Narrative Construction of the Self in Contemporary Polish Personalist Psychology: A Philosophical-Linguistic Analysis

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Abstract
This article examines how contemporary Polish personalist psychology constructs the self through narrative from a philosophical–linguistic angle. It argues that agency, responsibility, meaning, and integration function as constitutive categories of personhood. Using hermeneutic reconstruction and qualitative discourse analysis, the study identifies recurring semantic fields and grammatical/evaluative patterns that stabilise a normative, agentic, dialogical subject. It clarifies key anthropological presuppositions and their implications for debates on narrative identity.
Key words: narrative identity, personalist psychology, selfhood, discourse analysis, hermeneutics

Introduction

The "narrative turn" in the human sciences has made it increasingly difficult to treat the self as either a purely internal substance (a stable psychic entity) or a merely formal unity imposed by reflective consciousness. Instead, the self is widely approached as an achievement: an interpretive configuration in which lived experience is selectively emploted, linguistically mediated, and stabilised through culturally available genres of self-description. On this view, identity is not simply "possessed" but is continuously constituted through practices of telling, retelling, and revising one's life in interaction with others and within socially sedimented discourses (Bruner, 1991; McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013). The present article brings this program to a specific and comparatively under-analysed intersection: contemporary Polish personalist psychology and its implicit (and at times explicit) narrative grammar of personhood.

The term *personalist psychology* is used here in a specific sense. It denotes approaches that treat the person as an irreducible centre of meaning and agency, resisting reduction either to behavioural regularities or to merely functional cognitive modules. In Polish contexts, this orientation often resonates — directly or indirectly — with philosophical personalism and phenomenological anthropology, including the tradition associated with Karol Wojtyla's analysis of the acting person, in which the person is disclosed through action, self-determination, and responsibility (Wojtyla, 1979; see also Ricoeur, 1992). At the same time, contemporary psychological personalism in Poland presents itself as a systematic theory of personality and development, offering accounts of formation and distortion rather than serving only as a philosophical anthropology (Gasiul, 2022). What remains insufficiently articulated is the linguistic and discursive infrastructure by which such theories render "the person" and "the self" intelligible — namely, the semantic fields, narrative forms, and interpretive operations through which personalist psychology construes the self as a temporally extended unity.

Research relevant to the present study can be organised into four partially overlapping lines.

First, the international literature on narrative identity has developed psychological models in which identity is understood as an internalised and evolving life story that integrates a reconstructed past with an anticipated future, providing coherence, purpose, and moral orientation (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013). These accounts emphasise the development of autobiographical reasoning and the social co-construction of self-narratives. For present purposes, their major strength lies in the empirical and theoretical articulation of narrative as a psychological structure; their

limitation is that they can leave under-theorised the normative conception of personhood presupposed by particular cultural and intellectual contexts.

Second, philosophical hermeneutics and moral philosophy elaborate a complementary view in which selfhood is intrinsically interpretive and temporally configured. Ricoeur's distinction between *idem*-identity (sameness) and *ipse*-identity (selfhood) places narrative at the centre of personal identity: narrative is not an optional overlay but a medium through which the self remains responsible and answerable over time (Ricoeur, 1992). MacIntyre, from a different angle, treats narrative intelligibility as a condition for evaluating action within traditions of virtue, locating the unity of a human life within structures of narrative quest (MacIntyre, 1981). Taylor's genealogy of modern identity further shows how forms of selfhood are inseparable from moral sources articulated in language and cultural frameworks (Taylor, 1989). At the same time, critical strands in contemporary philosophy caution against treating "narrative unity" as a necessary condition of personhood. Christman argues that strong narrativity theses may be conceptually overstated and, in some contexts, normatively coercive — especially when narrativity is framed as a criterion for being a person (Christman, 2004). This debate is central here because personalist psychology typically emphasises robust unity, responsibility, and integration; the question is how such unity is discursively and narratively constructed, and what normative implications follow.

Third, Polish scholarship on narrative as a mode of understanding and on narrative psychology supplies a local intellectual ecosystem in which narrative is examined as a fundamental category of sense-making and identity formation. The programmatic collection edited by Trzebinski frames narrative as a basic way of organising reality and building self-understanding (Trzebinski, 2002). The volume edited by Dryll and Cierpka develops narrative psychology in relation to identity, dialogicality, and boundary phenomena, offering conceptual tools and empirical sensibilities for analysing self-stories in Polish contexts (Dryll & Cierpka, 2011). These contributions often imply a philosophical anthropology, yet they rarely enter sustained dialogue with Polish personalist psychology as a theory of the person, nor do they consistently mobilise explicit discourse-analytic procedures for examining the language through which selfhood is constructed.

