listening, observation, reflection,
- Camouflage silence,
- Silence out of fear,
- Silence resulting from ignorance,
- Silence as an expression of obedience,

- Silence resulting from shame (embarrassment),
- Prayerful silence (prayer without words), adoration, contemplation, meditation (leaving the human dimension and opening up to God),
- Silence of the one who eavesdrops,
- Silence as breaking off contacts,
- Silence as punishment,
- Silence as an expression of respect,
- Silence as a mystery,
- Silence understood as specific self-restraint (leading to internal conversion),
- God's silence and a person's silence,
- Silence in the face of God. Veil of silence,
- Silence in liturgy – specific space of participation in a mystery,²
- Purifying silence,
- Thanksgiving silence,
- Worship silence,
- Silent dialogue,
- Silence of the just in the face of an accusation,
- Insidious silence,
- Evil-doing silence,
- Silence as a scandal,
- Mystery of silence as a confrontation with the reality of the world,
- Lonely silence and dialogic silence – is this the same?,
- Service of neighbour in silence – an accompanying presence,
- Child's silence and adult's silence – equal or different?
- Silence as containing yourself.

Having **the skill of maintaining silence** allows us to think about spoken words. Refraining from speaking words gives time to think over their content, an opportunity to avoid words that are unnecessary and sometimes even hurt. Excessive speaking of words leads to their devaluation and excessive talkativeness gives an impression of an internal disorder. The need of quiet arises in a person gradually and is connected with a reflection

² A. Sielepin, *Wiara – symbol – spotkanie. Aranżacje plastycznej w przestrzeni liturgicznej*, in: *Liturgia w podstawowych formach wyrazu*, red. A. Żądło, Katowice 2011, p. 70; see also: L. Cheneviere, *Rozmowy o milczeniu*, Kraków 1984, p. 159.

about one's own life, one's own existence. Therefore, quiet requires discipline and courage.

5. Quiet and silence

Both silence and quiet have similar properties, therefore sometimes they are used interchangeably. However, to be able to say that quiet is quiet, first of all, I must know when I can call a given phenomenon “quiet” and when “silence.”

Quiet does not exclude sounds of nature that soothe nerves or sounds of peaceful relaxing music. We can be silent alone, performing conceptual works that require concentration but for various reasons we can also maintain silence amid noise. After all, quiet cannot stand noise because noise destroys quiet (where there is noise there is no quiet). Nevertheless, internal quiet is a specific variety of quiet that cannot be achieved by everybody, but can and should be attained if someone realizes its meaning and starts working on themselves. **Keeping quiet** has entered into health and safety regulations.

The most fundamental criteria of division are the concepts of **quiet and silence**, as well as of time and space in which these phenomena take place, which specify the point of view, restricting phenomena that are taken into account. As there are things and phenomena that should be distinguished based on their “quality.” They include the sacred sphere, as opposed to the profane one. Such a division of phenomena brings not only a division of things but also a division of research attitudes. It determines a specific point of view of the investigated range of a phenomenon. It is worth noting that in contemporary science, the range of phenomena determined by these concepts enjoys a specific autonomy of the subject and methods of research. Hence, a simple conclusion that quiet falls within the subject of interdisciplinary research. Such a field of interest, however, requires higher cautiousness and rigour of reasoning as it is supposed to lead to a better understanding of phenomena, not to tangling them up. Introducing rigour in cognition and thinking, we create a risk of removing some phenomena from the field of research. Science does not know such protection of the scope and direction of research that would guarantee full – and at the same time reliable – cognition. The wealth of life manifestations always surpasses resources of scientific knowledge, which due to the need of using cognitive restrictions

is fragmentary, first of all in respect of its scope, and in many cases also because of the use of various research methods. Knowledge therefore leads to caution, teaches humbleness in formulating our judgements juxtaposed with limitless resources of quiet.

