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***NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION IN THE LAIC  
DISCOURSE AND IN SERMON  
COMPARATIVE STUDY***

DOCTORAL THESIS

ABSTRACT

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**Key words:** communication, discourse, sermon, nonverbal, vocal, non-vocal, statements, signification

## ***Nonverbal Communication in the Laic Discourse and in Sermon Comparative Study***

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The PhD thesis, written within the Doctoral School of Orthodox Theology “Isidor Todoran” of the “Babeș-Bolyai” University from Cluj-Napoca, “Nonverbal Communication in the Laic Discourse and in Sermon. Comparative Study” proposes an analysis of the nonverbal communication, comparing two research targets: the laic discourse and sermon, in the form of a comprehensive study, in seven chapters that have as a main purpose to emphasize the elements of nonverbal communication that the sermon has the duty to recover in comparison with the laic discourse and to integrate them efficiently into its own ethos, which is signally liturgical.

Communication supports the relationships between human beings and human communities as a whole. “During the various historical periods, persons and human groups were defined and related to one another socially, politically, culturally, economically and religiously through communication acts”<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, “[...] the whole human life develops on a background of permanent communication”<sup>2</sup>, the entire creation communicates and the human being, as the crown of creation, “could not be imagined outside the space of

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<sup>1</sup> Constantin Onu, *Comunicare și slujire prin limbaj mimico-gestual*, Editura Universității din Pitești, Pitești, 2003, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Tatiana Slamna Cazacu, *Cercetări asupra comunicării*, Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, București, 1973, p. 51.

communication”<sup>3</sup>. As Paul Watzlawick states, communication is “a sine-qua-non condition of human life and social order”<sup>4</sup>.

Communication on the whole uses the two means of manifestation: verbal (through the meaning of the spoken words) and nonverbal (through the manner in which words are pronounced – paraverbal language and body language).

*Nonverbal communication* is a type of communication that either doesn't use words, or it reveals the meaning of the words through the manner in which they are presented, without taking into account their content.

Although nowadays our technical possibilities of communication offer the chance of an unprecedented extension of the process of communication in space and time, however the direct meetings are most of the times necessary because through these the nonverbal hints can be better observed than in the case of communication through technical means.

Man feels the need to communicate and to be communicated to, both verbally and especially nonverbally, both through technical means and directly.

It has already been said about communication that it helps us form personal and communitarian relationships, it helps us share our views and values with the others and to fulfil many of our daily duties<sup>5</sup>. All these objectives of communication can be achieved through nonverbal communication as well.

Man communicates nonverbally on several levels. The most important are > language \*tone, intensity etc.), gestures or body movements (kinesics), position in space (posture), touch (haptics), faces (mimics), eye movements (oculesics), smell (olfactics), the distance between those who communicate (proxemics), clothing and physical aspect (artifacts).

Nonverbal communication is used in general between humans and especially in certain fields of activity. There are fields such as theatre, law firms and politics, in which the success of those who practice them depends predominantly on the abilities to use nonverbal communication. Regarding the Christian preacher, the success of transmission through sermon of the Christian teaching also depends to a great extent on the manner in which he manages to convey the message through mimics, gestures and intonation. In this thesis we present the manner in which nonverbal communication can be used successfully in the laic discourse and in sermons, giving examples of various methods through which laic speakers

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<sup>3</sup> Constantin Onu, *Comunicare și slujire prin limbaj mimico-gestual*, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Livia Durac, *Semiotica limbajului nonverbal în relația părinte-adolescent*, Institutul European, București, 2009, p. 32.

<sup>5</sup> Claudia Schäfer, *Limbajul corpului*, trad. Roland Schenn, Niculescu, București, 2003, p. 29.

and Christian preachers used this type of communication in their mission to convey a determined message.

The thesis analyses and presents the importance and characteristics of nonverbal communication, its use and utility in laic discourses and in sermon, based on examples of the various manners in which it occurs in certain contemporary rhetorical and homiletical approaches.

After having presented several aspects regarding communication and types of communication (ch. 1), we will present the relationship between verbal and nonverbal communication, emphasizing the features and functions of nonverbal communication (ch. 2).

The display of general information regarding nonverbal communication (ch. 3) will be followed by the emphasis of the means through which nonverbal communication is achieved, both in its non-vocal and vocal aspects (ch. 4).

