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Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow

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REPORT

*Report from the 20th Media Ethics Conference:
„The value of the media – values in the media”*



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Editorial

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Dear Readers,

we are pleased to present another issue of our journal. Although the articles published herein address a wide range of topics, they are united by profound thematic connections centred on communication, ethics, and the search for authenticity and identity. The authors consistently demonstrate that genuine communication is far more than the mere exchange of information; rather, it constitutes a space of encounter with another human being. Such an encounter is possible only through authenticity—that is, the courage to be oneself, sincerity toward one's own convictions, and the willingness to express them while respecting the dignity and perspective of others. A person who knows and remains faithful to their identity can engage in dialogue founded on trust, responsibility, and mutual respect.

The search for one's identity is not a closed or finite process but a continual discovery of oneself through relationships with others. Awareness of one's values, experiences, and beliefs provides the inner coherence necessary for honest communication, free from manipulation and pretence. Only an authentic person is capable of genuine dialogue, for they do not regard conversation as a means of domination or personal gain, but rather as an opportunity for mutual understanding and the building of community.

The contributions to this issue also emphasise the ethical dimension of communication. Words carry responsibility: they can build relationships, strengthen a sense of security and dignity, yet they can also wound, exclude, and deprive individuals of their subjectivity. Ethical communication therefore requires not only truthfulness but also empathy, attentive listening, and respect for differing opinions and experiences. Understood in this way, dialogue becomes an expression of recognition of the inherent dignity of every person, regardless of their beliefs, background, or life circumstances.

Authentic communication fosters the holistic development of the human person. Through dialogue we cultivate critical thinking, assume responsibility for our words, and become open to perspectives different from our own. Conversation grounded in truth and mutual respect enables us not only to understand others more deeply but also to gain a richer understanding of ourselves. In this sense, communication becomes a means of both personal and social development, leading to the formation of mature relationships and conscious participation in community life.

Authenticity and a well-formed identity constitute the foundation of meaningful communication. Only dialogue rooted in truth, responsibility,

and mutual respect can safeguard human dignity while promoting human flourishing. In a world increasingly dominated by superficial and hurried forms of interaction, this message acquires particular relevance, reminding us that the essence of communication lies not merely in transmitting information but in building relationships based on trust, understanding, and respect for the other.

The opening article, *The law of the gift, the meaning of life and its communication* by Kathryn Rombs, seeks to answer several fundamental questions: What differentiates human communication from non-human communication? What guides the human use of communication? What ethical considerations pertain to communication, and how do we determine or evaluate its proper use? The author explores the metaphysical foundations of communication, tracing the development of philosophical thought from antiquity to the present day. She discusses Aristotle's understanding of communication as a means of discovering truth and experiencing wonder, as well as Thomas Aquinas's emphasis on honesty as the cornerstone of a virtuous society. The central focus of the article is the thought of St. John Paul II, who defines communication as a "gift of self," the only path to authentic human fulfilment. According to the Pope, genuine dialogue is grounded in love and unconditional respect for the dignity of the person, protecting us from reducing others to mere objects. The article offers a philosophical response to the challenges of the digital age by arguing that the meaning of human existence is found in community built upon truth. Within this perspective, communication ceases to be merely a tool for survival and becomes the key to authentic human flourishing.

The second article, *The authenticity of influencers in communicating values: An analysis of Instagram profiles* by Joanna Urbaś, examines how influencers' authenticity affects the effectiveness of communicating values on social media, with particular emphasis on Instagram. The author investigates how commercial collaborations shape online communication, demonstrating that sponsored content frequently shifts attention away from deeper values toward product information and functional benefits. By contrast, organic content more often promotes ethical and aesthetic values, as well as the category of "being," thereby strengthening the creator's credibility. The study combines content analysis with survey research, revealing growing audience scepticism regarding the sincerity of promotional activities. The findings suggest that authenticity has become a strategic marketing asset, although its excessive

instrumentalization may paradoxically create a sense of artificiality. Overall, the article highlights the importance of consistency between influencers' private and professional lives in fostering consumer trust.

The third contribution, *Ethics of transparency: Comparative analysis of corporate and independent foundations in Poland* by Dana Boretska, examines the ethics of transparency and communication models among Polish foundations by comparing corporate foundations with independent non-governmental organisations. The author highlights the dynamic growth of the foundation sector in Poland and examines how organisational ties to business or civil society influence reporting standards. The findings demonstrate that corporate foundations exhibit higher levels of formal transparency, largely due to their access to professional resources and reputational pressures associated with corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies. At the same time, the analysis suggests that although both types of organisations associate transparency with ethical conduct, their motivations differ, ranging from legitimacy-building to strengthening relationships with beneficiaries. The study emphasises that transparency has become a key factor in building public trust and advancing the professionalisation of the non-profit sector. It also introduces original research instruments, including the Transparency Index and the Ethical Orientation Index, designed to measure organisational reliability and ethical commitment.

The final article, *Paronomasia as an element of communication leading to the recovery of self-identity: A communicological-biblical study of Micah 1:10–16* by Joanna Nowińska, analyses paronomasia—a rhetorical device based on phonetic similarity—as a key communicative strategy in the Book of Micah. The author demonstrates that these sound-based wordplays originate in the oral tradition of ancient Israel and were intended to capture the audience's attention while strengthening the persuasive force of the prophetic message. Through a close reading of Micah 1:10–16, the article shows how literary associations between place names and their destinies confront the audience with its own moral failures. This interdisciplinary approach, combining biblical studies with communication research, reveals mechanisms through which the biblical text contributes to the restoration of both national and religious identity. Ultimately, paronomasia emerges not merely as a stylistic ornament but as a profound instrument of dialogue intended to foster inner transformation and the renewal of the human relationship with God.

On 20–21 May, Kraków hosted the 20th Jubilee Conference on Media Ethics, held under the theme The Value of the Media—Values in the Media. We warmly encourage our readers to explore the conference report included in this issue, documenting the most significant event organised by our research centre, which brought together scholars from across Poland.



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The law of the gift, the meaning of life and its communication

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Abstract

The law of the gift, the meaning of life and its communication

In our age of digital communication and social media, it can be instructive to ask what communication is at its foundations. What differentiates human communication from non-human communication? What guides the human use of communication? What ethical considerations pertain to communication and how do we determine or measure its use? This article is an inquiry into the metaphysical underpinnings of communication. It begins with Aristotle who (1) established the essential features of human communication and (2) offered that its greatest application is in the service of wonder and contemplation, which for Aristotle are the human being's highest, most "god-like" activity. Next the article looks to Thomas Aquinas who develops Aristotle's notion of communication as essential to human flourishing, emphasizing the cultivation of virtue. This reflection on Thomas Aquinas is a springboard to a final turn toward the personalist metaphysics of John Paul II, whose philosophical notion of the Law of the Gift gives fresh and penetrating insight into the truth about human communication, its purpose and its highest application. This article does not attempt to be exhaustive in its philosophical consideration of communication; rather its aim is to trace a line from Aristotle, arguably its greatest ancient proponent, through Aquinas, arguably its greatest medieval proponent, to John Paul II, whose insights into the nature of the human person provide the ground for one of the most fascinating contemporary reflections on the purpose and value of human interaction: its key role in human flourishing.

Keywords: communication, ethics, truth, love, meaning, gift, John Paul II

While the study of communication normally occurs in the context of the social sciences, it is also true that communication can be analyzed philosophically. In fact, philosophy's job is to shed light on the nature of things, and very little falls outside of its scope. Hence, we might take a moment to reflect philosophically on the very nature of communication and consider its metaphysical foundations. In so doing, the great insights of John Paul II will prove to be the most enriching and illuminating.

Method

Our method will be to sketch a philosophical line of reflection from Aristotle to Thomas Aquinas, both of whom are precursors to the penetrating thought of John Paul II. Aristotle will set the philosophical framework for how to analyze communication in terms of its nature. Aquinas will add features to the Aristotelian paradigm. Then John Paul II will both appropriate and, in an interesting way, overturn this rich philosophical heritage. His claims about the meaning of human life and human excellence being achieved most fully through making a sincere gift of self will give new insight into the purpose and value of human communication.

Aristotle on communication

We begin in the 4th century B.C., when Aristotle sets forth a philosophical consideration of the natures of different kinds of living beings. Aristotle contrasts sensate, non-rational animals with rational beings in terms of their communication (Aristotle, 1984a, III.3. 427b13, p. 680). Non-rational animals communicate mostly, according to Aristotle, in order to perpetuate the species—mating calls, signaling for food and the like. Human beings also communicate to help safeguard their survival—we use words to attract potential spouses, keep the spouses we have, help our children stay away from danger, to obtain and ration food, and so forth. But human beings can also communicate on a higher level. For Aristotle, it is not just a matter of degrees, as though we are more sophisticated in our speech than chimpanzees, but that we can do something that they just cannot do: we can apprehend and also disclose ‘truth’, truth *per se* (Aristotle, 1984a, III.5. 430a20–25, p. 684). We can share beautiful realities just for the sake of sharing them, just because they are beautiful. According to Aristotle, humans are oriented toward ‘wonder’ (Aristotle, 1984b, I.2. 982b12; 983a14, pp. 1554–1555). Wonder is not at the service of survival. It is not pragmatic or transactional. Wonder is, according to Aristotle, god-like (Aristotle, 1984b, XII.7. 1072b20–31, p. 1695). So, communication, for Aristotle, can be on the level of utility, getting what we want or need, but it can also be on the level of transcendence: revealing to one another the truths that are so beautiful, so good and so compelling that we share them out of the compunction to give others the intellectual

treasures, so to speak, that we are enjoying. Delight—when we communicate out of delight, we are communicating on this higher level that is qualitatively different than the level of utility or survival.

Thomas Aquinas on virtuous communication

Thomas Aquinas draws on the rich heritage of Aristotle as he crafts his own philosophical theology which includes insights into the nature of communication. Aquinas agrees with Aristotle about the above, and Aquinas ascribes human actions to two categories: those that are perfunctory or instinctual, such as scratching one's beard, versus those actions that engage the intellect and will. Those that engage the intellect and will are human acts as such (*actus humanus*). They are human actions properly speaking, as they are the ones in which we actualize our human potential and flourish as only humans can (Aquinas, 1948, I-II.1.1, p. 583). Just as we might hope that the sapling we planted in our garden grows into a blossoming cherry tree, and that the baby kitten we have taken in grows to be a soft, lovely cat who is not only nice to hold but also catches unwanted mice, human flourishing will pertain to human acts as such and involve maximizing our potential for knowledge, wisdom and understanding. It will also have bearing on actions that exercise virtue: kindness, magnanimity, prudence, justice, courage, and truthfulness (Aquinas, 1948, I-II.4.6, p. 607).

Communication fits within this framework in the thought of Thomas Aquinas. Words, he says, are signs of ideas, and ideas are images or similitudes of things in reality, and so words relate to the meaning of reality through the mode of intellectual conception (Aquinas, 1948, I.13.1, p. 60). Aquinas confirms Aristotle's view that the purpose of communication is to manifest one's interior grasp of things, ultimately seeking to manifest the truth. Hence communication is foundational for human acts as such, including knowledge, wisdom and understanding. The right use of truthful speech is critical for the survival of human beings and for social integration: "Since man is a social animal, one man naturally owes another whatever is necessary for the preservation of human society. Now it would be impossible for men to live together, unless they believed one another, as declaring truth to one another" (Aquinas, 1948, II-II.109.3, p. 1656).

Communication is not only about survival; it also pertains to moral life. Using words to convey the truth as well as one is able is virtuous, for Aquinas. It is the opportunity to exercise consistency and reasonableness, which involves moral beauty. Truthfulness is also one way to be just, and justice is a cardinal virtue that perfects one's character. Being truthful "makes its possessor good and renders his action good" (Aquinas, 1948, II-II.109.1, p. 1655). Conversely, lying is wrong: it is a deliberate choice to represent the truth falsely or with a distortion (Aquinas, 1948, II-II.110.3, p. 1660). For Aquinas, communication is not only fundamental to society, but it requires a virtuous application—both the individual and the culture are strengthened by a truthful, integrous use of all forms of communication.

John Paul II on dignifying communication

John Paul II understood the Aristotelian-Thomistic tradition well and appropriated it for himself. But as a philosopher in his own right, he added something new: self-disclosure out of love. How does the human being flourish? Not by building himself up, but by giving himself away. In his office as supreme pontiff he writes:

Being a person means striving towards self-realization which can only be achieved through a sincere gift of self. ... Man is called to exist for others, to become a gift (John Paul II, 1988, p. 28).

This can be called the Law of the Gift: the amazing fact of human nature, that self-realization or fulfillment can only happen, paradoxically, through a "sincere gift of self" (Second Vatican Council, 1965, § 24). It is an awe-inspiring, counter-intuitive feature of human nature, built into the metaphysical fabric of who we are, that instead of thriving by way of gaining goods and amassing fortunes for ourselves, rather than establishing our good name and even acquiring fame and honor, the surest way to genuine happiness is the kind of love through which we give ourselves away.

John Paul II identifies marriage as the proto-typical setting in which humans mutually give themselves, each to the other, but it is not the only one. Nevertheless, his message is consistent throughout his writings: *Find a way to make of your life a gift; that is the surest path to happiness.*

How do we make of ourselves a gift to someone else? Self-disclosure is a key feature (Wojtyła, 1993, p. 23). Communicating our interior lives, thoughts and feelings to our trusted companion is the basis of our gift of self, upon which we build through actions of humble, loving generosity.