Quiet is not silence. “In silence, we are better able to listen to and understand ourselves; ideas come to birth and acquire depth; we understand with greater clarity what it is that we want to say and what we expect from others; and we choose how to express ourselves. By remaining silent we allow the other person to speak, to express themselves; and we avoid being tied simply to our own words and ideas without them being adequately tested. In this way, space is created for mutual listening, and deeper human relationships become possible.”³ Quiet is not monotonous; it has a variety of tones. It is space in which thoughts, feelings and reflections flow – you must be able to listen carefully. A person becomes sensitive, feels more and opens up to contacts with the other person.

“**Quiet** can exist without a person; it is a broad and multi-aspect concept. **Silence** refers to the spiritual state which arises from deep wisdom and sensitivity; anticipates spoken words [...], exists outside words. It manifests in people’s attitudes, joins people and is an expression of human awareness,”⁴ may also mean happiness, satisfaction, a certain level of content or comfort.⁵

An excess (overuse) of spoken words, often deceitful ones, makes them become not credible, and even empty. Most of people get addicted to words while many emotions can be expressed without words, what is proved for instance by mime.⁶ Along with the trend towards an increase of noise, there is a growing need of making silence the method of the contemporary person’s living. If we recognize quiet as a social behaviour, this will be surely an action complementary to speech⁷ and possible to be taught in the educational

³ Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the 46th World Communications Day *Silence and word: path of evangelization*, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20120124_46th-world-communications-day.html.

⁴ P. Niedziałkowski, *Świat mimu*, Warszawa 1998, pp. 18–19.

⁵ H. Norman Wright, *Sztuka porozumiewania się, czyli jak zrozumieć siebie, aby zrozumieć współmałżonka*, Warszawa 2005, p. 8.

⁶ More about this topic – see: P. Niedziałkowski, *Świat mimu...*, p. 16.

⁷ Cf. J. Habermas, *Zur Logik der Sozialwissenschaften*, p. 220, quoted after: A. M. Kaniowski, *Filozofia społeczna Jürgena Habermasa*, Warszawa 1990.

process. Quiet is a way of communication with others but maybe first and foremost with one's own "self."

When everybody talks, there is a lack of the understanding of the content, there is no quiet, no message of the word. Quiet before an important decision involves tuning out, retreat, cutting oneself off the intended sounds and phenomena distracting from the focus on the words and contents.

Therefore, it will belong to school to work out passion for quiet, to use its inherent opportunities favourable for the development of a young person, for the purpose of cooperation during individual and group classes.

In forests, at lakes and at the sea, zones of silence are established both to respect the other person's right to rest and leisure, and to protect the threatened conditions of the development of the animal world.⁸

6. Effective listening – good conversation

Social sociology, in particular referring to interpersonal communication, teaches us methods of conversation and communication with others. However, while reviewing the methods used within its framework, we can come to the conclusion that their purpose is simply to manipulate the other person. This is intentional communication which emphasizes the use of various techniques, and not its most important subject – the person. **Interpersonal contacts become formal** and bookish. There is some learned correctness, and not much spontaneity or friendliness in them. This also translates into everyday reality of the twenty-first century person. The accelerated commercial mechanisms have robbed us of time for friendship while the concept of common good has been lost. Time and space have become electronic and public, there is no intimacy in them.

In the meantime, people who have a personal relationship with each other must communicate. All efforts to avoid communication make a person ever more lonely. Loneliness triggers egocentrism and egoism in people, causing concentration on themselves. Selflessness should be therefore under close protection.

⁸ M. Szczepan, *Rozmowy o milczeniu*, Kraków 1984, p. 15.

In interpersonal relations, each message plays the reporting (transfer of the content) and relational role (taking a stance on the content). A very important role is played by non-verbal messages that sometimes determine how a given verbal message will be construed. In healthy relations, the content-related aspect of communication prevails over its taking-a-stance aspect.