Fourth, discourse studies provide methodological resources for analysing how identities are enacted and negotiated in language. From Fairclough's account of discourse as social practice through which subject positions are produced (Fairclough, 1992), to methodological syntheses in critical discourse studies (Wodak & Meyer, 2016), to Gee's approach emphasising how language-in-use enacts identities, relationships, and systems of valuation (Gee, 2014), this tradition offers frameworks for moving from "the self" as a theoretical entity to selfhood as a discursive achievement. Dialogical approaches inspired by Bakhtin additionally foreground the polyphony of voices within which the "I" is articulated (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986) — a point of direct relevance for personalist accounts of interiority and responsibility.

Polish personalist psychology constitutes a further body of work requiring focused treatment. Gasiul advances a contemporary "personalist concept of personality" with explicit theoretical foundations and developmental mechanisms (Gasiul, 2022). Popielski's analyses, shaped by logotherapeutic inspirations, foreground the noetic (spiritual) dimension as integral to personality and meaning, thereby situating the person within a horizon irreducible to psychophysical description (Popielski, 1994). These works suggest a model of the person as meaning-bearing and value-oriented, yet the literature seldom asks which linguistic forms carry these commitments: what narrative templates make "noetic" or "personalist" identity intelligible, and which metaphors, genre conventions, and evaluative vocabularies function as semantic scaffolding for the personalist self. This is the central lacuna addressed in the present article.

The gap is therefore not the absence of narrative theory, nor the absence of personalist psychology, but the lack of a rigorous integration: an account of how contemporary Polish personalist psychology constructs the self through language and narrative, analysed with explicit discourse-analytic tools and situated within philosophical debates over narrativity and personhood. Narrative-identity models offer psychological mechanisms (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013), philosophical hermeneutics offers ontological and normative depth (Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989), and discourse studies offer methodological precision (Gee, 2014; Fairclough, 1992; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). What is missing is a study that treats Polish personalist psychology as a discursive formation that articulates a distinctive concept of personhood and thereby mobilises particular narrative operations —emplotment, evaluation, agency attribution, and moral positioning — in the construction of selfhood.
The aim of this article is to reconstruct the narrative construction of the self in contemporary Polish personalist psychology through a philosophical–linguistic analysis of key conceptual vocabularies, narrative presuppositions, and discursive strategies. The working thesis is that Polish personalist psychology tends to stabilise selfhood through a relatively "strong" narrative ontology: it foregrounds agentic unity, moral responsibility, and meaning-oriented teleology, and it does so by relying on characteristic linguistic resources (evaluative lexicon, action predicates, modalisation, dialogical positioning, and metaphors of interiority and vocation) that are not merely stylistic but constitutive of the personalist subject it describes.
This thesis is pursued through four research questions:

1. What conception of personhood is presupposed in contemporary Polish personalist psychology, and how does it relate to philosophical personalism and hermeneutics of the self (Wojtyla, 1979; Ricoeur, 1992)?
2. Which narrative forms and operations (e.g., emplotment, agency attribution, moral evaluation) are implicit in the ways personalist psychology explains identity, development, and disruption (Gasiul, 2022; Popielski, 1994)?
3. How do discursive mechanisms (genre, modality, intertextuality, dialogical voicing) contribute to producing the personalist self as a coherent and normatively positioned subject (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 2014; Fairclough, 1992)?
4. How does the personalist emphasis on "strong unity" relate — explicitly or implicitly — to philosophical critiques of narrativity as a condition of personhood (Christman, 2004)?

Methodologically, the article adopts a triangulated approach. First, it applies philosophical hermeneutics to selected texts in Polish personalist psychology in order to reconstruct their implicit ontology of the person and their horizon of meaning (Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989). Second, it conducts a discourse-analytic reading of the same texts, focusing on identity categories, agency constructions, evaluative language, and modal and dialogical positioning, drawing on discourse analysis and critical discourse studies (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Third, it situates the findings within broader debates on narrative identity, using narrative psychology as a comparative frame (Bruner, 1991; McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013) and incorporating critical reservations about strong narrativity theses (Christman, 2004). The result is intended to be neither a purely philosophical exegesis nor a purely empirical discourse study, but a systematic account of how a particular psychological tradition constructs selfhood through language.
The article proceeds in four steps. Section 1 reconstructs the conceptual architecture of "person" and "self" in selected works of contemporary Polish personalist psychology, clarifying their anthropological and axiological commitments (Gasiul, 2022; Popielski, 1994). Section 2 develops the narrative-theoretical framework, positioning personalist unity in relation to hermeneutic and moral-philosophical accounts of narrative identity and their critics (Ricoeur, 1992; MacIntyre, 1981; Taylor, 1989; Christman, 2004).