The illustration of the importance of feedback and autofeedback is the subject of the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, followed by the presentation of certain peculiarities of the nonverbal communication in the laic discourse and in sermon, displaying theoretical information and using practical examples, indicating both the similarities and the distinctions between nonverbal communication in the laic discourse and in sermon. (ch. 6).

Furthermore we presented some recommendations on how the abilities of nonverbal communication can be developed and we also offered examples of several means of nonverbal communication based on the analysis of two discourses and a sermon (ch. 7).

We chose two orators and a preacher: philosopher and writer Andrei Pleșu, Fr. Constantin Galeriu and actor Dan Puric. We chose these three renowned speakers, who have different ages and temperaments and who come from different cultural environments: (1) philosopher and writer Andrei Pleșu (b. 1948), historian of art, former minister of Culture and External Affairs; we chose him because his discourse is elegant and elevated, serious and distinguished, simple and persuasive; (2) Fr. Constantin Galeriu (b. 1918 – † 2003), appreciated priest and renowned university professor, he was put in jail several times between 1950 and 1953; we chose him because for decades he gathered hundreds of people to his sermons that he presented in the Church St. Silvester in Bucharest, people who came not only to participate to the Liturgy, but also to listen to his sermons spoken with impressive dedication; (3) actor, director and essayist Dan Puric (b. 1959), very appreciated both in the country and abroad; we chose to analyze one of his conferences because we were interested in observing the manner in which nonverbal communication masterly professed within his pantomime shows influenced his discourse presented outside a theatrical context.

Of the sermons or discourses given by the three speakers we chose (1) the conference on *The Matter of Evil: a stumbling stone* presented by Andrei Pleșu within the conferences *Edictum Dei*, Cluj, October, 2015, (2) the sermon on the *Sunday of Raising of Jairus' Daughter* given by Fr. Constantin Galeriu in the Church of Saint Silvester from Bucharest, October 2001, and (3) the conference *On Dignity* presented by Dan Puric in the conference hall from Vrancea, march 2013.

Knowing that we cannot observe correctly the significance of a means of nonverbal communication unless we take into account all the other means through which nonverbal communication is achieved, we started our approach to analyze the three speeches by stopping the audio-video recordings and observing over 180 moments (images and statements). We extracted from the recordings accessed through the internet (the site <https://www.youtube.com/><sup>6</sup>) over 180 moments that we analyzed both from the point of view of the impression that the means of nonverbal communication convey and regarding the manner in which theoretical information is presented (vocal nonverbal communication).

The analysis of the image was completed by the analysis of the manner in which the text is presented, and also by its relation to the meaning of the spoken words. Hence, for each of these moments we analyzed both the non-vocal nonverbal communication (video) and vocal nonverbal communication (audio).

Thus we went through several stages: (a) stopping the recordings and saving the images (screenshot); (b) presentation of the impressions transmitted by posture, mimics, gestures and artifacts used; (c) recording of the statements uttered during each of the images; (d) analysis of the manner of presentation of the text. We correlated the image and the text, and implicitly, the manner in which the text of each speech was presented, thus creating a parallel between image, the meaning of the text and the manner of presentation.

We determined that the impressions drawn from the analysis of the images, without knowing the words spoken in the same time, were approximately 90% in agreement with the text presented for the first two speakers analyzed (Andrei Pleșu and Fr. Constantin Galeriu) and 80% in the case of Dan Puric. This proves that his manner of communicating nonverbally is more surprising and unpredictable.

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<sup>6</sup> Andrei Pleșu, *Conferința Edictum: Problema răului*, <https://youtu.be/JuD2REGni5E>, accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2018,  
Constantin Galeriu, *Predică la învierea fiicei lui Iair*, [https://youtu.be/3Soeh\\_LNtOM](https://youtu.be/3Soeh_LNtOM) and <https://youtu.be/H80Nok4BOIE>, accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2018,  
Dan Puric, *Conferința: Despre demnitate* <https://youtu.be/pNuFbt31Wto>, accessed: 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2018.