The young experience problems, tensions and a spiritual battle – nobody listens to them. A meeting with quiet can change a lot. Therefore, it is important not only how something is said but also how something is listened to. Thus, a good conversation may be a dialogue,⁹ not a monologue. Each of the interlocutors should be able to speak freely, remembering about the same right of the other person. A person, particularly a young one, wants to be listened to but also wants to be spoken to. Regrettably, we often happen to hear but not listen to. In the meantime, listening should not be a passive activity but a skill of an active involvement in a conversation, i.e. making the interlocutor understand that what he is saying is important to us. In business contacts, through listening, we gain time to prepare our answer, to spot arguments to be used in the right moment to build our own position. Such active listening consists mainly in asking questions skilfully.

Effective listening is inextricably linked to empathy, i.e. readiness for compassion and understanding of the other. The listening person opens up to what their interlocutor is saying, without an attempt of an ongoing assessment of what he/she has to say. When speaking to someone, you must be sincere and open, speak clearly, specifically and accurately. You must maintain friendliness, treat your interlocutor seriously and respect their time – remember that he/she is your partner in a conversation, and therefore not to go into a never-ending monologue.

7. To listen – to hear – to get heard

These three terms, pronounced in a similar way**, have different meanings and different capacities. In brief, they should be characterized in the following

** The author means their pronunciation in Polish: *śluchać – słyszeć – usłyszeć* [translator's footnote].

⁹ More about it: J. Tischner, *Filozofia dramatu*, Kraków 2006; M. Buber, *Ja i Ty*, Warszawa 1993; B. Baran, *Filozofia dialogu*, Kraków 1991.

way: to understand – to want to understand – and consequently, to undertake an activity in respect of the person being listened to and yourself.

Trust and bond are built in the relation between the listening person and the person being listened to (in a dialogue these roles are interchangeable). A conversation that has a sense, a value may become an intellectual feast. Therefore, when we speak to the other person, we should do our best to concentrate on this activity. To listen attentively means to turn to the other person.

In a dialogue, both parties' integrity of character and rationality of thinking appear.¹⁰ An approach to the other person, holding a conversation with him/her, and winning his/her trust oblige us to maintain discretion, sometimes even the secret. Interlocutors try to undertake activities that will be beneficial to both parties of the dialogue. This is not as much the skill of resignation as the skill of rational thinking, getting to know one's own and the other person's capabilities. This is also an act of will, i.e. willingness to arrive at and reach an agreement.

7.1. To listen

A dialogue is a complicated process to which words and moments of calming down contribute in nearly an equal degree. When we speak a word in quiet, it is more likely that the listening person will understand it. When the speaker speaks and "hears" their words, he/she understands them differently because in quiet there is a chance that the message of the words will be heard.

Active listening means not only showing the interlocutor acceptance, respect, friendliness and warmth. This is also refraining from one's own judgments and good advice. Openness contributes to building trust. It is important to keep things in proportion to enable the other person to unveil themselves in a free and natural way. A positive attitude to the other and mutual respect are connected with the attitude of interest, with care for the other's good, respect for their individuality and value as a human being. This is important, particularly at the beginning of building relations – this stage is characterized by a confrontation with emotions and difficulties. Trends to escape, or reluctance to allow difficult subjects and emotions to emerge often

¹⁰ B. Baran, *Filozofia dialogu...*

appear. In the meantime, further dialogues and specific statements shape appropriate interpersonal communication. In a discourse, some plasticity and various activities adjusted individually to the person and the stage of acquaintanceship are needed. A dialogue should be a creative, natural and intuitive but also intellectual, informed and planned process.¹¹ There is no room in it for nonchalance, harsh language or uncontrolled gestures.

7.2. To hear

The sole hearing of the other person's statement does not have to mean willingness to elevate a given dialogue to a higher level of interpersonal relations. You may hear but answer your interlocutor "This is your problem." Then, it comes to the manifestation of indifference to problems with which a person turns to their interlocutor. The latter hears the message but does not empathize with the content and does not understand the intention of the spoken word. Such a reaction may affect the speaking person, their self-assessment and their future behaviour.