Section 3 presents the discourse analysis, identifying linguistic resources and discursive strategies through which the personalist self is stabilised as agentic, responsible, and meaning-oriented (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2016; Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Section 4 synthesises the results into a philosophical–linguistic model of the personalist narrative self and discusses implications for contemporary narrative psychology in Poland (Trzebinski, 2002; Dryll & Cierpka, 2011).

Section 1. The Conceptual Architecture of the Person and the Self in Contemporary Polish Personalist Psychology

1.1. Person as Ontological Centre and Normative Subject

Contemporary Polish personalist psychology typically does not begin from the empiricist question "What are the measurable traits of personality?", but from an anthropological question: "Who is the person who acts, interprets, and assumes responsibility?" This shift in the guiding interrogative frames psychological theorising within an ontological horizon in which the person is not treated as a derivative construct of behavioural regularities but as a primary locus of meaning, agency, and evaluation.

Henryk Gasiul's *Personalistyczna koncepcja osobowosci* explicitly locates personality theory within a personalist anthropology that resists both reductionism and psychologism (Gasiul, 2022). The person is not equated with an aggregate of traits nor reduced to adaptive mechanisms; rather, personality is construed as a dynamic configuration through which a person comes to realise herself as meaning-oriented and value-responsive. The lexicon mobilised in this framework — agency, responsibility, development, disturbance, integration — is revealing. These terms function not merely as descriptive labels but also as normative and teleological categories: they presuppose that the subject is oriented toward coherence and fulfilment, and that deviations from this orientation are diagnostically significant.

This orientation resonates with the philosophical anthropology articulated in Wojtyla's *The Acting Person*, where personhood is disclosed through action as self-determining and self-possessing (Wojtyla, 1979). Wojtyla's analysis of *actus humanus* situates personal identity in the lived structure of self-determination: the person becomes herself through responsible action. Importantly, this is not presented only as an empirical generalisation but as a claim about the reflexive structure of acting — action reveals the subject to herself as the originator of acts. Read against this background, Polish personalist psychology can be seen as inheriting a "reflexive grammar" of agency, even when it operates in developmental or clinical registers.

From a hermeneutic standpoint, such a conception implies that identity is not an inert datum. If personhood is disclosed through self-determining acts, then continuity across time requires interpretation. Ricoeur's distinction between *idem*-identity (sameness, including characterological continuity) and *ipse*-identity (selfhood as fidelity, promise-keeping, and responsibility) offers a philosophical clarification of what personalist psychology often presupposes (Ricoeur, 1992). On this reading, the personalist self is not only stable through traits (*idem*) but also through fidelity to commitments and meanings (*ipse*). The prominence of "responsibility" in personalist discourse is therefore not incidental; it operates as a linguistic marker of *ipse*-identity.

1.2. Noetic Dimension and the Horizon of Meaning

Kazimierz Popielski's *Noetyczny wymiar osobowosci* intensifies this structure by introducing the noetic dimension as constitutive of personality (Popielski, 1994). Drawing on logotherapeutic inspirations, Popielski portrays the person as oriented toward meaning (*sens*), not merely toward homeostasis or gratification. Here, the "noetic" is not equivalent to the "cognitive"; it refers to a dimension of meaning, value, and transcendence that shapes the person's interpretive horizon.

A key consequence of this move is linguistic. When personality is described as noetically structured, the explanatory vocabulary shifts from causal-mechanistic accounts toward hermeneutic and evaluative registers. Terms such as "meaning," "purpose," "calling," or "crisis of meaning" function less like labels for discrete inner states and more like narrative pivots around which life-stories can be organised. In this sense, the noetic dimension provides a semantic axis that enables experiences to be emploted within a teleological arc. From the perspective of narrative psychology, this is broadly homologous to narrative-identity models that conceptualise identity as an internalised and evolving life story providing unity and purpose (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013). Personalist psychology, however, often leans toward a thicker ontological implication: meaning is not framed solely as subjective construction but as a horizon to which the person is answerable. In this respect, the personalist self differs from strictly constructivist accounts; it is not only narratively configured but also normatively addressed.

The philosophical background of this claim can be situated within hermeneutic traditions that emphasise the embeddedness of selfhood in moral and symbolic frameworks (Taylor, 1989). Taylor's analysis of "moral sources" suggests that modern identity is unintelligible apart from evaluative languages through which persons orient themselves toward perceived goods. Polish personalist psychology can be read as aligned with this view: identity is not a neutral configuration of traits but a morally inflected orientation within a field of values.