The essence of John Paul II's vision of human communication is that we are to speak to others in a way that respects their inherent dignity. We are never to objectify the other person but always to treat them as a subject (Wojtyła, 1993, pp. 21–28). How easy it is to objectify others and allow ourselves to be objectified in today's world of social media and digital networking. But John Paul II wrote that we are never to treat others merely as a means to an end, but as an end in itself (Wojtyła, 1993, pp. 21–28). As a survivor of World War II and a witness to the atrocities of human objectification in its cruelest forms, the cornerstone of John Paul II's ethics for human communication is respect. Each person has an inherent dignity, he believed, and it is of paramount importance to maintain that dignity, even when we are doing transactional business and even when we disagree. Whether we are speaking to a stranger, or to our spouse, parent or child, we should never treat others as mere tools or ways to get what we want. The need to communicate entails an obligation to communicate with mutual respect.

So many people are restless, seeking a path that makes sense of and helps us cope with the vicissitudes of life. In *Fides et ratio* no. 1 he writes:

A cursory glance at ancient history shows clearly how in different parts of the world, with their different cultures, there arise at the same time the fundamental questions which pervade human life: *Who am I? Where have I come from and where am I going? Why is there evil? What is there after this life?* These are the questions ... which have their common source in the quest for meaning which has always compelled the human heart. In fact, the answer given to these questions decides the direction which people seek to give to their lives.

John Paul II posits that the quest for meaning is fundamental to human existence, that searching for meaning is essential to what it is to be human. He says in *Redemptor hominis* no. 10:

Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it.

He and other Fathers of the Second Vatican Council tie this quest for meaning and sense with the notion of human progress:

Man's social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advance of society itself hinge on one another. For the beginning, the subject and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person which for its part and by its very nature stands completely in need of social life. Since this social life is not something added on to man, through his dealings with others, through reciprocal duties, and through fraternal dialogue he develops all his gifts and is able to rise to his destiny (*Gaudium et spes*, 1965, § 25).

Human beings are not isolated in their quest for meaning. Rather, we are social creatures who cannot flourish without communion, community, society and relationship. What is the basis of this matrix of interaction? "Fraternal dialogue." Communication.

Conclusions

In sum, then, from a philosophical perspective, how might we approach the questions, "What is communication?" and "What guides an ethical use of communication?" John Paul II agrees with both Aristotle and Aquinas that a link exists between communication and the achievement of human greatness. Communication is self-disclosing interaction with another, and can have as its purpose survival, practical ends and social engagement. All three thinkers see communication as correlated to reality and believe that truthfulness is essential to a right use of it. Yet with John Paul II we see an innovation. One use of communication, John Paul II says, is self-disclosure done in the mode of love, with a view to making a sincere gift of self to someone else. This kind of communication gets to the heart of what is most fundamental about the human person, namely that meaning is found in love. This feature sets humans apart from other species of living things and is what is greatest about them. The way to the greatest happiness of human beings is through making a sincere gift of self to another, and self-disclosure is key to this process. As we advance in global communications, social networks, and digital platforms, John Paul II's message is to take care not to objectify one another. People are not mere means to an end: they are subjects in their own

right and are worthy of love. Communication throughout our culture, even when it is pragmatic in nature, is ethical when it aligns with the human path to flourishing: the pursuit of wisdom which culminates in self-donating love.

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The authenticity of influencers in communicating values. An analysis of Instagram profiles

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Abstract

The authenticity of influencers in communicating values. An analysis of Instagram profiles

This article addresses the relationship between influencers' authenticity and their communication of values on social media. Authenticity, as one of the factors contributing to effectiveness, is understood in indexical terms as the consistency of actions with the influencer's identity and internal motivations, whilst taking into account its potentially performative and market-driven nature. The aim of the research was to determine how commercial collaboration affects the communication of values, how audiences assess influencers' authenticity, and how authenticity functions as a communication strategy. A content analysis was carried out on posts and stories (Instagram Stories) published on the Instagram platform by 20 influencers. The study was supplemented by a survey of 151 audience members. The results indicate that commercial collaboration influences the axiological dimension of messages—cognitive values dominate in promotional posts and Stories, and there is a greater absence of references to fundamental values, whilst non-commercial content favours the communication of hedonistic, aesthetic, vital and moral values, as well as the 'being' category. The survey reveals the audience's ambivalence towards the authenticity of influencers and a tendency to perceive social engagement as selective and potentially instrumental.

Keywords: influencer marketing, authenticity, values, axiology of communication, image

Influencer marketing is a marketing strategy in which authenticity is one of the most important factors in its effectiveness. In other words, an effective influencer is an authentic influencer. This article analyses the issue of authenticity in relation to influencers' communication of various values on social media. It is precisely the consistency between an influencer's values and their communication of them that serves as one of the criteria by which audiences assess authenticity.

The word 'authenticity' derives from the Greek word *authentikos* ('original', 'true'), meaning conformity with reality. The term *authentēs*, in turn, referred to 'perpetrators'—people who exercised power over themselves and others, as well as criminals, murderers and suicides (Hellich, 2020, pp. 79–91). Another concept relevant to the subject of this article is that of an influencer, who will be understood as 'a person who has an above-average influence on other people and the decisions they make'. An influencer is active on social media

platforms. Their community centres around a specific topic about which they are passionate. What counts is recognition, having an audience and influencing their decisions” (Stopczyńska, 2021, p. 140). Influencer marketing, in turn, is “a field of marketing based on the recognition and standing of those involved in promotion. An influencer may be a blogger, a vlogger, the owner of a popular social media account, or an expert in a given field sharing their opinion online” (White Press).

Influencers’ communications are therefore promotional and marketing in nature, but they also serve as a space for embedding values that effectively influence the audience. Value is understood here as: “any material or immaterial object, idea or institution, real or imaginary, towards which individuals or groups adopt an attitude of respect, attribute an important role in life to it, and feel compelled to strive to attain it” (Szczepański, 1972, pp. 97–98). The values communicated by influencers can serve as a point of reference for audiences when interpreting messages and assessing their sincerity. Authenticity is also closely linked to the value of truth. “Authenticity is the truth about a person in the sense of who they are in life and how they live; it is therefore the truth about a person who is actively experiencing and acting, and who chooses a course of action” (Raszkiewicz, 2018, pp. 39–61).

What, then, is the role of authenticity in influencer marketing, and what characteristics will an influencer considered to be authentic possess? The authors of the article ‘The persuasive power of social media influencers in brand credibility and purchase intention’ point to a key sociological definition, whereby a person experiences authenticity when they are true to themselves, and they expand on this idea in relation to social media research, where the foundation is the authenticity of one’s personality. “Followers perceive the passion and sincerity of influencers in content creation, as well as the strength of their internal intentions. [...] Influencers who create content driven by internal motivations, as opposed to those motivated by external or commercial incentives, are considered authentic” (Liu & Zheng, 2024). The literature indicates that the perceived authenticity of influencers depends particularly on their uniqueness (perceived originality in terms of independence, creativity and individuality) and consistency (true to themselves, perceived perseverance in striving for change). Research has also shown that influencers perceived as authentic have a stronger impact on purchase intent; however, authenticity does not influence non-purchase-related behaviour. Instead, it serves as an indicator of credibility and a signal that inspires trust.

Consumers want to learn from influencers who are not only authentic but also truthful (Andonopoulos, Lee, & Mathie, 2023; Balaji, Jiang, & Jha, 2021, pp. 293–304).

Grayson and Martinec distinguish between two types of authenticity—indexical (which describes something that is not considered a copy or imitation) and iconic (used to assess whether the physical appearance of an object resembles something stereotypical). In this article, authenticity will be viewed from an indexical perspective—a person perceived as authentic will undertake actions that reflect who they really are. A person is considered inauthentic, on the other hand, if their actions are seen as motivated by the fulfilment of social norms or commercial objectives (Zniv, Weitzl, & Lindmoser, 2023, pp. 1485–1514). Influencers' motivations for creating content can be internal (passion, self-development, identity-building, altruism, the need for artistic expression, the desire to challenge stereotypes or to find an escape from everyday life) and external (social—forming bonds with others; economic—material gain and the need for approval) (Urbaś, 2024, doctoral thesis). Motivations, in turn, are closely linked to values. Understood in the spirit of personalist ethics, they constitute a form of reasoning that influences a person and their personal choices (Drożdż, 2019, p. 104).

Given that authenticity is one of the factors contributing to marketing effectiveness, it is also worth noting that authenticity sometimes takes on performative characteristics; it is embedded in market reality and relies on the ability to present oneself, build a 'personal brand' and respond to market demands. Thus, authenticity becomes a product in its own right and is sometimes used as a strategy in image communication. This also involves a paradox, whereby the very efforts to be authentic can reduce the chances of actually achieving authenticity.

Research methodology

The aim of this article is to demonstrate the relationship between influencers' authenticity and their communication of values. The research questions are: (1) Does commercial collaboration change the way influencers communicate values? (2) Do audiences perceive influencers' communication of values as authentic? (3) How do influencers use authenticity as a communication strategy?

The method used was primarily content analysis, defined as “a research technique aimed at providing an objective, systematic and quantitative description of the explicit content of communication” (Berelson, 1952, in: Lisowska-Magdziarz, 2004, p. 13). For the study, based on a comparison of two popularity rankings published in 2021 for the year 2020, 20 influencers were selected from five categories, determined on the basis of a typology based on motivation. The corpus consists of content published on Instagram: 1,704 Instagram Stories from 1–7 August 2022 and 103 feed posts from 1–7 August 2022 and 1–7 August 2023.

The categorisation framework for the entire study comprised eight categories;¹ however, those relevant to this article, in the case of posts, are:

- commercial nature (unsponsored post, sponsored post, sponsored post in the form of a simple product demonstration, sponsored post in the form of a competition for the audience, sponsored post incorporating storytelling, sponsored post as part of a social campaign),
- quality of the communicated value² : (transcendent value, aesthetic value, moral value, cognitive value, vital value, hedonistic value—psychological and physiological sensations),
- reference to fundamental values³ (being, having, love, dignity, truth, freedom, responsibility, justice, no reference to fundamental values).

In the case of Instagram Stories: commercial nature (commercial message, non-commercial message—lack of advertising labelling) and, as with posts, the quality of the communicated value and reference to fundamental values.

The values were operationalised on the basis of the Thesaurus—using this, synonyms, related values and contexts were identified for each value, which were treated as indicators during the research.⁴ In the coding procedure, the author paid particular attention to the keywords used by influencers and their behaviours evident in the analysed messages, drawing on concepts of

1 The research described in this article was conducted for the purposes of the doctoral thesis *Promocyjno-marketingowa rola influencerów w komunikowaniu wartości i idei w mediach społecznościowych. Studium analityczno-badawcze profili na Instagramie* [The promotional and marketing role of influencers in communicating values and ideas on social media. An analytical and research study of Instagram profiles] defended at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow in 2024.

2 Based on Jadwiga Puzynina's typology. See Bulisz, 2014, p. 73.

3 The basic dichotomy according to Erich Fromm and the values based on the work of Michał Drożdż.

4 Online Dictionary of synonyms of the Polish language, entries: love, dignity, truth, freedom, justice, responsibility, <http://www.synonimy.net/> (access: 26.02.2024).

influence which assume that every behaviour has one or more values as its causal factor, or at least part of such a factor (Kloska, 1982, p. 121) .

Among the limitations of the study, it is worth noting the inability to interpret the actual values held by the influencers. The author focuses on values that are declared and those inferred from verbal and non-verbal behaviour. For a comprehensive interpretation of the authenticity of the influencers studied, it would be necessary to take into account the context of their entire activity, not just a short period. However, this goes beyond the scope of this article.

Research findings—content analysis

The results of the content analysis indicate that commercial collaboration alters, to some extent, the way in which influencers communicate values (Table 1) and this may also have implications for their authenticity.

Table 1. Commercial nature of posts versus the quality of the values communicated

Values	Non-sponsored post	Sponsored post with storytelling	Sponsored post in the form of a competition for followers	Sponsored post in the form of a simple product demonstration	Sponsored post
Cognitive value	5	7	0	1	8
Ethical value	26	1	1	1	3
Hedonic value	32	1	0	3	4
Transcendental value	1	0	0	0	0
Vitality value	10	2	0	0	2
Aesthetic value	13	1	0	0	1

Source: own analysis.

In non-sponsored posts, hedonistic value is most frequently communicated, whilst in sponsored posts, it is cognitive value. This shows that, on the one hand, advertising posts are increasingly conveying a value other than merely hedonistic; on the other hand, however, the reason for this may be an attempt to exploit these values for commercial purposes. Through its cognitive—informational—layer, the post is intended to encourage recipients to make a purchase, highlighting not only the pleasure associated with the advertised brand or product but also specific benefits. However, an excessive focus on highlighting the features of products or services, their functionality and the benefits they offer—even in an educational context—brings the format closer to traditional advertising. In such a situation, depending on the context of the influencer's previous content, their experience and knowledge, this may either enhance or diminish their authenticity. So, if a content creator who usually posts content centred on humour, fun and irony attempts, in isolated instances unrelated to their previous activities, to present themselves as an expert, their audience may perceive this as inauthentic. If, on the other hand, the products are carefully selected and the information conveyed about them is consistent with their existing image, this will reinforce their image as someone who knows what they are talking about, and is therefore authentic.