7.3. To get heard

The fundamental difference between this and the previous aspects of communication involves the existence of elements of will, desire. To get heard means to be willing to admit to oneself the other person's words, to be interested in the content of what is being said. A person needs another person to share with him/her their joy and success but first of all their failures, pains, sufferings and weaknesses. Listening to others gives comfort. In contemporary times, more and more often we meet people closed for the needs of the other, "different" person. Since the loved ones do not find time or willingness to listen, more and more often young people (and not only them) speak anonymously on the Facebook in the hope of being "heard," that somebody will enter into dialogue with them in issues that bother them. Prior to the era of the Internet, many people phoned the helpline to talk about their problems, to be aware that somebody feels together with them. A lack of time from parents and the loved ones, the devaluation of the idea of friendship,

¹¹ Cf. K. Benien, *Jak prowadzić rozmowy trudne*, Kraków 2005, pp. 35–49.

too weak emotional ties, loneliness among the nearest and dearest, a lack of committed presence, and a lack of patience – these are the reasons of looking for a listening person outside the group of the nearest. Conversations on a mobile phone are supposed to be a substitute of conversations in which one pretends that he/she is really listening to, understands and is entering into a dialogue with the other. Conversation on a mobile phone often resemble ones held in a public laundry. They substitute a lack of presence, closeness and commitment.

8. The person who listens and the person who is listened to

The person who listens and the person who is listened to (the speaking person) enter into a relation with each other based on polarization of two persons: the listening one and the speaking one. The way of conduct of individual partners, both the one who listens and the one who is listened to, may have an impact on behaviour and reactions of either of them. A broad range of interpersonal contacts provides us with many examples of such kind of the relationship, both at the personal and the formal, official level – at work, in the courtyard, among the loved ones but also with people met accidentally in the street. All of them have one thing in common – in each case, to be able to talk about an effective dialogue, you must focus on the words and content spoken by the other person. In the meantime, a few of us, in each case, take consistent measures to sustain in ourselves a kind and positive attitude to the other person, particularly when the situation itself seems to be unpleasant, for example if the person met is our suppliant who adopts an attitude of demand or in other circumstances when he/she does not show willingness to establish friendly relations.

A conversation starts by the speaker but its course and end can be also influenced by the listener's personality. Personality is a structure subject to continuous changes whose direction (development or degradation) depends on ourselves, on the gained experience and values taken from the surrounding world. A partnership dialogue takes place in the atmosphere of respect, friendship and appreciation of the other person's freedom. Such details as the facial expression or the timbre of voice are important here. And finally the value (the content) of the spoken word is really essential.

The person who listens is the one who has an ability and is willing to listen. He/she can be characterized by the concentration on the word spoken by the other. The person who listens (the one to whom we speak) is offered trust, we address our case to him. The one who is capable of listening, understands not only the content of words spoken by the other but also their silence (a lack of words). Quiet that falls on the other side, i.e. listening to the other in silence and concentration, is an expression of respect for that person.

In spite of appearances, “silence is not only an individual matter but has a broader, social dimension”¹² – it is one of the ways of communication between people in direct daily contacts. Jan F. Jacko writes that “silence is a kind of quiet with which we have to do in a situation of an unfulfilled waiting for any stimulus or sign.”¹³ Such a situation may happen for instance in music by the use of a meaningful pause but also in interpersonal communication when after having asked somebody a question, we do not get an answer. We were expecting to hear a word while a quiet falls. Such quiet should be distinguished from a phenomenon which the said author calls “perceptual noise.”¹⁴ Such a noise appears when communication is disturbed by external factors, such as for example a street hustle that drowns out the interlocutor’s statement.