For a better organization of the precise analysis of the three speeches, we established the following numbering: 1. Andrei Pleșu's discourse, 2. the sermon of Fr. Constantin Galeriu, 3. The discourse of Dan Puric; then, for each of the three numbers we added a current number of the image we referred to; for example, by using the sequence 1.2 we refer to screenshot 2 from the discourse of Andrei Pleșu; by using the sequence 2.6 we refer to screenshot no. 6 from the sermon of Fr. Galeriu and so on.

After the analysis of the nonverbal communication, the data retrieved were organized in a table (*Appendix 3*) as follows: the *left half* of the table records the data of the *non-vocal* nonverbal communication, distributed depending on the means of communication used, on the manner of communication, on the possible meaning and on the minutage<sup>7</sup>; the *right half* of the table records the data for the *vocal* nonverbal communication, depending on the minutage, on the text of the statement uttered by the speaker, on the means of communication and on certain observations (peculiarities) of the exposition through which the nonverbal communication was achieved.

We analyzed the following means of non-vocal nonverbal communication: space (artifacts), posture, gesture, mimics, oculosics and feedback (nonverbal communication of the listeners). Of the means of vocal nonverbal communication we analyzed: rhythm, pauses, tone, accent and volume.

In order to observe, in the context of the other images and statements, the means of nonverbal communication exposed, we added to the thesis the audio-video recordings of the discourses and sermon, and in *Appendix 3* we presented the time (minute and second) when the speakers used the means of vocal and non-vocal nonverbal communication that we analyzed.

From the analysis of over 180 images and statements from the two discourses and the sermon, one may observe that there aren't significant differences between the means of vocal and non-vocal nonverbal communication used within the discourses and those used within the sermon. The only difference is given by the fact that the discourse, depending on its subject, may offer certain easiness of the expression and it may use more means of nonverbal communication (e.g. the orator can communicate nonverbally through the position of his legs or through gestures that are not appropriate for the preacher). However, significant differences

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<sup>7</sup> In order to listen to the information and to see the manner in which the speakers acted during their speech, and also in order to analyze them in the context in which they were presented, we mentioned between the two categories of nonverbal communication (i.e. non-vocal and vocal) the time of the recording (minute, second) in which each of the manners of nonverbal communication is used. *N.B.*: do not mistake the minutage (00:34; 17:59) with the numbering system of the screenshots (1.4; 2.6; 3.1)!



can be observed depending on the personality, temperament or possibilities of nonverbal communication that the preacher/orator uses. One can see big differences in nonverbal communication of the same sermon or of the same type of discourse if those who present that discourse have different personalities or different abilities of nonverbal communication.

By approaching this subject I wanted not only to present the importance of nonverbal communication within the general process of communication, but especially to emphasize the amount of information given through the means of nonverbal communication that man has, what is their meaning and how can they be used to communicate more efficiently certain ideas and truths. That is why, in *Appendix 1* we mentioned over 200 ways in which we can communicate nonverbally, with their possible meanings.

The conclusions of the study were presented in chapter 7, a part of the thesis in which one can find not only theoretical information and practical recommendations, but also examples of the efficient use of the means of nonverbal communication. Thus, one may observe the fact that the non-vocal and vocal nonverbal manner of communication are not in contradiction, but they support and intensify each other.

The main conclusion is focused on the statement according to which nonverbal communication constitutes a very important part in the presentation of a discourse or of a sermon, and it has always had a vital role in the whole process of communication – a role that is insufficiently explored in the literature from our country. That is why this thesis comes to complete, in the Romanian environment of the PhD theses in Practical Theology, the necessity of a comprehensive study dedicated to nonverbal communication, based on a thorough research (both theoretical and practical) of the subject, with the help of modern investigation techniques. Moreover, we hope that this thesis contributes to opening the way for new studies on this subject, but also proves its practical dimension, helping the future readers to form certain skills of nonverbal communication, that are useful when presenting a speech.

The importance of nonverbal communication both in the laic discourse and in sermon comes from the fact that its efficient use influences in a positive manner the message conveyed, the one who communicates it and also those that it is communicated to. Nonverbal communication in sermon and in discourse offers valuable information on the one who presents it, on those to whom it is presented, on the context in which it is presented and even on the speeches that are presented.

On the one who presents the discourse or the sermon, nonverbal communication reveals age, financial and social status, temperament, motivation and the level of involvement in the presentation of the speech, culture, way of being, level of sensitiveness etc.