In sponsored posts, it is striking how rarely transcendent, vital and ethical values are communicated—influencers seldom use such collaborations to express them. Commercial messages therefore seem to convey a narrower spectrum of values.

In both commercial and non-commercial posts, love is the most frequently communicated core value. It appears in a wide variety of contexts—both as emotional attachment to people and as affection for objects or places.

The value 'be' appears more frequently in non-sponsored posts than in sponsored ones (47 to 13). However, the sample of sponsored posts is small, so the result offers limited scope for interpretation, similarly to the value "to have". The same applies to 'love' (22). Content relating to relationships and emotions is therefore more closely associated with organic content. Surprisingly, this also applies to messages related to possession, which intuitively might be expected to be more closely linked to advertisements.

Table 2. Commercial nature of posts versus core values

Values	Spon- sored post	Non-spon- sored post	Sponsored post with storytelling	Sponsored post in the form of a competi- tion for the audience	Sponsored post in the form of a sim- ple product demonstra- tion
Freedom	0	6	0	0	0
No reference to core values	14	51	11	0	3
To be	13	47	11	0	2
Love	3	22	2	0	1
Dignity	0	2	0	0	0
Responsibility	2	2	1	1	0
Justice	1	1	1	0	0
To have	6	38	1	1	4
True	0	2	0	0	0

Source: own analysis.

Cognitive values (knowledge, information, benefits and product features) predominate in sponsored posts, whilst hedonistic values (pleasure, emotions, depictions of everyday life) predominate in non-sponsored posts. This may suggest that in advertisements, influencers opt for more neutral, product-focused content and avoid referring to moral standards or greater emotionality.

In the case of Instagram Stories (Table 3), hedonistic values are present to a very similar extent in both types of content (46 stories from all 104 stories with commercial message in percentage terms is 44% and 679 with non-commercial message from all 1594 stories gives 42%). This means that, unlike posts, advertisements here rely to a greater extent on pleasure. However, these differences are minor. As with posts, cognitive values are more common in commercial content (39 from all 104, what gives 37.5% for commercial, and 536 form al 1594 what gives 33.6% non-commercial).

Table 3. Commerciality of Instagram Stories versus the quality of the values communicated

Values	Commercial message	Non-commercial message; no advertising label
Hedonistic value	46	679
Transcendent value	0	10
Moral value	8	76
Aesthetic value	8	200
Cognitive value	39	536
Vital value	4	95

Source: own analysis.

The low proportion of transcendent values is striking—only 10 appeared in non-commercial content, and not a single one in adverts. These values are therefore not used in commercial contexts, but they did not appear in Stories on other topics either. This may indicate not only specific choices made by influencers, but also the affordances of Instagram itself, where short, visual formats dominate, and values requiring reflection and deeper narrative are more difficult to communicate. It may also influence the perception of creators' authenticity, regardless of their intentions.

In both types of Stories, the majority of content was classified under the category 'no reference to core values' (commercial—92.4%, non-commercial—90.5%). This aligns with the analysis of the nature of values, which revealed a dominance of hedonistic and cognitive values. This can be linked to the fact that Instagram Stories serve as a form of communication focused on everyday activities and products, rather than on deeper meanings. It is also worth noting that unambiguous messages about moral, ethical or transcendent values have great potential to polarise the audience, which creators consciously seek to avoid by focusing on more neutral content so as not to lose some of their followers. At the same time, such caution will be viewed negatively by some audiences—distancing oneself from, for example, statements on important social issues is often criticised in comments, sparks much debate and undermines perceptions of authenticity. This is because it is precisely those brands and individuals who 'swim against the tide' who are perceived

as intrinsically motivated and therefore authentic, as their uniqueness is defined by independence and individuality (Zniv, Weitzl, & Lindmoser, 2023).

Table 4. The commercial nature of Instagram Stories and references to core values

Values	Commercial message	Non-commercial message; no advertising label
To be	20	737
To have	85	861
Love	7	81
Dignity	0	15
Truth	0	12
Freedom	0	18
Responsibility	1	20
Justice	0	6
No reference to core values	97	1446

Source: own research.

A significant difference emerges in the ‘being’ category, where 19% of commercial posts referred to it, compared with as many as 46.1% of non-commercial posts. ‘Having’, on the other hand, accounted for 81% of commercial posts and 53.9% of non-commercial posts.

To summarise the analysis of both Instagram Stories and feed posts, it is worth noting that non-commercial content features a high proportion of aesthetic, vital, moral and hedonistic values, as well as the ‘being’ category, whilst commercial content emphasises cognitive values and the ‘having’ category. Influencers’ portrayal of their everyday lives, relationships and emotions forms the basis of authenticity, and it is non-commercial posts in particular that provide this opportunity. Commercial content appears to alter the nature of the message, shifting the emphasis from the emotional to the informational. It makes the content more professional, which may result in it being perceived as less natural. Furthermore, the range of values

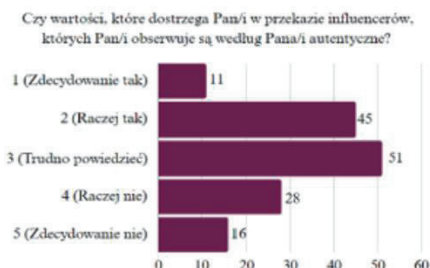
communicated is narrower, and expression may be restricted, which can also diminish the impression of authenticity among the audience. Although the literature suggests that consumers do not expect influencers to avoid commercial collaborations, in particular appreciate those who approach such partnerships with caution. It is also important to create content in such a way that certain products appear in posts about everyday life, even outside of advertising campaigns. For consumers, this serves as evidence of the influencer's intrinsic motivations and the sincerity of their opinions, as well as proof that the advertising reflects their genuine beliefs and values (Duffek, Eisingerich, Merlo, & Lee, 2025, pp. 21–46).

Influencers build a sense of authenticity by documenting their everyday lives. The 'Stories' format on Instagram is particularly conducive to spontaneous posts. Authenticity can also be used instrumentally and, to some extent, strategically—influencers realise that portraying a perfect life no longer yields the desired results, so they will strive to show imperfect moments, which may also be part of a script. At the same time, however, the audience's awareness of superficial authenticity is growing—younger groups are already sensitive to it, and as many as 37% of women and 31% of men do not believe in slogans such as 'you are beautiful just as you are' (Mizierska, 2025).

Research findings—survey

The content analysis described above was supplemented by a survey of influencers' audiences. This provides insight into the audience's perspective and allows us to examine how they perceive the authenticity of influencers when communicating values. A total of 151 respondents completed the questionnaire. It was shared on social media, particularly in thematic groups for people interested in social media and influencers, between 7 June and 27 July 2023, using the snowball sampling method. Social media users were evaluating the authenticity of influencers generally as a group of online creators, not only audiences of 20 influencers whose activity was the subject of the content analysis.

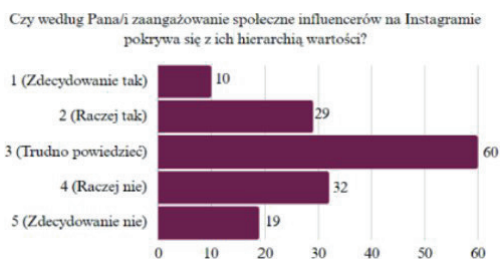
Figure 1. Authenticity of values perceived by audiences in influencers' messages



Source: own research.

Most respondents selected the most balanced response (Fig. 1), but when the responses closer to 'definitely yes' (11 + 45) and those closer to 'definitely no' (28 + 16) are totalled, it appears that a greater number of respondents consider the values conveyed by influencers to be authentic.

Figure 2. Correlation between influencers' value hierarchies and their social engagement, according to respondents



Source: own research.

Similarly, in the question assessing the correlation between influencers' value hierarchy (Fig. 2) and their social engagement, there is a tendency to select the most balanced response (60 responses); however, when the responses close to 'definitely yes' and 'definitely no' are combined, it is noticeable that more respondents (51 in total) assess influencers' social engagement without reference to their hierarchy of values, whilst 39 of them believe that the two

overlap. This can be interpreted as an indication of perceived selectivity in the communication of values and the perception of pro-social actions as the instrumental use of values as an image-building strategy.

What accounts for this ambivalence and the audience's difficulty in unequivocally assessing the authenticity of the communicated values? This may be linked to the very high proportion of the 'no reference to core values' category in influencers' messages—consistent, more axiologically profound messages would allow for a more unequivocal assessment. On the other hand, the survey results suggest that authenticity is not a clear-cut trait, but rather a whole spectrum of behaviours and the possibility for an influencer to be more or less authentic depending on the context, topic or form of communication.

Summary

Influencers' authenticity is closely linked to the values they communicate. Consistency between their statements and their observed behaviour (including engaging in commercial collaborations), the integrity of their attitudes over time, and the originality of their message are important criteria in how audiences assess authenticity.

Content analysis has shown that advertising content resulting from influencers' collaborations with brands, or self-promotional content from their own brands, alters the axiological dimension. As for the quality of the values communicated, cognitive values dominate here and are also characterised by a frequent lack of reference to fundamental values. Informative content, rich in knowledge—for example, about products—may be perceived as more formalised and less authentic. Non-commercial content, on the other hand, tends to promote hedonistic, aesthetic, vital and moral values, and more frequently refers to the 'being' category. It therefore seems to serve more effectively in building authenticity, understood as the consistency between an influencer's messages and their identity.

Instagram Stories, as an ephemeral format focused on immediacy and showcasing everyday life, contains few references to fundamental values, which may stem, amongst other things, from the difficulty in communicating values that require longer reflection and analysis.

The authenticity of influencers in communicating values is inextricably linked to the way in which they portray everyday life, because communicating values is not merely about declaring them but also about consistently conveying them through various behaviours—spontaneous content, emotions, relationships and knowledge. Authenticity is not a trait that can be unequivocally and definitively attributed to influencers, but rather a process dependent on many contexts.

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Ethics of transparency: comparative analysis of corporate and independent foundations in Poland

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Abstract

Ethics of transparency: comparative analysis of corporate and independent foundations in Poland

This article analyzes the differences in the level of transparency and the relationship between transparency and ethical orientation in corporate and independent foundations in Poland. Despite the discussions presented in this study and the literature review, the results of the study indicate that corporate foundations are characterized by a higher level of formal transparency than their independent counterparts, which is related to access to organizational resources and the use of formalized management practices. At the same time, it has been shown that the relationship between transparency and ethical orientation varies depending on the type of foundation, suggesting different functions of transparency in corporate and independent organizations. The results obtained indicate the need for cautious interpretation of the mechanisms underlying the observed relationships and the validity of further qualitative research on institutional motivations in the non-profit sector.

Keywords: non-governmental organizations, corporate foundations, NGO, independent foundations, non-profit

The steady growth in the number of non-governmental organizations is leading to an increase in donor requirements, and the growth in the number of non-governmental foundations raises the question of which of these forms of organization is more effective and transparent (Charycka et al., 2025).

As of 2024–2025, according to data from registers and reports published on NGO.pl, at the end of 2024 there were 161,000 non-governmental organizations registered, including 117,000 associations and 44,000 foundations (data according to the REGON register, as of December 31, 2024). Volunteer fire departments (OSP), of which there are almost 17,000, also have the legal form of associations.

In Poland, non-governmental organizations have the status of foundations and associations. Associations are democratic organizations based on membership and active involvement of members, voluntary, permanent associations of natural or legal persons that pursue common non-profit goals, most often social, cultural, or educational. Foundations, on the other hand, have a more hierarchical structure, with clearly defined assets allocated for statutory purposes, and do not operate through a collective of members.

A foundation is an organization established by a founder to achieve specific goals. In practice, foundations tend to focus on charitable and social activities supported by the founder's assets, while associations promote more collective and diverse civic initiatives (NGO.pl, 2020).

However, when we look at newly established organizations, we can see that the growth rate of new foundations has been very high for several years. Poles are increasingly willing to set up foundations rather than associations. In 2024, 7,200 new organizations were registered, including 3,700 associations and 3,500 foundations. In 2014, twice as many associations were established as foundations, and in 2008, the difference was fivefold (NGO.pl, 2025).

Corporate foundations are increasingly being researched and discussed in Poland. Nowadays, the growth of such organizations in larger forms is referred to as a trend towards the increasing role of corporate social responsibility and the growing awareness of companies of the need for social and charitable activities through their own foundations. In the last decade, the number of corporate foundations in Poland has almost doubled. A particularly noticeable increase has been recorded in the last 5–7 years, linked to the growing interest of companies in supporting local communities, the environment, and education through their own foundations. A report prepared by the Forum Darczyńców [Donors Forum] on corporate foundations in Poland for 2023 shows that there were approximately 220 active corporate foundations in Poland, which is a significant increase compared to previous years, when the number was closer to 100–120 (Forum Darczyńców, 2023).

The growth of corporate foundations reflects the CSR trend: over the decade, their number has almost doubled, reaching 219 active foundations in 2023 (up from 100–120 ten years earlier), driven by companies' awareness of the need for strategic philanthropy and support for local communities (Forum Darczyńców, 2023). The Forum Darczyńców report highlights their role in ESG implementation and business reputation building, which justifies analyzing their transparency in comparison with independent NGOs.