Falling silent, we allow the other person to speak and express themselves and to give ourselves an opportunity not to grow attached exclusively to our own words or ideas. This way, space is created in which – because of listening to each other – it is possible to establish a more complete interpersonal relation. It is silence in which we notice the most authentic moments of communication between people. Then, a gesture, a facial expression, body language elevate to the level of signs that reveal the other person to us.

In this context, we should also mention the categories of a concealment and an oblique statement. On the pragmatic level, a concealment is always addressed to other people (the concealed means the hidden) whereas an oblique statement is a way of substantiation of this category. A person is not

¹² M. Szczepan, *Rozmowy o milczeniu...*, p. 15.

¹³ J. F. Jacko, *Cisza jako pojęcie analogiczne. Próba analizy ontologiczno-semiotycznej*, in: *Przestrzeń ciszy. Przestrzenie wizualne i akustyczne człowieka. Antropologia audiowizualna jako przedmiot i metoda badań*, red. J. Harbanowicz, A. Janiak, Wrocław 2011, pp. 13–20.

¹⁴ J. F. Jacko, *Cisza jako pojęcie analogiczne. Próba analizy ontologiczno-semiotycznej*, pp. 13–20.

always ready to speak. Not in every situation words are capable of taking on themselves human emotions and affections.¹⁵

It is important to find a proportion in communication between listening and speaking. This is particularly important for educators and teachers in a situation when we realize that both a word and silence (listening) are important and inherent elements of didactics and education. In the context of the fundamental interpersonal relations that family relations are, the ability of listening to and getting heard one's own children seems to be particularly important, elevating to the level of one of the most important educational skills. Peter L. Berger, a sociologist, confirms these assumptions, saying clearly that "allowing somebody to speak" should be "an element of education."¹⁶

The person who listens endows their interlocutor with time, attention, openness to problems that the other addresses to him/her, and with acceptance of the other. The speaking person must be accepted as he/she is, without judgement or criticism. You may say your point of view but also give the speaker the right to say theirs. Empathy of the person who listens plays an extremely important role. The presented warmth, kindness and protectiveness should be adjusted to the stage of the relationship and the current situation of persons engaged in a dialogue. The person who listens should – through face-to-face communication – also pay attention to the speaker's inflection, the content said (some expressed more loudly, others – more quietly and slowly) and pauses (quiet) used in an utterance, showing tension, difficulties in expressing oneself and the speaker's emotional state. It should be emphasized once again that in certain situations quiet can be an equivalent of a word.

In turn, the person listened to expects a focus on words said by him/her, understanding and friendly rapport. He/she wants to find their "place" in a dialogue, their own space of being heard. Patient listening is a value that cannot be overestimated. "The fact that they will feed me, tidy up my room, make the bed, wash my linen does not mean that they will help me in 100%. I want to be heard, I want to do something more, I want **to be** and still mean

¹⁵ Cf. M. Antoniuk, "Kultura małomówna" Stanisława Lacka. *W kręgu młodopolskiej świadomości mowy i milczenia*, Kraków 2006.

¹⁶ P. L. Berger, T. Luckmann, *Spółeczne tworzenie rzeczywistości. Traktat z socjologii wiedzy*, Warszawa 2010, p. 43.

something for myself and others!”¹⁷ Having not been listened to and having not had friendly relations for a long time results in the marginalization in family and society, in loneliness and social exclusion.

The profiles of the person who listens and the person who is listened to, constructed above, present requirements of the model situation. It is just such qualities that dialogue partners should have so that a creative relation may be established. However, on the interpersonal level, difficulties in communication frequently arise. Their reasons may be on both parts: the speaker and the listener. The speaker may present the situation inappropriately, describe a “substitute” problem instead of a real one or exhibit a lack of faith in a possibility of solving it. The listener, in turn, may exhibit impatience, tiredness, a lack of interest towards the speaker, getting the speaker understand that their problem is not important enough and that listening to it only consumes the listener’s precious time. Sometimes various difficulties may appear that prevent from effective listening: no intimacy, third parties’ presence, difficulties in understanding the nomenclature, a demanding attitude and even aggressive behaviours of the speaker (which happens, for example on the occasion of different types of protests).