Through nonverbal communication, the orator or preacher becomes more appreciated and more persuasive. That is why it was said that: “Interestingly, nonverbal communication that we present is two to seven times more significantly in the persuasion process than the words we speak”<sup>8</sup>. Researchers even tried to establish some rates for the importance of verbal and nonverbal communication in the persuasion process:

“In a situation of persuasive communication, the value of the words that we speak represents about 15% of the whole message. The vocal signs, including rhythm of speech, tone, ring, volume and accents are evaluate at approximately 35%. Physiology, including facial expressions, posture, body movements and visual contacts cover 50%. We cannot establish exact percentage for each of these three categories. This is one of the reasons why persuasion is an art, not an exact science”<sup>9</sup>.

The importance of nonverbal communication within the laic discourse and sermon also comes from the fact that it influences not only the impression we send to the others, but also our impressions on our own person. That is why it was said: “The theory of the management of impressions suggests that people can control their behaviours – especially nonverbal language – in order to create the impression they want on their own person”<sup>10</sup>.

Nonverbal communication is also determined by thought and feelings and it can determine, in its turn, thoughts and feelings. For example, the thought that a person loves us can determine our love for that person. Through the exchange of verbal and nonverbal information we influence, while being influenced in the same time. Our own nonverbal communication “[...] is the means through which we form and modify our attitudes”<sup>11</sup>.

Nonverbal communication tells us about the audience of the orator or preacher the following: age, financial status, interest, level of attention, state of spirit, impression etc. By using it, the preacher or orator finds out the thoughts of those to whom he addresses and can correct his own behaviour, but he can also correct the behaviour or attitude of the others.

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<sup>8</sup> Kevin Hogan, *Psihologia persuasiunii. Cum să-i convingeți pe alții de modul vostru de gândire*, trad. Mihnea Columbeanu, Antet, Oradea, 1998, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> James Borg, *Șapte lecții simple pentru a stăpâni limbajul non-verbal*, trad. Ianina Marinescu, All educațional, București, 2010, p. 77.

<sup>10</sup> Robert H. Gass, John S. Seiter, *Manual de persuasiune*, Polirom, Iași, 2009, p. 180.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Noël Kapferer, *Căile persuasiunii. Modul de influențare a comportamentelor prin mass-media și publicitate*, trad. Lucian Radu, Editura Comunicare.ro, București, 2002, p. 20.

Nonverbal communication can be a support for the one who gives a discourse or a sermon in evaluating properly the personality, attitude, impressions, feelings, emotions and conceptions of his listeners, based not only on the information communicated by them through the meaning of the words they say to him.

Listeners offer through their attitude during the discourse or sermon, very important information to the one that addresses to them. Hence, crossed arms, directing the feet towards the exit, fussing, blinking often, looking at the clock, fake smiles and other gestures that prove the listeners aren't interested in the subject or the manner of exposition is not attractive to the audience. Hence, the preacher or orator must modify the content and/or the manner of presentation of his speech or he must even end his discourse.

Therefore, the content and the manner of presentation of the discourses and sermons can and must be modified according to the data obtained through the interpretation of these clues. Hence, the orator or preacher will know when is time to change the subject (if he notices the disinterest of the listeners), what information he should avoid (if he notices their disapproval), when to present the information with a pronounced affective involvement or when he should end his presentation (if he notices the listeners are bored).

About the speech given, nonverbal communication can show us if it is formal or informal, happy or sad, important or relaxant etc.

The proper use of the nonverbal communication within a discourse or a sermon can be very useful in our verbal communication, but also in memorizing the information we communicate to the others. It was said even about the process of expression that: "it originates directly from the organization of the mental representations of images and actions and not directly in the forms of planning the speech"<sup>12</sup>.

Therewith, nonverbal communication facilitates not only the improvement of the manner of communication or of the content of the communication, and easier and longer memorization of the information (with the help of visual memory), but also a clearer understanding of the message conveyed.

"In the context in which the ambiguity of the verbal communication can have as result the wrong interpretation or the misunderstanding of the message, observing the gestures to the same extent as listening to the words will prove profitable: your ability to perceive the true messages subjacent to the words will improve"<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Samuel Rouvillois, *Corps et Sagesse. Philologie de la liturgie*, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1995, p. 23.