Deborah Rhode and Amanda Packel (2009), in their article “Ethics and Nonprofits” emphasize that “transparency is not an optional add-on for nonprofits; it is a core ethical duty that underpins public trust and organizational legitimacy.”

Transparent impact reporting is not merely a formal obligation; it demonstrates a genuine dedication to integrity, accountability, and ongoing improvement (Sopact, 2026). Examining this trend reveals a range of approaches and

tools that enable nonprofit organizations to present their results in a clear and accessible way, thereby strengthening trust with donors and reinforcing their commitment to ethical and transparent conduct.

In operational terms, transparent impact reporting requires nonprofits to systematically record and communicate how donated resources are allocated and what measurable outcomes they generate. For example, an organization may release an annual impact report that includes comprehensive data, illustrative case studies, and visual materials documenting achieved results. They can also employ infographics to show how funds are distributed or develop interactive digital platforms that allow donors to monitor the advancement of specific initiatives in real time (Sopact, 2026). Moreover, organizations may organize online or in-person meetings where beneficiaries share personal experiences of how contributions have affected their lives. Such practices ensure that donors are not only informed but also actively engaged, fostering a stronger connection with the real-world effects of their support.

In Poland, corporate foundations constitute a specific and dynamically developing part of the non-governmental sector, distinguished in terms of resources, mode of operation, and links with business founders. On the other hand, independent NGOs differ in their operating models, organizational structures, and forms of financing. Although both types of organizations pursue social goals, there is a lack of comprehensive research comparing their practices, including standards of transparency, stakeholder communication, and ethical management.

Previous reports, such as the research conducted by the Klon/Jawor Association for the Forum Darczyńców, focus mainly on corporate foundations, while broader analyses of the NGO sector tend to treat these organizations collectively, without distinguishing between their subtypes. The lack of such comparisons makes it difficult to assess whether and to what extent corporate foundations stand out in terms of transparency and ethics compared to independent NGOs.

There are insufficient systematic comparisons of the level of transparency, quality of communication, and ethical practices between corporate foundations and independent NGOs in Poland, which makes it difficult to develop recommendations tailored to the specific characteristics of these two groups of organizations.

This article presents the dimensions of transparency ethics and examines transparency and ethical orientation in the communication of activities in

corporate and non-governmental foundations, taking into account sociological, technological, and legal perspectives (Burchell & Rettie, 2015). The study presented in this paper compares the ethical challenges associated with communicating results in both corporate and non-governmental foundations.

This article aims to provide a comparative assessment of the ethical transparency of communication and reporting in corporate foundations and independent foundations operating in Poland. The starting point is the assumption that transparency is no longer solely an ethical obligation of NGOs, but has become a measurable element of accountability and legitimacy, shaped by stakeholder pressure, self-regulation standards, and CSR practices in the corporate sector. In our view, transparency is not limited to financial disclosure, but encompasses a broad set of practices for disclosing financial, organizational, and communication information that can be captured in the form of research indices.

The article begins with a review of the development of transparency standards and expectations in Polish non-governmental organizations and corporate foundations, drawing on literature on ethics in nonprofits, accountability, legitimacy, and stakeholders' perceptions of transparency as a sign of trustworthiness and credibility. It then presents the theoretical framework, based on stakeholder theory and CSR, to explain differences between corporate and independent foundations in terms of funding, ties to founders, autonomy, and responsibility toward the surrounding environment. The next part describes the research design, including the sample of 127 foundations registered in Poland, the data sources used, and the manual coding of 14 indicators of ethical transparency. The study is cross-sectional and uses two indices, the Transparency Index and the Ethical Orientation Index, to compare the level of information disclosure and the normative orientation toward ethical values. The article concludes with a discussion of the key results, their theoretical and practical implications, and an indication of the study's limitations and directions for further research.

Theoretical background and literature review

The Enron and WorldCom corporate scandals in the early 21st century tightened global financial reporting and corporate governance standards, which quickly spread to the non-profit sector. Transparency ceased to be merely

a good practice and became an ethical obligation to disclose goals, methods, results, and risks without manipulation (Rhode & Packel, 2009). Research by Behn and Smith (2010) empirically confirms its instrumental value: greater financial transparency increases donations, strengthening donor confidence.

In the following decade, transparency evolved into a key element of accountability. Non-governmental organizations introduced self-regulation systems, codes of ethics, and ratings (Charity Navigator, GuideStar) to measure the quality of reporting (Chêne, 2013). Chêne (2013) defines it as the obligation to report accurately on mission, governance, finances, and the effects of activities to stakeholders, while Thrandardottir (2012) emphasizes its role in the political legitimacy of NGOs through the “expressed consent” of audiences.

Stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984) explains transparency as a mechanism for relations with multiple groups in the environment, from donors (expecting impact reporting) to beneficiaries (requiring access criteria) and local communities (demanding dialogue). Genoud and Vignau (2017) empirically demonstrate that stakeholder pressure increases transparency by 25–30%, which in Poland justifies the differences between corporate (business-related) and independent (beneficiary-oriented) foundations.

The concept of Corporate Social Responsibility (Carroll, 1991) explains the higher transparency of corporate foundations as a tool for social responsibility. They achieve this through self-regulation: codes of ethics, ESG/GRI standards, audits, conflict of interest procedures, and impact reports (Forum Darczyńców, 2015/2023; GRI, 2021; Bethmann & Schnurbein, 2008). In Poland, the Forum Darczyńców acts as the institutional coordinator of standards, publishing the document “Standards for the operation of corporate foundations” (Forum Darczyńców, 2015/2023), which sets out detailed requirements for financial transparency, communication with stakeholders, management ethics, and annual reporting. At the European level, the European Foundation Centre promotes self-regulation as an effective tool for strengthening the credibility of foundations, pointing out that voluntary standards often lead to a higher level of transparency than statutory regulations (EFC, 2020). This type of normative and reputational pressure has a particularly strong impact on corporate foundations, which operate in close proximity to commercial brands.

However, there is relatively little research in the international literature that directly compares corporate and independent foundations. Rey-García

et al. (2017), analyzing foundations in Spain, show that corporate foundations are characterized by a higher level of formalization of governance and reporting procedures, resulting from CSR and reputational pressure, while at the same time having less strategic autonomy and greater susceptibility to conflicts of interest. In turn, research by Koushyar, Longhofer, and Roberts (2015) on a large sample of American foundations indicates that transparency is systemic: larger and better-funded organizations publish more detailed reports, while smaller entities limit themselves to the minimum required by law.

In the Polish context, industry studies and reports emphasize the dual role of corporate foundations as “social antennas” for their parent companies and as tools of strategic philanthropy, serving to achieve CSR goals and build the company’s reputation (Forum Darczyńców, 2023). At the same time, their strong dependence on the control of the corporate founder is pointed out, which raises questions about their actual decision-making autonomy and ethical orientation (Forum Darczyńców, 2015/2023). The document Standards of Operation for Corporate Foundations suggests that these foundations are subject to higher formal disclosure requirements than traditional NGOs, which indicates their advantage in terms of formalized transparency, but does not determine the depth of their ethical responsibility.

In summary, the literature review indicates that corporate foundations demonstrate a higher level of formal transparency, resulting from business pressure, CSR standards, and self-regulation mechanisms, while independent foundations may surpass them in terms of relational and normative ethical orientation related to dialogue with beneficiaries and local communities. The limited number of comparative studies and the lack of analysis of the relationship between transparency and ethical orientation in the Polish empirical context justify the need for further quantitative and qualitative research.

Based on this, the following research hypotheses were formulated, which form the basis for the comparative analysis:

- H1: Corporate foundations in Poland are characterized by a higher level of formal transparency than independent foundations.
- H2: The relationship between transparency (TI) and ethical orientation (EOI) differs between corporate foundations and independent foundations.

Methodology

The study is based on a cross-sectional data set covering foundations divided into corporate foundations and independent foundations (NGOs).

The study was conducted on a sample of 127 organizations registered and operating in Poland. Organizations that did not have websites or had outdated data were then rejected.

A total of 89 organizations from the national register were selected for the sample: 44 corporate organizations and 45 independent organizations. The data sources were the organizations' official websites, published annual reports and financial statements, and manually coded indicators of ethical practices and transparency, totaling 14 indicators.

The indicators were selected and operationalized based on international and Polish standards for non-governmental organizations (Accountable Now, 2020; Forum Darczyńców, 2015/2023; Ethical Codes of Humanitarian Aid Organizations—The Sphere Association, 2018). The 5-point coding (1–5) reflects the degree to which the criterion is met based on an analysis of documents on the organizations' websites.

EOI indicators (1–7): ethical/normative orientation

1. Ethical Code CSR Policy
2. Whistleblowing mechanism
3. Protection of vulnerable groups
4. Relations with Beneficiaries
5. Support Policy and Procedures
6. External Relations
7. Evaluation of effects

TI indicators (8–14): formal transparency:

8. Publication of the annual substantive report for 2024
9. Publication of the financial report for 2024
10. Availability of archived reports
11. Publication of the administrative cost structure
12. Donation acceptance policy
13. Mission Statement and Strategic Goals mission alignment
14. Governance independence and supervision

Based on a review of empirical literature on measuring transparency and ethical orientation in non-governmental organizations, this study introduces two original composite indices: the Transparency Index (TI) and the Ethical

Orientation Index (EOI). These indices enable the operationalization of theoretical constructs in a way that allows for comparisons between corporate and independent foundations. The TI measures the formal level of information disclosure, adapting approaches from research on disclosure indices for NGO projects (Cabedo et al., 2017), while the EOI captures the normative nature of transparency (drawing on the conceptualization of ethical orientation in organizational decisions (Fink et al., 2023).

The Transparency Index (TI) is a composite measure of multidimensional transparency, aggregating data on the availability and quality of disclosed information in three dimensions: technical (governance structure, statutes, management), financial (sources of revenue, expenditures, reports), and scope of activities (projects, impact reports, stakeholder communication). The methodology draws on the disclosure index for NGO projects, which codes information about activities according to criteria of completeness, accessibility, and verifiability (Cabedo et al., 2017), and on the T-Index, which measures de facto transparency by aggregating standardized indicators (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2022). The Ethical Orientation Index (EOI) measures whether transparency serves normative accountability goals (towards beneficiaries and society) or instrumental ones (reputational legitimacy). The construct adapts the operationalization of ethical orientation from research on deontological vs. consequentialist decision logic (Fink et al., 2023), where normative positions (e.g., dialogue with beneficiaries, social impact reports) are summed, and instrumental ones (e.g., reports to shareholders, corporate PR) are reversed and subtracted. Indicators coded from organizational documents (mission, ethical policies, CSR reports) are standardized and aggregated to a scale of 0–100, with higher scores indicating a stronger normative orientation. This approach is in line with Accountability Now frameworks measuring the ethical accountability of NGOs (Accountable Now, 2020).

The TI and EOI indices were constructed on a sample of 89 organizations, divided into corporate (44 organizations) and independent (45 organizations), which allows for comparative and regression analysis. Validation includes reliability tests (Cronbach's α), convergent validity (correlations with external ratings), and discriminant validity (differences between groups). The methodology combines qualitative quantification with practices from the literature (Cabedo et al., 2017; Fink et al., 2023), enabling empirical verification of whether the formal advantage of corporate foundations transparency stems from ethical orientation or instrumental business logic.

The study used fourteen indicators relating to ethical practices and transparency of foundations, assessed on a uniform five-point Likert scale (1 = lowest level of compliance with a given criterion, 5 = highest level). Based on these, two aggregate indices were constructed. The Ethical Orientation Index (EOI) was calculated as the arithmetic mean of indicators 1–7, while the Transparency Index (TI) was calculated as the arithmetic mean of indicators 8–14. In the construction of the indices, equal weights were applied to all components, assuming that each of them contributes equally to the given construct. Due to the uniform measurement scale, no additional normalization of variables was applied. Both indices took values in the range from 1 to 5, with higher values indicating a higher level of ethical orientation or transparency, respectively. In the regression analyses, the Transparency Index variable was previously centered on the mean of the entire sample.

The hypotheses were verified in two stages. In the first stage, the Transparency Index levels of corporate foundations and independent foundations (NGOs) were compared. Due to the identified violations of the assumption of normality of distributions in some of the analyzed variables, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples was used. In addition to the level of statistical significance, measures of central tendency, standard deviations, and effect size were also reported.

In the second stage, the relationship between the level of transparency and ethical orientation was assessed using ordinary least squares (OLS) linear regression. The model included the main effect of the centered Transparency Index, the main effect of the sector (NGOs vs. corporate foundations), and the interaction effect of $TI \times \text{Sector}$ to test the hypothesis of the potential moderating role of the sector. The model took the form:

$$EOI = \beta_0 + \beta_1 (TI_{\text{centered}}) + \beta_2(\text{Sector}) + \beta_3 (TI_{\text{centered}} \times \text{Sector}) + \varepsilon$$

Model diagnostics included an assessment of the linearity of the relationship, homogeneity of residual variance, normality of residual distribution, multicollinearity of predictors (VIF), and identification of influential observations.

In order to test the moderating effect of the sector, the Transparency Index (TI) variable was centered on the mean of the entire sample. Centering consisted of subtracting the mean TI value in the sample from each observation, according to the formula:

$$TI_{\text{centered}} = TI_i - \overline{TI}$$

This procedure was used to reduce collinearity between the main variables and the interaction component ($TI \times \text{Sector}$), as well as to facilitate the interpretation of the regression model parameters. After centering, the intercept represents the predicted value of the dependent variable (EOI) for the reference group at the average level of transparency.