The role of the listener may be important and difficult and sometimes even unrewarding when the interlocutor feels a need to get grievance and distress off their chest, to report their problems. He/she expects help in sorting out a chaos of thoughts, a different view on themselves and on the reality that surrounds him/her and even solving their problem. In such situation, the listener can feel helpless, facing their inability of providing help or constructive advice, may want to take on themselves too much responsibility, feeling a strong need of solving the speaker’s problem. Despite these difficulties, one should never give up a conversation as an element of shaping the quality of life. In many difficult situations, a conversation gives time and strength to survive a difficult period, offers hope for a satisfactory solution of a conflict situation.

Besides two key roles assumed by the dialogue characters, i.e. the person who listens and the person who is listened to, we also deal with other attitudes connected with listening that are worth looking at, at least

¹⁷ The motto of the residential home in Płaza, the District of Chrzanów, Poland.

briefly, to complete a picture of interpersonal relations based on word and silence that accompanies it.

9. The person who listens

The person who listens is a witness to a dialogue of two people but does not participate in the conversation. Depending on the role/situation the listener is in, he/she is obliged to maintain discretion, sometimes a secret with regards to the heard content.

10. The person who is eavesdropped

Eavesdropping is an activity that takes place against the person's will, encroaching their sphere of intimacy. Consent to eavesdropping on a massive scale has come from politicians and become an instrument of a political game, thereby breaching the system of values. A habit of eavesdropping existed already in earlier periods of history. In palaces, there were rooms where you could eavesdrop somebody's conversation, standing in a remote corner. The technique of eavesdropping was not as perfect as today but spies were used frequently. As a result of such practices, an obligation to maintain privacy of correspondence arose. However, is discretion of this type still valid in the era of mass-media and social networking sites where the ease of surveillance is present on ever bigger and wider scale and the number of people who eavesdrop us or observe our activities is becoming the determinant of our popularity? A question comes to mind: What is going on with ethics and morality? It is clear how important are values transmitted and acknowledged in the process of education.

11. The person who eavesdrops

The person who eavesdrops encroaches somebody's privacy, steals property, information and content that does not belong to, has not been said to, or is not intended for him/her. A person who lives certain values and rules will

never eavesdrop, whatever the circumstances. It seems that public approval for such activities is becoming ever more widespread. We regard specific activities as correct and appropriate insofar as we encounter them more and more often. We derive our knowledge of standards of behaviour from observations of behaviours of the majority, especially in public places. This results from deficiencies in education, a low standard of behaviour and searching for role models in other people. We are much more prone to be influenced by society when we feel uncertainty and the situation we have got into is ambiguous. We follow herd behaviours, excusing ourselves by saying that “everybody does so.” It can be easily noticed that widely published, presented and commented facts of eavesdropping lead directly to an increase of the number of such behaviours in society. Imitation in this area applies both to adults and children. Recording or eavesdropping is also widespread in schools, whereby it is losing an overtone of something inappropriate or even reprehensible.

12. The person who interrogates

In a situation of an interrogation, in private or social area, the person who interrogates may carry out a formal work without following legal or moral rules or standards. Sometimes, “an interrogator” is a parent for their child or one spouse who “interrogates” the other, trying to get information that is important for him/her. This is a slightly different type and dimension of an interrogation than the one we first associate with this term, however particularly worth noting as it can cause considerable abuse and a negatively impact on interpersonal relations.