<sup>13</sup> Guy Cabana, *Atenție, gesturile vă trădează*, trad. Natalia Cernăuțeanu, Humanitas, București, 2008, pp. 15, 16.

The importance of nonverbal communication within the discourse or sermon is emphasized by the prestige of the speaker or preacher, and the efficient use of the nonverbal communication can increase their notoriety. If the orator or preacher is appreciated, he can be listened to not only very attentively (since the listeners know that he can communicate extremely important or interesting things), but also with greater trust. And prestige cannot be separated from deeds. Demosthenes (384-322 BC) considered that “it is not the words and the sonority of the voice that make the orator famous, but his deeds”<sup>14</sup>.

Nonverbal communication helps us be more convincing, helps us influencing conceptions, state of minds and attitudes of the others towards us, towards fellows and even towards themselves. It is considered that there is a strong relationship between communication and influence, communication consisting of the intention to influence the other or the others.

Realizing the importance of nonverbal communication is a fact in the absence of which the orator or preacher cannot fulfil their mission successfully.

Through this research, the thesis contributes to raising awareness on the importance of nonverbal communication both in the success of the oratorical and preaching endeavour, and for the improvement of relations between humans. Some of the speakers are more appreciated than others, although the content of their speeches is just as rich in information and/or well structured. The reason is the fact that some of them use more efficiently the means of nonverbal communication than the others. The exposition of the features of the manners of nonverbal communication, of the signs and their significance can be very helpful not only to make the communication process more efficient, but also to improve the relations between those who communicate. This is due to the fact that the correct observation and interpretation, accompanied by the proper use of the means of nonverbal communication can contribute both to convey thoughts, impressions and feelings and to increase the level of trust between those who are involved in the process of communication.

The analysis of the vocal and non-vocal nonverbal communication in relation to the meanings of verbal communication and the observation of concordances and/or the differences between them is another objective reached through this research.

In the exposition of a speech, the orator or preacher must take into account the meaning of the words, the manner in which they are spoken and also the impression they create through his aspect, his behavior, and also through the context of the exposition.

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<sup>14</sup> Maria Dorogan, *Curs de elocință*, Editura Arc, Chișinău, p. 67.

Therefore, he must combine the care for the content of the speech with that for the manner in which it is communicated.

The thesis facilitates the development of the abilities of nonverbal communication of each of the readers by observing the different variability of the means of communication and of their connotations.

Through the research carried on for this thesis we discovered the large number of modalities by which we communicate nonverbally and their numerous connotations. Each of us, people, communicate nonverbally through many ways, most often in the same time, without knowing and, sometimes, without being aware of this. The discovery of these means of communication and of the ways in which they can be interpreted can help us in developing our own abilities of nonverbal communication. And these can be very helpful to us, for the knowledge and efficient use of the means of nonverbal communication lead to an increase in credibility and, implicitly, of the authority of the orator or preacher, to achieving the communion between the speaker and the listeners of his message, to the efficient transmission of information and especially to his feelings, for “by communicating, people transmit not only information, thoughts, knowledge and ideas, but they transmit more than this: affects, emotions, feelings and even strength and energy”<sup>15</sup>.

Both in the laic discourse and in sermon, through nonverbal communication, the speaker puts enticement into his expression and contributes decisively to the successful achievement of the assumed mission. That is why it has been said that “balance and harmony between the inner matters and the exterior manifestations make the man and secure the success of priesthood”<sup>16</sup>.

Nonverbal communication conveys more than the proper-said meanings of the words, for we communicate permanently<sup>17</sup> with our entire being, and the knowledge and its efficient use is very helpful to us because through it we can build or destroy souls, we can hurt or we can comfort, we can deepen or heal wounds, we can make happy or sad, we can disunite or unite.

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<sup>15</sup> Ștefan Prutianu, *Comunicare și negociere în afaceri*, Polirom, Iași, 1998, p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> Ene Braniște, *Despre preoție*, Editura Renașterea, București, 2005, p.69.

<sup>17</sup> Alex Mucchielli, *Comunicarea în instituții și organizații*, trad. Viorica Aura Păuș, Polirom, Iași, 2008, p. 76.