Results

The analysis showed that in terms of the Transparency Index TI variable, the difference was statistically significant, $U = 731.50$; $p = 0.033$, a higher score was observed in the Corporate group ($M = 3.37$; $SD = 0.75$) and a lower score in the NGO group ($M = 3.14$; $SD = 0.57$). The effect size of the differences between the groups in terms of the Transparency Index TI variable was small ($rg = 0.26$). The analysis did not reveal any other significant differences. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 1. In order to verify the assumption of normality of the distributions of the studied variables, a series of analyses were performed using the Shapiro-Wilk test (a test dedicated to sample sizes $N < 50$) (Royston, 1982) and the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test with Liliefors's correction (a test dedicated to sample sizes $N > 50$) (Dallal, Wilkinson, 1986). The results of these tests, together with measures of distribution symmetry, are presented in Tables 2 and 3. Intergroup comparisons are presented in Table 4.

Table 1. Basic descriptive statistics of variable distributions Transparency Index TI

Variable	N	Min	Max	M	SD	SE
Transparency Index TI	89	1.86	4.57	3.25	0.67	0.07

Table 2. Normality tests and measures of symmetry of variable distributions transparency index TI

Variable	Sector	Kolmogorov-Smirnov test		Shapiro-Wilk test		Measures of distribution symmetry	
		KS	p	SW	p	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transparency Index TI	Corporate	0.17	0.002	0.91	0.002	-0.63	-0.83
Transparency Index TI	NGO	0.13	0.051	0.96	0.094	-0.20	-0.45

Note: KS = Kolmogorov–Smirnov test statistic; SW = Shapiro–Wilk test statistic. Normality test p-values > 0.05 indicates that the variable distribution is normal.

Table 3. Normality tests and measures of symmetry of the distributions of the Transparency Index TI variables in groups distinguished on the basis of the Sector variable

Variable	KS test		SW test		Measures of distribution symmetry	
	KS	p	SW	p	Skewness	Kurtosis
Transparency Index TI	0.14	< 0.001	0.96	0.005	-0.34	-0.82

Note: KS = Kolmogorov–Smirnov test statistic; SW = Shapiro–Wilk test statistic. Normality test p-values > 0.05 indicate that the variable distribution is normal.

The analysis of the Transparency Index TI (Table 4) variable showed a statistically significant difference between the corporate sector and the NGO sector. Corporate foundations achieved a higher Transparency Index TI than independent foundations; the difference was significant, but the effect size was small. No other significant differences were found. The hypothesis that corporate foundations in Poland's Transparency Index are characterized by a higher level of formal transparency than independent foundations was confirmed.

Table 4. Differences between groups distinguished on the basis of the Sector Variable in terms of the level of variables Transparency Index IT

	Variable	Transparency Index TI
Corporate (a)	N	44
	M	3.37
	SD	0.75
	Me	3.57
	Mrang	50.88
NGO (b)	N	45
	M	3.14
	SD	0.57
	Me	3.14
	Mrang	39.26
U Mann-Whitney test	U	731.50
	p	0.033
	Difference a vs b	a > b

Note: Mrang = mean rank; U = Mann-Whitney U statistic; p = statistical significance; rg = Glass's two-series correlation strength test statistic.

In order to verify the relationship between the level of transparency of foundations and their ethical orientation, a linear regression analysis was performed, taking into account the moderating effect of the sector (NGOs vs. corporate foundations).

The results indicate that the model was statistically significant and explained 47.73% of the variance of the Ethical Orientation Index variable ($R^2 = 0.48$; adjusted $R^2 = 0.46$). A significant positive effect of the level of transparency on ethical orientation was found ($b = 0.24$; s.e. = 0.08; $t = 2.97$; $p = 0.004$). This means that an increase in the TI level by one unit (relative to the mean) is associated with an increase in the EOI by 0.24 points.

The main effect of the sector was also significant ($b = -0.53$; s.e. = 0.08; $t = -6.24$; $p < 0.001$), which means that at an average level of transparency,

independent foundations (NGOs) achieved a lower level of ethical orientation on average than corporate foundations.

No significant interaction between TI and sector was found ($p = 0.187$), which means that the strength of the relationship between transparency and ethical orientation is statistically comparable in both sectors.

Standard graphical and indicator diagnostics were performed to assess the validity of the estimated regression model. First, the residuals plot against the fitted values did not reveal any systematic deviations or clear nonlinear patterns, which allows us to consider the assumption of linearity of the relationship between variables to be satisfied. The distribution of standardized residuals also did not indicate a “funnel” effect; the spread of residuals remained similar across the entire range of fitted values, which suggests no serious violations of homoscedasticity. Second, the Q-Q plot showed only minor deviations in the upper tail of the residual distribution. With a sample size of $N = 89$, these deviations can be considered insignificant in terms of the accuracy of parameter estimation, and the assumption of normality of the residual distribution can be considered acceptably satisfied. The leverage and Cook’s distance analysis did not reveal any observations exceeding the critical values accepted in the literature, which means that there are no strongly influential points that could distort the model results. After centering the TI variable, the VIF values for all predictors were within generally accepted limits, indicating no problematic collinearity between the explanatory variables.

In summary, the diagnostics did not reveal any significant violations of the assumptions of linear regression, which allows the estimated model to be considered statistically correct, stable, and adequate for further interpretation of the results.

Additional analyses in subgroups showed a positive relationship between transparency and ethical orientation in both corporate foundations ($b = 0.24$; $p = 0.004$) and independent foundations ($b = 0.41$; $p < 0.001$). However, the difference between these slopes did not reach statistical significance, confirming the lack of a moderating effect of the sector.

Regression analysis (Table 5) showed that higher levels of transparency were associated with higher levels of ethical orientation; this relationship was significant and moderately strong. At the same time, the sector, understood as a qualitative variable indicating membership in a corporate or independent foundation, also influenced ethical orientation, membership in the NGO sector was associated with a lower level of ethical orientation than

membership in the corporate sector. In both groups (corporate and NGO), the relationship between transparency and ethical orientation was positive; it was slightly stronger in the NGO group, but this difference between sectors proved to be statistically insignificant and its strength was weak. The model collectively explained a significant portion of the variability in ethical orientation. The hypothesis that the relationship between transparency and ethical orientation differs across sectors was not confirmed.

Table 5. Regression analysis estimates for the Ethical Orientation Index (EOI) variable

Effect	b	s.e.	t	p	β	DPU	GPU
(Intercept)	2.94	0.06	48.90	0.000	NA	NA	NA
Transparency Index centered	0.24	0.08	2.97	0.004	0.3	0.1	0.5
SectorNGO	-0.53	0.08	-6.24	0.000	-0.99	-1.3	-0.67
Transparency Index centered* - SectorNGO	0.17	0.13	1.33	0.187	0.33	-0.16	0.81

Note: b = unstandardized regression analysis estimate; s.e. = standard error of estimate b, t = Student's t-statistic; p = statistical significance; β = standardized regression coefficient; DPU / GPU = 95% confidence intervals for β ; NA = No standardized estimates for the regression model constant coefficient. R^2 and its adjusted value for the tested model were 0.48 and 0.46, respectively.

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this study was to compare the level of formal transparency and the relationship between transparency and ethical orientation in two types of third sector organizations in Poland: corporate foundations and independent foundations. The results obtained allow for both empirical verification of the hypotheses and their placement in the broader context of research on organizational diversity in the non-profit sector.

Hypothesis H1, assuming that corporate foundations are characterized by a higher level of formal transparency than independent foundations, was confirmed. This result is consistent with earlier findings in the international

literature, which indicate that organizations affiliated with business entities are more likely to implement formalized mechanisms for reporting, disclosure, and standardization of management processes.

Comparative studies of corporate and independent foundations show that corporate sponsorship provides access to organizational resources, managerial expertise, and administrative infrastructure, which promotes a higher level of formalization and transparency of activities (Koushyar, Longhofer, & Roberts, 2015). In this context, transparency serves not only an informational function, but also a legitimizing one, enabling corporate foundations to demonstrate compliance with social responsibility standards and the expectations of business stakeholders.

Similar conclusions are drawn in studies on the rationalization of non-profit organizations, which indicate that the import of management practices from the private sector leads to an increase in proceduralization and formal accountability, while shifting the emphasis from relationships to efficiency and measurability (cf. Hwang & Powell, 2009).

Hypothesis H2 assumed that the relationship between transparency (TI) and ethical orientation (EOI) differs between corporate foundations and independent foundations. The results obtained indicate significant differences in the nature of this relationship, confirming that transparency is not a homogeneous functional construct across the entire non-profit sector.

Reports in the literature indicate that transparency can serve different functions depending on the type of organization (e.g., a legitimizing function in business-related organizations and a relational function in civic organizations), but this study did not measure institutional intentions or motivations. Therefore, interpretations of the mechanisms behind the observed relationships should be considered hypothetical and requiring further qualitative research.

This differentiation in the functions of transparency is confirmed by research on the influence of stakeholders on the activities of business-related organizations, which indicates that reputational pressure and the expectations of multiple interest groups can lead to the instrumental treatment of ethical and informational practices (Stinchcombe, 1965). Consequently, a formally high level of transparency does not necessarily translate into consistency with the declared ethical orientation, but may be part of a management strategy.

It should be emphasized that this study did not include a direct measurement of the intentions or institutional motivations behind the transparency practices used. Therefore, interpretations of the mechanisms underlying the observed relationships between TI and EOI should be treated as a preliminary study in this direction on the Polish NGO market. The results obtained point rather to structural and organizational determinants of transparency than to unambiguous conclusions about the moral basis of the actions of the entities studied.

In light of the presented results, it seems reasonable to develop future research in the direction of qualitative methods that would enable the analysis of narratives, decision-making justifications, and ways of interpreting ethics and transparency by the foundation's management. It would be particularly important to examine whether the observed differences result from different institutional logic, stakeholder pressure, or imitation and rationalization processes characteristic of the contemporary non-profit sector.

In summary, the results of the study confirm that corporate foundations and independent foundations operate under different regimes of transparency and organizational ethics. The higher level of formal transparency of corporate foundations does not necessarily mean stronger ethical roots, but rather reflects adaptation to business logic and stakeholder expectations. At the same time, independent foundations, despite their lower level of formalization, may show a stronger link between transparency and ethical standards and the relational nature of their activities.

These findings are part of a broader debate on the consequences of the private sector's growing involvement in philanthropic activities and the potential, often unintended, effects of rationalizing the third sector.

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Paronomasia as an element of communication leading to the recovery of self-identity. A communicological-biblical study of Mic 1:10–16

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Abstract

Paronomasia as an element of communication leading to the recovery of self-identity: A communicological-biblical study of Mic 1:10–16

This article examines paronomasia in Mic 1:10–16 as a communicative device directed toward restoring the audience's awareness of its own identity. The interdisciplinary approach adopted here integrates biblical exegesis with communication studies, taking into account the cultural specificity of ancient Israel and the oral roots of the Hebrew textual tradition. The first part of the article discusses the distinctive features of prophetic communication—its multi-agent structure (God, prophet, addressee), its persuasive intent, and the rhetorical function of phonic devices. The study then proceeds to analyse the ten instances of paronomasia found in Mic 1:10–15, employing the classificatory framework developed by S. B. Noegel. The analysis demonstrates that the wordplays built upon place names of the Shephelah do not serve a merely ludic function, but rather construct a semantic network of references to specific territories, communal bonds, and the people's relationship with God. Their compositional arrangement forms a chiasmic structure whose centre points to frustration and spiritual disorientation as consequences of the deviation from the identity proper to the people of God. The findings suggest that the concentration of paronomastic figures constitutes a deliberate rhetorical strategy aimed at awakening in the audience an awareness of its identity as Israel and at restoring its relationship with YHWH as the ultimate source of that identity. The study further opens, in a preliminary and exploratory fashion, the prospect of applying communication-theoretical tools and Biblical Performance Criticism to future research into the identity-constituting function of phonicity in the texts of the Hebrew Bible.

Keywords: paronomasia, Book of Micah, communication, identity, orality

One of the phenomena in the fields of communication and linguistics that carries enormous interpretive potential is paronomasia. Beyond its status as a literary device, it also holds a mandate within paralinguistics and interpersonal dialogue. Its application to biblical texts makes it possible to capture the communicative process taking place within and through those texts, and to illuminate universal mechanisms in a new light. The innovative character of the interdisciplinary research conducted on the subject of this article enables the identification of aspects that remain unnoticed in monolithic exegetical approaches, as well as the discovery of communicative dimensions

linked to identity. Such an approach is both feasible and justified by virtue of the specific provenance of the biblical text.