13. The person who is interrogated

At least two categories should be distinguished here: a legal and a moral. In the social sense, the interrogator has more opportunities to destroy one’s personality. A lack of equality between the interrogator and the person who is interrogated pushes the latter to defence. In this context, the principle of being morally responsible for a word should be remembered, and therefore for answers given and their intentions. Two different attitudes of humbleness

and false authority are adopted. In our reality, a new area has emerged: the person interrogated by the media. The media message gets to millions of listeners and engages two parties even though it is a monologue. The role of the messenger is disproportionately higher when it has authority, is a celebrity, a known person. The technique of these interrogations is not always compliant with ethical standards. It seems that we still underestimate the power of the media's influence and manipulation techniques.

14. Quiet as the lack of a word

Quiet as the lack of a word – they do not want to talk to me or with me – loneliness. Quiet that falls between people who are not bound by a deep relation is difficult and awkward. It seems that a short time of such quiet is extended forever and leads nowhere. There is a type of quiet that does not build ties and may hurt the other person. It may become space in which we enforce our rights and extort them from the other person. This happens when we are in conflict (silent treatment) or feel hurt. We bear a grudge and then most often avoid a dialogue while conversation is replaced by silence that does not solve the problem.

15. Quiet of listening out

24 August 2016, at 3.30 a.m. a big earthquake in Italy revealed two different faces of quiet: quiet of dread and quiet of listening to hear a human voice from beneath debris. Every few minutes everybody stopped debris removal to listen to voices of the living trapped under ruined buildings. In quiet you can hear weak voices of people who are still alive.

Summary

Each civilization, through the creation of a given social and cultural type of person, builds specific models of behaviours and lifestyles, at the same time shaping specific types of interpersonal relations. The 20th century began

a new era in the history of interpersonal contacts – an era based on chaos and noise, in which both the person who listens and the person who is listened to must be able to find themselves so as not to lose totally the skill of creating links.

“Our civilization is not sensitive to objectives or values nor to the existential dimension of life.”¹⁸ A wealth of spoken words blur in a virtual reality, creating a sequence of incomprehensible signs, a kind of language games whom nobody tries to assign a meaning appropriate to them. Everybody speaks but nobody listens to, nobody tries to make an effort of listening to what is hidden under the guise of **talkativeness**. On the other hand, closing in the virtual world and handing over our own words and thoughts to it, we forget about the here and now, about face-to-face communication when eyes, gestures and facial expressions but also moments or meaningful silence are important.

The deliberations presented in this study are to be contributive to a reflection over necessary aspects of an effective dialogue. In this context, it is worth highlighting in particular the meaning of quiet that can help find the sense of life of a person in a hurry. Quiet gives an excellent opportunity of a deepened reflexiveness and motivating one's own attitudes with higher ethical, spiritual, aesthetic and cognitive values. While dosing skilfully the number of spoken words and intertwining them with moments of silence, not only do we show respect to the said content but also allow the other person to speak and to reflect on the sense of a held dialogue. Quiet favours not only a physical perception of the sign, but also helps to understand its sense. Only because of keeping an appropriate balance between silence and speech, we will be able to introduce a benchmark of the ‘speaker-listener’ relation into life. A benchmark thanks to which regard for a human being can be paired with expressing oneself and the will of the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relations based on understanding and respect. Quiet is the way of approaching and getting to know the other, different person, assuming that God lives in every human being, and therefore also approaching and getting to know God.

¹⁸ B. Suchodolski, *Edukacja permanentna. Rozdroża i nadzieje*, Warszawa 2003, p. 146.

Not only word but also silence is “an utterance,” a message. Christ’s silence before the Sanhedrin was very meaningful, especially in that situation of an unjust accusation. Important is not only the context but also who remains silent with whom and in connection with what matter. Therefore, both silence and listening “participate” in communication, are its parts. However, can eavesdropping, in the course of which one can find out about the content addressed to someone else, be called communication? And what about an interrogation in its various sequences and meanings? I will not mention the immorality of such behaviour but only make a reference to a different meaning, a different “value” of quiet when somebody eavesdrops. This is a bad, dangerous and destructive quiet.

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