The Hebrew Bible, as a cultural artifact, grows out of the oral tradition within the community of ancient Israel. It was fostered by the network of familial bonds from which this people emerged after their liberation from Egypt and their consolidation during the journey to Canaan. The primary role of YHWH God in bestowing, shaping, and preserving the identity of Israel—as indicated by the Hebrew Bible and extrabiblical tradition—makes Him the first point of reference in situations threatening the community, as well as in cases of destruction or erosion of collective self-awareness. His activity on behalf of Israel, together with His word and dialogue with individuals, groups, and the nation as a whole, constitutes the principal theme of the tradition transmitted from generation to generation within this community. Communication within familial circles and across generations was natural and foundational to this culture. It was reinforced by a sense of belonging guaranteed by kinship bonds (Ong, 2002, p. 67) and safeguarded by regulations governing marriage exclusively within the nation (Deu 7:3–4). Credibility was guaranteed by the authority of the ancestors, measured within the community by their relationship with God, their obedience to His word, and its manifestation in the practice of life—referred to as faithfulness to YHWH. The weight of information was emphasized through various rhetorical devices, including paronomasia, as well as memorization techniques developed in oral cultures, techniques that appeal to the senses, implicate emotional experience, and make use of relational, temporal, and topographic codes (Ong, 2002, pp. 56–65). The greatest testimony to the importance of any given message was its written record. Such a record attested to the timeless quality of the information conveyed in a particular communicative situation and rested upon the authority of the sender. It comes as no surprise, then, that in ancient Israel, owing to its history, written records encompassed messages originating from God. A second significant impetus for the inscription of content transmitted orally from generation to generation was the experience of the threat to national and communal identity that befell the ancient Jews as a result of Assyrian and Babylonian invasions and the deportations that followed. Analogously, the specific nature of prophetic discourse—interpreting the present moment and current events in light of the foreseeable consequences of choices made by human beings—gave it priority and nominated it for written preservation. This was carried out in such a way as to render the

text as persuasively powerful as possible, seeking to transfer to the written medium the force of interpersonal face-to-face communication (including the experience of communication with God).

Communication within the prophetic texts

Communication in the prophetic books of the Bible takes place among three subjects: God, whose word is conveyed in a formula that marks its dynamic character (*the word of YHWH that came to...*—cf. Mic 1:1; Zeph 1:1) and in the so-called messenger formula (*Thus says the Lord...*—cf. Jer 2:5; Isa 50:1); the inspired author/prophet; and the recipient (Israel within the text, the direct recipient for whom the written record is intended, and the indirect recipient—the human being of every age who encounters the text). The communicative situation present within the action of the text is generally sketched at the outset in terms of its historical time and context—as in Mic 1:1—and contains a reference to the rulers of that period (in Micah: Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah). The topography—here: Moresheth, Jerusalem, Samaria—specifies the spaces upon which the prophet's attention will be focused. Topics are determined by specific historical situations (Mic 4:10; 5:4–5) and moods (e.g., Mic 4:9–10), as well as social and individual attitudes (e.g., exploitation in Mic 2:8–9; 3:11), to which the prophet responds under the influence of God's suggestions and word. These, in correlation with the prophet's education and cultural familiarity, take on a specific literary form—speeches (e.g., Mic 6:9–16), narrative (e.g., Mic 7:2–4), lament (Mic 1:8–9), song (absent in Micah), and others.

The purpose of prophetic communication is to stimulate the recipient to think, to reflect, and consequently to make decisions toward change in the sphere where previously choices of death, destruction, and self-destruction were made. The vision, the broader perception of reality offered by God, is oriented toward the preservation of the human being in his identity. This is why the confrontation is so often painful: attitudes, customs, and habits adopted at a given time hinder access to what is proper, original, and natural for the human person. The goal of the prophetic texts is not the proclamation of destruction brought upon the world by God, but rather the alarming of the human being who brings destruction upon himself, driving himself—in terms of his beliefs, the persons in whom he places his hope, his values,

and his state in its economic, social, and internal communal dimensions—to a condition of easy prey for enemies. The introduction of imagery and the use of rhetorical figures act upon the addressee's senses, attracting attention, extending the perception of content to sensory levels, and thereby enhancing the process of persuasion. The motive on God's part is love, and the goal is the liberation of the human being toward life.

Prophetic texts frequently resemble a form of diatribe—for example, when they invoke opinions expressed by the addressee in various situations. In this way, the communicative situation unfolds on two levels: that of the debate within the text, and that of the text's debate with the implied and actual recipient. This facilitates the confrontation of the latter with uncomfortable content from the message, since someone has already “gone through it” in their own skin and in their own circumstances, and one can see in that text or in other books what results this produced—and can also try on the advice oneself, tentatively, mentally for now, without the consequences of an error committed in action.

The specific nature of communication within the prophetic books grows out of their oral provenance. This discourse, which is the product of God's communication with human beings, conceived within the oral culture that was ancient Israel, is designed in spoken form, predisposed to oral performance (Voth, 2005, p. 118). It manifests itself in the immediacy of the message (in Mic 6:1: “Hear, I pray, what the Lord says” and elsewhere), in emotional expression (e.g., woe—Mic 7:1), in symbolic actions (absent in Micah), in the performativity that follows from the dramatic style (e.g., Mic 2:7–11), and sometimes also in the presentation of a dialogue between God and the prophet (absent in Micah) or of commands issued by God in that context (absent in Micah). According to J. Joosten, the reference to popular rhetoric is visible in prophetic texts, among other things, in the presence of dialectical negation forms (Mic 18b), pseudo-quotations (Mic 2:6), and vocative antonomasia (e.g., 5:1: “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah”) (Joosten, 2013, pp. 49–54).

A text so rooted draws extensively in its content on cultural memory (Voth, 2005, p. 119), which is evidenced, among other things, in the invocation of past events charged with the emotional affect accompanying them—as in Mic 6:4–5. E. Voth, in his article, recalls E. Havelock's position that from oral contexts (and culture) derives the imagistic thinking found in prophetic texts—thinking oriented toward action and accompanied by an almost complete absence of abstract thought (Voth, 2005, p. 119). As a result, the texts

contain a heightened number of verbs, especially those pertaining to movement, and God is portrayed in action rather than through the characterization of predicates.

It is difficult to identify the precise sequence in which the orality of prophetic texts became intertwined with textuality (Niditch, 1996, p. 120). What is certain is that the mutual interaction of both forms of transmission in prophetism constitutes the basis for the expression found here (Niditch, 1996, p. 134). Communication along the axis God-prophet, prophet-people, and subsequently from generation to generation—including God-people and each individual member separately—is, also by virtue of the passage through these levels and environments, cultures, and relationships, strongly evocative and persuasive in every sphere. The more individually it is received, the greater its force of impact.

The conceptions outlined above concerning the origin of prophetic texts justify why various sound-based constructions are so numerous represented within them. These include the rhythm of individual phrases and of the text as a whole, meter, rhyme, chiasmic phonic similarities, alliteration, onomatopoeia, and paronomasia (Casanowicz, 1894, pp. 4–5). They render the message strongly emotive and thereby influence the perception of its content.

The specific nature of communication in the Book of the Prophet Micah from an oral perspective

The Book of the Prophet Micah, through its reference to the rulers Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, suggests the eighth century BCE as the key period for its dramatic arc. This is the era of the rising Assyrian power in the east, in the basin of the Euphrates and Tigris, of invasions and the first deportations of inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom (the Kingdom of Israel), as well as of Jewish alliances attempted with, among others, Egypt. Moresheth, from which Micah originated (Mic 1:1), was situated on the border of the Southern Kingdom (the Kingdom of Judah) and the Philistine territories around Gath, near the road connecting the Via Maris with Jerusalem—a location that conditioned the permanent passage of troops through the region and the prophet's constant experience of the tension of war (Wolff, 1990, p. 6). Turmoil, destabilization, and the stimulation of questioning constituted the atmosphere and backdrop of God's communication with Micah (in this article,

the text of the Book of Micah will be analyzed from a synchronic perspective). The central question concerns the causes—that is, the transgressions of the inhabitants of both parts of the former Solomonic state. Among those invoked are: the cultivation of hostility (Mic 2:1), greed (Mic 2:2; 6:12a), exploitation of fellow countrymen (Mic 2:8; 3:2–3; 6:10), violence (Mic 2:9), the venality of prophets (Mic 3:5), manipulation (Mic 3:9; 6:12b; 7:3b), bribery (Mic 3:11; 7:3a), idolatry (Mic 5:12; 6:16), and mutual hostility (Mic 7:6). In response to these, the word is directed and the announcement of God’s intervention is made, together with information concerning forthcoming events, understood as changes produced by the consequences of the choices currently being made by the members of the Chosen People.

As the first interlocutor in communication with God, the book presents the prophet himself, whose name etymologically means: *Who is like YHWH*. It is therefore no surprise that the fundamental theme of the prophetic message is the activity of God, recognized by the prophet as a response to the attitudes of the Chosen People and of its individual representatives. Within the book there also appear references and messages directed specifically to particular social groups and their identities—identities arising from the functions they perform—taking the form of debate and discourse, yet shaped as diatribe. This communication in a unilateral form, albeit with a shifting sender (in various configurations: prophet, God, personified Zion), continues until the conclusion (Mic 7:18–20), where it passes into a direct address of the prophet to God. The contents recur in a pattern of symmetry throughout the book, surrounded by divine utterances or the prophet’s commentary. Noteworthy is the recurring set of themes: the current attitude of the people and God’s opposition to it, elaborated in detail and presented repeatedly in a pattern of repetition—as though the absence of conformity with the norm were intended in this manner to reach the recipient and persuade him toward change.

This is an obvious motif in any kind of admonition, characteristic of prophetic texts. The effectiveness of admonition, however, is not so easily achieved—since, by virtue of the fact that the message calls for change, it also places the recipient in a situation that compels decision-making, departure from the comfort zone conditioned by what is familiar, the paradoxical evaluation of past behaviours (which is among the least pleasant of tasks), and the beginning of a new mode of functioning. However much any divine suggestion and call may redirect the human being toward his identity and situate him in a relational space with God and thus not alone in facing

change—this does not eliminate the effort involved or the intensity of emotion. In consequence, the form in which such content is transmitted plays an extraordinarily important role, and it is largely upon this form that the recipient's blockage to information—or, conversely, its acceptance and further dialogue with the Sender—depends. The Hebrew Bible frequently employs imagery, contrastive juxtapositions, and vocatives in these contexts. In Mic 1:10–16, a passage is introduced that appears exceptionally well-suited in its persuasive orientation toward the recovery of identity—a passage composed of a series of paronomasias. It stands out for its literary artistry from the rest of the book (McKane, 1998, p. 57) and by virtue of its remarkable sonic quality, it attracts attention.

Paronomasia as a literary device in Mic 1:10–16

Wordplay, according to S. Schorch, is most frequently employed in prophetic texts. One of its devices is paronomasia (Schorch, 2000, 2p.05). Paronomasia by its very definition links two worlds—even two independent words—and is thus a characteristic instrument that can be deployed in the construction of communicative space. At the same time, it constitutes a form of wordplay whose connecting mechanism is grounded in the phonetic aspect of words (Casanowicz, 1894, pp. 4–5), whose function is to attract attention and draw the recipient into the dynamics of communication (Schorch, 2000, p. 206; Casanowicz, 1894, pp. 4–5). This makes it particularly important in situations where the topic being addressed touches upon the necessity of introducing radical changes into everyday life.

The primary purpose of paronomasia is to engage some mental space within the recipient and to offer the experience of melodiousness (Casanowicz, 1894, pp. 4–5) —thus employing the sense of hearing to construct an invitation, or to offer a taste of the pleasure inherent in communication. It can frequently provoke a smile, introduce an element of lightness, even playfulness (in keeping with the designation *wordplay*), but it can also sublimate the recipient's experiences in difficult situations (Szeffler, 1968, p. 375).

In principle, sound in paronomasia is detached from meaning; yet this stylistic device is introduced deliberately, so as to convey specific content. It may underscore the message's content, or it may create a new semantic level (Schorch, 2000, p. 207). The immanent power of the word in Israel precludes

a purely “ludic” character of paronomasia. In the texts of the Hebrew Bible it frequently takes the form described by S. Schorch as exegetical (Schorch, 2000, pp. 211–212), because it links a given word with a second that constitutes its interpretation, illuminates and deepens its semantics. It thus allows for a movement into the depths of meaning along the path of their “identity,” enabling a better understanding of the reality being described. Frequently in such paronomasias, proper nouns are employed (Schorch, 2000, p. 212). S. B. Noegel classifies such paronomasias as appellative (containing both proper names and common nouns) (Noegel, 2021, p. 99). Wordplay then leads to the discovery of the distinctive, unique, individual characteristics of a place—and thus also of its community—and in a certain way poses a question to the recipient: did you see this? Did you appreciate it? Have you recognized yourself as unique in this place, in this world? And have you recognized your identity? Paronomasia, by constructing sonic bridges and associations, also frequently refers to other biblical texts (Schorch, 2000, p. 214), events, and divine actions, thereby deepening the message and rendering it strongly persuasive. It also facilitates, through the invocation of already-occurring situations, the practice of those values toward which it redirects attention.

A masterpiece of paronomasia is the text of Mic 1:10–16, which, across six verses, contains ten such forms. By virtue of their variety in this passage, it is difficult to maintain that they are coincidental (Ben Zvi, 1998, p. 118). They are indicated below in bold type.

Micah 1:10 *bēgat ‘al-taggidû bākô ‘al-tibkû bēbēt lē‘aprâ ‘āpār* (hitpallāštî) [hitpallšî]
Do not tell it in Gath, weep not at all [or: don’t weep in Akko]; in Beth-le-aphrah roll yourselves in the dust.

Micah 1:11 *‘ibrî lākem yôšebet šapîr ‘eryâ-bōšet lō’ yāšē’â yôšebet ša’ānān mispad bêt hā’ēšel yiqqah mikkem ‘emdātō*
Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame; the inhabitants of Zaanan do not come out; the lamentation of Beth-ezel will take from you its support.

Micah 1:12 *kî-hālâ lēṭôb yôšebet mārôt kî-yārad rā’ mē’ēt yhwh lēša‘ar yērûšālēm*
For the inhabitants of Maroth wait anxiously for good, but disaster has come down from the LORD to the gate of Jerusalem.

Micah 1:13 *rětom hamerkābā lārekeš yōšebet lākiš rēšit ḥaṭṭā't hī' lēbat-šiyyon kī-bāk nimšē'ū piš'ē yiśrā'ēl*

Harness the steeds to the chariots, inhabitants of Lachish! It was the beginning of sin to the daughter of Zion, for the transgressions of Israel were found in you.

Micah 1:14 *lākēn tittēni šillūḥīm 'al mōrešet gat bāttē 'akzib lē'akzāb lēmalkē yiśrā'ēl*
Therefore you shall give parting gifts to Moresheth-gath; the houses of Achzib shall be a deceitful thing to the kings of Israel.

Micah 1:15 *'ōd hayyōrēš 'ābī lāk yōšebet mārēšā 'ad-'ādullām yābō' kēbōd yiśrā'ēl*
I will again bring a conqueror to you, inhabitants of Mareshah; the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam.

Micah 1:16 *qorḥī wāggōzī 'al-bēnē ta'ānūgāyik harḥībī qorḥātēk kannešer kī gālū mimmēk*
Make yourselves bald and cut off your hair for your pampered children; make yourselves as bald as the eagle, for they shall go from you into exile.

The majority of the paronomasias mentioned above are formed on the basis of a juxtaposition of a place name with some action or designatum. Some exegetes consider the list of these towns to mark the route of the march of the Assyrian army under Sennacherib (Nogalski, 2024, p. 83; Walton, Matthews, & Chavalas, 2000, p. 782).

The preceding context (Mic 1:8–9) suggests that they stand in the face of an approaching threat, which is the consequence of human behaviours, idolatry (Mic 1:7), and the pseudo-values and attitudes flowing therefrom. The prophet's lament does not render the situation hopeless, but rather functions as a final signal so that the annihilation of the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom does not come to pass.

The first paronomasia consists in the play of sounds *bēgat 'al-tagḡîdû*. This is a homonymic paronomasia (Noegel, 2021, pp. 261–266)—the words sound similar (*Gat* / *tagḡîdû*—the consonants /g/ and /t/ in both), but carry different meanings. Semantically, it evokes Gath, which was a Philistine city, one of the strongholds of the Pentapolis, the hometown of Goliath (1 Sam 17:4). Etymologically, the name means *winepress*. The verb *nagad* in the hiphil form, combined with a negation, co-constructs the expression: *in Gath do not proclaim*. It evokes the space of this city—large, historically significant,

a stronghold of enemies (like a winepress). Perhaps the sound would echo there in a hollow reverberation.

The second paronomasia is represented in the formulation *bākô 'al-tibkû*. By virtue of context and semantic logic, it seems warranted to discern here the expression *be-Akko* and to identify it as the name of one of the towns in the Shephelah, rather than as the verb *bākāh* meaning *to weep*. On this assumption, the whole reads: *in Akko do not weep*. The words linked here share the same root but are different lexical forms (a proper noun and a verb with a negation). According to Noegel's classification, a homonymic paronomasia may be recognized here (Noegel, 2021, p. 99).

The next sound construction is *bēbēt lē'aprâ 'āpār*. Phonetically, it is constructed from a prepositional alliteration (*bēbēt*) and a paronomasia (*lē'aprâ 'āpār*). The formulation *lē'aprâ 'āpār* is a form of polysemy. According to Noegel's classification, it is an antanaclasis (Noegel, 2021, pp. 164–165), that may produce a paronomastic effect. The locality evoked here—situated on the border of the Shephelah and the coastal plain, adjacent to Philistine territories—is Beth-le-aphrah (*bēt le'aprâ*), the 'House of Dust.' It is juxtaposed with the noun *'āpār* (dust), from which it derives, and the verb that forms a sentence with them is *pālaš* in the hiphil (Becking, 2023, p. 106), the Qere form *hit-pallāštî* should be adopted on syntactic grounds), meaning *to roll oneself in the dust*—while phonetically evoking *pēlišṭîm* (Philistines) (Nogalski, 2024, p. 88).

In v. 11, the paronomasia *yôšebet šapîr 'eryâ-bôšet* appears, in which the name of the town Shaphir—located to the south of Hebron and etymologically meaning *beautiful/pleasant*—is positioned amid the half-rhyming sounds of the verb *yāšab* in the qal, together with the expression *'eryâ-bôšet* (Mic 1:11)—*in shameful nakedness*. A semantic contrast also appears here: beauty versus nakedness, which calls for concealment, since it implies shame (in the Hebrew mentality, shame accompanies transgression). The ironic dimension is clearly perceptible.

In the same verse, there is a cohesion of words not standing adjacent to one another, which is more properly classified as rhyme: *yāšē'* and *ša'ānān*. The verb *yāšā'* meaning *to go out* resounds with the name of the town Zaanān, which means *exodus/going forth*. They are placed within the expression: *lô' yāšē'â yôšebet ša'ānān—the inhabitants of Zaanān do not go out*. A semantic play operates between them on the principle of duplication, but with the verb negated by the particle *lô'*. It is as though something predisposed to going out and to movement has been abruptly halted (Becking, 2023, p. 106). Possibly

the background here is a plan to secure the town so that it will not be cut off, or a prediction that, out of concern for its autonomy, it will not offer support to fugitives (Szeffler, 1968, p. 377). In such a context, the invocation immediately following—*bêt hā'ēšel*, etymologically ‘house without shade/support’—as offering no support (Nogalski, 2024, p. 89), whether as a building or as a moral authority, in accordance with the semantics of the noun *'emdāh* (Becking, 2023, p. 107), confirms the earlier anticipations. G. A. Pierce recalls commentaries linking this designation with the Assyrian empire, which was supposed to offer protective shade but brought destruction instead (G. A. Pierce, 2021).

Mic 1:12 brings another paronomasia in the form of *mārôt kî-yārad rā'*. Without invoking the context, one gains an impression of semantic disjunction. The town of Maroth—etymologically ‘bitter’—is confronted with the question of how to await good when evil *descends* (*yārad*). The duplication of syllables at the end of this expression reinforces its meaning and the contrast it delineates. This is a paronomasia of weaker phonicity, grounded primarily in the semantic link between the name and the content of the oracle—close to what S. B. Noegel calls an allusion (Noegel, 2021, pp. 91–96), or *homoeopropheron* (Noegel, 2021, pp. 241–247)—if the focus is placed on the repetition of *r* as the initial consonant of the root. It is further highlighted by the contrast built through the semantics of the verbs: writhing/dancing in anticipation of good (Nogalski, 2024, p. 90), juxtaposed with the evil that descends.

An anagrammatic paronomasia—consisting in the transposition of syllables (Noegel, 2021, p. 273), here: *š* and *r*—occurs toward the end of this verse 12 in the expression *lēša'ar yērûšālēm*—*to the gate of Jerusalem*. Sonically it closes—and as it were sanctions as happening—what the passage previously describes (it underscores the very occurrence of the events).

Verse 13 contains the paronomasia *lārekeš yôšebet lākiš rē'šît*—between the proper name of the town Lachish and the word *rekeš*, meaning *steeds*. There are two consonants common to both, placed in the same order (*k* and *š*), with one differing (*r* vs. *l*). Lachish was an old Canaanite town, fortified by Rehoboam, wealthy and well-developed (Nogalski, 2024, p. 91), in which there were probably stables—which might testify to its power. The valley over which it rose served as a kind of gateway to Jerusalem (Becking, 2023, p. 108). The statement placed in Mic 1:13 would suggest that placing trust in the strength of military equipment was the beginning of the Chosen People's apostasy. All the more so since Mic 5:9 contains the words: *And it shall come to pass in that day, says the LORD, that I will cut off your horses from among you and destroy*

your chariots (wěhāyāh bayyôm-hahû' ně'um-YHWH wěhikrattî sūsêkâ miqqirbêkâ wěha'ābadtî markēbôtêkâ), situated in the context of YHWH's opposition to idolatry (Mic 5:10–14). In such a context, the paronomasia of Mic 1:13 poses a question to the recipient: from what do you draw in your identity—and are you making proper use of it?

The next paronomasia is *'akzîb lě'akzāb* in Mic 1:14. It follows a semantic wordplay that exploits the etymology of Moresheth, the prophet's hometown—from *môrāšāh*, meaning *possession* (Brown, Driver, & Briggs, 2000, p. 4192)—and juxtaposes it with the receiving of a gift, thereby introducing a duplication of content. The word *šillûḥîm* denotes the money or its equivalent that a man was obliged to pay to the father of his future wife before the wedding, and in the case of divorce – to return to her (Nogalski, 2024, p. 92). The expression *'akzîb lě'akzāb* juxtaposes the town of Achzib in the territory of Judah with the noun *'akzāb*, meaning *deception, falsehood, lie* (Szeffler, 1968, p. 377). Here one observes identity of roots with a difference in vocalization and lexical function. S. B. Noegel classifies such expressions as antanaclasses (Noegel, 2021, p. 164). A deceptive hope of support resonates here—support that will not ultimately be given to the kings of Israel. Paradoxically—or ironically—identity is preserved.

Verse Mic 1:15 contains two paronomasias. The first occurs within the phrase *ōd hayyōrēš 'ābî lāk yôšebet mārēšā* is built on the resonance between the name of the town of Mareshah (meaning *possession*—nearly synonymous with Moresheth) in the Shephelah (Becking, 2023, p. 109), and the participle *yōrēš* meaning *one who takes possession*. The acting subject of the action described here is YHWH. One gains the impression that the consequences of some earlier choice—perhaps negligence—have come to pass, as a result of which the town was captured.

The second paronomasia in v. 15 is formed by the words *yābô' kēbôd—glory shall come*. This is a type of homonymic paronomasia (Noegel, 2021, p. 261). Their placement in the same context as Adullam, a town controlling all movement in the Elah Valley (Becking, 2023, p. 110), evokes the space in which David found refuge when fleeing from Saul (1 Sam 22:1). The association is employed to construct the assurance of God's protection—perhaps a suggestion: *if you look at your identity, you will see Me, and I will save you*. At this point the mood of the utterance changes; this is no longer a lament, but a promise.

Verse 16, which closes this part of the prophet's discourse, contains no paronomasia in the strict sense—but from a sonic perspective it conveys the

totality of the dynamics that has run through the verses above, while simultaneously implying the necessity of movement in some direction, despite the prevailing atmosphere of mourning (McKane, 1998, p. 53). One perceives in this sentence an unevenness of sounds, a tossing of them throughout the space of the sentence.

Paronomasia in Mic 1:10–16 as an instrument of communication on the subject of identity

The arrangement of paronomasias in Mic 1:10–15 creates a distinctive music of irregular meter, which the clusters of sounds of successive paronomasias—each different from the others, yet each internally highly harmonized—systematically disrupt. The recipient gains the impression that harmony in communication is possible and beautiful, yet something systematically interrupts it. On the one hand, the recipient is drawn in by it; on the other, he finds himself in something akin to a mental loop, in which he must weigh the paths that stand open before him (Noegel, 2021, p. 303). The arrangement of these sounds escapes schematic pattern, thereby compelling reflection and a return—corresponding to the process of returning to identity and cultivating it, a process that does not conclude in a few acts.

The masterpiece of paronomasia in Mic 1:10–16 consists in the construction, within these verses, of a network of semantic references and connections. The mention of the entire pool of diverse localities within the ten paronomasias of the analysed text creates the impression as though harmony were proper to individual places, dwelling within them—whereas any coordination of these places and the dynamics occurring within them into a coherent whole is entirely absent. The question thus arises concerning the purpose of making such a fact apparent. Since all the localities mentioned are situated on the territory of Israel, each inhabited by Jews, perhaps the communication taking place here through the device of paronomasia is intended to make them aware of their shared identity and to encourage a return to it.

Listening to Mic 1:10–16 and its leaping sounds paradoxically provokes a smile from the sonic side. On the one hand, one might be tempted to state that the communication occurring here is very ludic (Casanowicz, 1894, p. 6)—yet the semantics of the words and the surrounding context construct an entirely different mood. These paronomasias speak to attention, imagination,

and emotion; they are easy to perceive yet difficult to forget (Casanowicz, 1894, p. 6). They impart a clear, albeit varied, tone; they bring energy (Casanowicz, 1894, p. 7) —perhaps even sarcasm (Casanowicz, 1894, p. 13).

The accumulation of sixteen occurrences of fourteen proper names across these seven verses has no parallel in the entire Book of the Prophet Micah. It seems to suggest an interpretive hint. Perhaps the inspired author wishes very forcefully to shift the recipient's attention toward the present, toward the territory on which he lives, toward the space of his everyday life. Since these names are linked with words carrying social and relational meaning, it seems warranted to ask whether the goal is not to highlight something specific and distinctive to each given locality.

Ben Zvi draws attention to the fact that in the first chapter of Micah the term *Israel* appears four times: in vv. 5, 13, 14, and 15—and each time its distinctness is in some way blurred, as though merged and juxtaposed with Judah (Ben Zvi, 1998, p. 116). Within the paronomasias, this is, successively: the juxtaposition of Lachish with the Daughter of Zion (v. 13), the equation of the impossibility of using Moresheth of Judah with Achzib (v. 14), and the invocation of the unity of the state through the mention of Adullam—and by implication David (v. 15). A deliberate intention to emphasize the close bond between both parts, inhabited by one Chosen People, seems to be present here. This fact demonstrates that the chain of paronomasias constructed in Mic 1:10–15 serves to enable the recipient of the text to recognize himself as a full-fledged subject of the identity 'Israel.' God speaks not to an abstract group, but to a specific community that is Israel—even if that community itself does not recognize this and does not live in accordance with its identity.

The exegete cited above emphasizes that the grammatical shifts of person (from the 2nd to the 3rd person and back), exceptionally frequent throughout Mic 1:10–16, are designed to enable the association of individual entities with one another, including Judah with Israel and the prophet with YHWH (Berlin, 1985, pp. 40–41). The result is a space of confrontation of lifestyles and values; the consequences of human choices are brought into relief. Spronk draws attention to the deliberately inverted logic within Mic 1–2: instead of moving from sin through consequences to lament, the recipient first experiences (through paronomasia) the pain of the destruction of his cities, and only afterward is confronted with its cause (Mic 2 ff.) (Cuffey, 2023, p. 285). This redirection of attention to the concrete pain of concrete places is intended

to awaken identity: *this is your city, this is your land, this is your God showing you the consequences.*

The individual wordplays in Mic 1:10–16 expose specific ways in which the true identity of God’s people is betrayed. The paronomasia *lākîš* | *rekeš* raises the question of genuine security—whether it is guaranteed by the army or by God (Wessels, 1998, p. 445)—and about the consequences of an improper choice in this matter. The paronomasia *’ākzīb* | *’ākzāb* reveals betrayal as something contrary to identity: if the ‘kings of Israel’ rely on something *akhzab* (false), then the text exposes them as those who have grounded their identity in a lie—rather than in Yahweh. The paronomasia *mārôt kî-yārad rā’* reveals the disparity between the good that people desire and the bitterness that their own way of life—their failure to function in accordance with their identity—brings upon them. The paronomasia of v. 15 *yôreš* / *mārēšā*, in conjunction with the mention of the glory of YHWH emphasized by the paronomasia *yābô’ kēbôd* and Adullam, shifts attention to God, who always saves and is eternal. In the context of the chapters of the Book of Micah following the analysed text, the lament contained here is only the preamble to the drama (Cuffey, 2023, p. 180) —it is meant to move people to a decision of change and acceptance, and God will rebuild His people (Mic 2:12 ff.).

Cuffey, in analysing the arrangement of paronomasias in Mic 1:10–15, discerns a chiasmic structure linking phonetic wordplays with conceptual ones (Cuffey, 2023, p. 285). The centre of the chiasm is formed by the concepts of Etzel (supports taken away) and Maroth (exhausted waiting), which underscore the frustration and depletion of strength that are the lot of the Chosen People. This deliberate chiasmic composition reinforces the thesis concerning the intentional character of the paronomasia and the direction of the text: toward the identity of the recipient and toward God, in whose image and likeness every human being was created.

Conclusions

The analyses conducted shift the recipient’s attention back toward the ideas from which communication grows: toward encounter, understanding, and relationship. The primary level proves to be that of the human being’s encounter with himself, within the contexts in which he finds himself, in relation to the God who conceived him and who is Lord of the entire world. It is then that

the proper recognition of values takes place, and motivation toward change is born. The analysis conducted above ventures to constitute a contribution to the discussion of the importance of taking into account the orality of texts in order to reach the core of their message—so that, in dialogue with the One who reveals Himself, the human being might be reborn. Perhaps *Biblical performance criticism* (West, 2020, pp. 301–322; Rhoads, 2006a, pp. 118–133; Rhoads, 2006b, pp. 164–184) may also serve this end, corresponding as it does to contemporary media culture and the specific sensory character of twenty-first century recipients. The broader interdisciplinary approach applied in this article reveals the particular potential of categories from communication studies for the analysis of texts from ancient cultures, as well as for drawing from them aspects not previously investigated. It should be noted that the specific subject addressed here has never previously been treated. The tools applied here on a pilot basis may therefore serve not only in the further combination of disciplines, but also in the investigation of various aspects of communication within texts—especially those related to self-expression and to the identity of persons entering into interaction.

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Report from the 20th Media Ethics Conference: „The value of the media – values in the media”

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On 20–21 May 2026, the 20th Media Ethics Conference was held in Kraków under the theme *The value of the media. Values in the media*. This special anniversary edition of the conference was devoted to issues of fundamental importance for contemporary media and communication studies, while also contributing to broader humanistic reflection.

The conference theme was grounded in the conviction that the media are not merely neutral channels of information or simple reflections of social reality. Through the selection of topics, the ways they are interpreted, the narrative frames employed, the language of commentary, and the prioritization of issues, the media actively shape society's understanding of the world. They influence the formation of attitudes, public opinion, collective imagination, and systems of values. In this sense, values -both those explicitly articulated and those embedded implicitly within the structure of media messages-are present in every act of media communication.

The program of the 20th Media Ethics Conference included a debate, two plenary sessions, twelve thematic sessions, and four student sessions. This structure enabled participants to combine broad theoretical reflection on the value of the media and values in the media with in-depth analyses of specific ethical challenges in contemporary media communication. The Organizing Committee was chaired by Rev. Prof. Sławomir Soczyński, PhD, DLitt, with Prof. Olga Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk, DLitt, serving as Vice-Chair. The conference secretariat consisted of Dr. Urszula Dyrz and Dr. Joanna Urbaś.

The conference brought together researchers from leading academic institutions across Poland, including universities and research centres in Lublin, Poznań, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Katowice, Wrocław, Rzeszów, and Toruń, making it one of the most significant national forums for scholarly discussion on media ethics and values in communication.

The conference covered a broad spectrum of analytical perspectives, including:

- the media as a tool for fostering social cohesion or contributing to social fragmentation;
- social trust as a measure of the value of the media;
- public service media and their axiological mission;
- freedom of expression and its value-based limitations;
- disinformation, manipulation, and propaganda as anti-axiological phenomena;
- the algorithmization of communication and the axiological neutrality of technology;
- the role of artificial intelligence in the media;
- media polarization and the erosion of a shared system of values;
- media literacy as a means of fostering audiences' value formation;
- the historical evolution of the media's mission.

Opening session and debate

Introductory remarks were delivered by His Magnificence Rev. Prof. Robert Tyrała, PhD, DLitt, Rector of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, and by Prof. Sławomir Soczyński, PhD, DLitt, Dean of the Faculty of Communication Sciences.

The conference opened with a solemn inaugural debate, which set the tone for the entire event. The panel brought together distinguished representatives of the Church, academia, public administration, and journalistic practice. Its participants included Cardinal Grzegorz Ryś, PhD, DLitt, Metropolitan Archbishop of Kraków; Prof. Maria Mrówczyńska, PhD, DLitt, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Science and Higher Education; Prof. Iwona Hoffman, PhD, DLitt, President of the Polish Communication Association and Director of the Institute of Social Communication and Media Studies at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University; Brygida Grysiak, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of TVN24 and Editor for Standards and Good Journalistic Practice; and Marek Zając, Chair of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Foundation Council and Deputy Programme Director of Polish Television.

The debate was moderated by Prof. Olga Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk. The discussion was framed by the moderator's opening question, which referred to a classic philosophical idea. Citing Aristotle's words from *Metaphysics*: "All people by nature desire to know", Nadskakuła-Kaczmarczyk pointed to a paradox of the contemporary world: although access to information has never been easier, the crisis of truth is deepening. In an era of widespread disinformation and informational chaos, she argued, it becomes essential to return to the foundations: to the question of whether the search for truth and objectivity in the media remains possible and meaningful. "We find ourselves in a moment of such chaos, with disinformation raging around us, that we must return to the beginning: to Truth. Is there still a chance for truth, and how should it be understood?" the moderator asked.

The discussion that developed around this question focused primarily on the essence and possibility of objectivity in the media. The participants addressed the tension between the ideal of impartiality and the inevitable perspectival nature of every media message. During the debate, attention was also drawn to the need for genuine dialogue between media actors. It was emphasized that the problem today is not only access to information, but also the intention behind seeking it: whether the media truly wish to understand

their interlocutors or merely obtain statements to serve their own narratives. In this way, reflection on truth was broadened to include a dialogical dimension: truth requires not only facts, but also a readiness to listen.

Following the inaugural debate, a ceremony was held to name the hall after Rev. Prof. Andrzej Baczyński, PhD, DLitt, and Rev. Prof. Michał Drożdż, PhD, DLitt, scholars who have made outstanding contributions to the development of reflection on media ethics, social communication, and journalistic responsibility. This symbolic moment emphasized the continuity of the scholarly tradition within which the Media Ethics Conference has, for many years, served as an important forum for reflection on the moral dimension of media communication.

Plenary sessions and discussions

The first plenary session, entitled *Contexts of the value of the media*, was chaired by Prof. Katarzyna Pokorna-Ignatowicz, PhD, DLitt, from the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków. The session was devoted to various ways of understanding the value of the media: in normative, social, political, economic, and technological terms.

The first paper, entitled *There is no freedom without responsibility: Examples of the functions and dysfunctions of digital media*, was delivered by Prof. Agnieszka Hess, PhD, DLitt, from the Jagiellonian University. Her presentation focused on the relationship between freedom of communication and responsibility for the consequences of media messages in the digital environment. Next, Prof. Szymon Ossowski, PhD, DLitt, from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, presented a paper entitled *Media in the opinions of audiences and voters: Poles' political views and their use and evaluation of the media*. His presentation explored the relationship between audiences' political orientations, patterns of media use, and assessments of media credibility.

Prof. Maria Łoszevska-Ołowska, PhD, DLitt, from the University of Warsaw, in her paper *Moral dilemmas and the values and anti-values of the media*, reflected on the ethical tensions present in media practice and on situations in which the declared values of the media collide with actual practices that are far from value-oriented and may even raise legal concerns. Prof. Katarzyna Konarska, PhD, DLitt, from the University of Wrocław, then delivered a paper entitled *Idealism or realism? Ethical orientations of Polish journalists in the light*

of the Worlds of Journalism Study, addressing how professional and ethical standards are understood within the journalistic community. The session concluded with a presentation by Prof. Jerzy Gołuchowski, PhD, DLitt, from the University of Economics in Katowice, devoted to the economic value of the media in the age of artificial intelligence.

Prof. Iwona Hofman offered a synthetic summary of both this session and the final plenary session of the conference, emphasizing not only the importance of the issues discussed, but also their remarkable heuristic potential.

The discussion following the presentations in the first plenary session raised questions about the limits of users’ freedom in the digital environment, the responsibility of platforms, and the protection of the youngest audiences. Prof. Klaudia Cymanow-Sosin, PhD, DLitt, from the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Kraków, asked the speakers whether they would support the introduction of age limits for social media users, justified by the need to protect children online.

This question fitted well with the main concerns of the session. In response, Prof. Jerzy Gołuchowski emphasized that he particularly values his role as a grandfather, and therefore the issue of protecting children in the digital environment is important to him also from a personal perspective. He noted that although there may still be no guarantee that particular solutions will be fully effective, this does not mean that they should not be implemented. On the contrary, he argued, the issue should be viewed in ethical terms, as part of adults’ responsibility for the safety of the youngest users of social media.

Thematic and student sessions

The thematic sessions demonstrated the multidimensional nature of the issue of values in the media. The discussions addressed, among other topics, the relationship between history, propaganda, and memory; truth, manipulation, and crisis; image, authenticity, and value; faith, media, and community; credibility, conflict, and hierarchies of values; algorithms, ethics, and responsibility; the boundaries of communication, trauma, and responsibility; reputation, responsibility, and values; media literacy; influence, choice, and manipulation; politics, values, and image; as well as image, narrative, and value.

Such a broad thematic scope confirmed that the question of media axiology is not limited to journalistic ethics in the classical sense, but also encompasses digital technologies, political communication, visual culture, media education, artificial intelligence, religion, collective memory, and audience practices.

The second plenary session, entitled *Dilemmas of the value of the media*, further developed reflection on journalistic responsibility, media humanism, technopoly, the values of cultural heritage, business ethics, regional media, and responsibility for communication.

Student sessions also formed an important part of the conference. They were devoted to the ethics of artificial intelligence and digital media, social media as a space for shaping values, media systems and political communication, as well as technology design and the social consequences of the media. The presence of young researchers gave the conference a formative dimension, showing that reflection on media ethics is not only a subject of academic debate, but also an important element in educating the next generation of media scholars, journalists, and social communication specialists.

Conclusions

The program as a whole confirmed the interdisciplinary character of the Media Ethics Conference. The presentations combined perspectives from media studies, communication studies, philosophy, pedagogy, theology, political science, history, law, and technology. As a result, the conference became a space for discussion not only about the values communicated by the media, but also about the value of the media themselves for social life, democracy, culture, education, and community-building.

The 20th anniversary edition of the Media Ethics Conference, devoted to the highly significant theme *The value of the media. Values in the media*, confirmed that questions concerning values in media communication remain an important subject of scholarly inquiry. At the same time, the participation of media practitioners in the inaugural debate showed that these issues also resonate beyond academia and remain relevant to professional media practice.



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