1.3. Unity, Integration, and the Problem of Narrative Coherence

A central concept in Gasiul's account is *integration*. Personality development is described as a process in which experiences, motivations, and values are integrated into a more coherent configuration, whereas disturbance is associated with fragmentation, disintegration, or loss of coherence (Gasiul, 2022). The metaphorics — coherence, integration, unity — are spatial and structural, and they readily invite narrative interpretation. Bruner's thesis that narrative is a primary mode of meaning-making helps to illuminate this point (Bruner, 1991). Narrative does not merely recount events; it configures them according to intelligibility conditions such as coherence, intentionality, and moral evaluation. When personalist psychology appeals to "integration," it implicitly assumes that disparate experiences can be related within a life trajectory. In narrative terms, this corresponds to emplotment: arranging events so that they become intelligible as parts of a temporally extended whole.

Philosophical debate, however, complicates this alignment. Christman argues that strong claims about narrative unity as a condition of personhood risk overextending narrativity and may become normatively coercive, especially when they exclude episodic or non-coherent modes of self-relation (Christman, 2004). The personalist emphasis on integration therefore invites a careful question: does it treat narrative coherence as an empirical tendency, a clinical ideal, or a criterion of mature personhood? Clarifying the descriptive versus normative status of "integration" becomes crucial for the argument developed in subsequent sections.

MacIntyre's conception of the unity of a human life as a narrative quest offers a supportive, though demanding, philosophical analogue (MacIntyre, 1981). In MacIntyre's view, action becomes intelligible only within narrative contexts structured by goods and traditions. Personalist psychology can be seen as echoing this thesis in psychological vocabulary: without integration into a meaningful life project, the person may experience crisis. The disciplines differ — moral philosophy versus personality theory — but the structural homology is noteworthy.

1.4. Language, Agency, and the Discursive Production of the Personalist Self

If the personalist subject is construed as agentic, responsible, and meaning-oriented, these commitments should be traceable in the language through which the tradition

theorises the person. Discourse-analytic approaches provide tools for examining how agency and normativity are enacted textually (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). A preliminary reading of personalist psychological texts points to recurring patterns: active verb constructions that attribute initiative to the subject; evaluative descriptors that mark authenticity, maturity, or distortion; and modal resources that imply obligation, vocation, or developmental "oughts."

Gee's conception of discourse as language-in-use that enacts identities clarifies what is at stake (Gee, 2014). When personalist psychology describes individuals as "taking responsibility," "integrating values," or "realising meaning," it does more than describe behaviour; it enacts a model of the subject as morally accountable and self-originating. Syntactically, the grammatical subject is frequently the person-as-agent rather than impersonal mechanisms — an orientation consistent with the tradition's ontological emphasis on agency.

Bakhtin's account of dialogism further enriches this perspective (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). The personalist self is rarely presented as purely monological; it is articulated in relation to values, traditions, and significant others. Even where theoretical exposition appears monologic, the conceptual vocabulary is intertextually saturated — with philosophical personalism, logotherapy, and (often) Christian anthropological motifs. The "I" in personalist psychology can therefore be understood as dialogically constituted, even as unity and integration are affirmed.

Conclusion of Section 1

Contemporary Polish personalist psychology constructs the self as an ontologically grounded, normatively oriented, and narratively integrable subject. Its key categories — person, responsibility, integration, noetic dimension, meaning — function not merely as neutral descriptors but as elements of a substantive anthropology. Interpreted hermeneutically, these categories presuppose a narrative logic: the self becomes intelligible as a temporally extended unity that interprets its past and projects its future within a horizon of values. The next section situates this personalist narrative grammar within broader philosophical debates on narrative identity, including both affirmations and critiques, in order to clarify what kind of "narrative unity" is at stake and what conceptual and normative costs it may involve.

Section 2. Narrative Identity between Hermeneutics and Critique: Philosophical Coordinates of the Personalist Self

2.1. From Substantial Identity to Narrative Configuration

If contemporary Polish personalist psychology presupposes a unified and meaning-oriented subject, a philosophical question concerns the ontological status of this unity: is it substantial, procedural, narrative, or dialogical? In modern debates on personal identity, accounts grounded in substance metaphysics have increasingly given way to interpretive and temporally mediated approaches to selfhood. Within this broader shift, narrative has come to function not merely as a literary metaphor but as a candidate structural principle for understanding how selves achieve continuity over time. Ricoeur's hermeneutics of the self remains particularly relevant. In *Oneself as Another*, he distinguishes between *idem*-identity (identity as sameness, including characterological continuity and numerical persistence) and *ipse*-identity (selfhood as fidelity, promise-keeping, and responsibility) (Ricoeur, 1992). This distinction provides a useful coordinate for situating personalist psychology. To the extent that personalist accounts emphasise responsibility, integration, and meaning, they align more readily with *ipse*-identity than with trait-based models oriented primarily toward *idem*. On this reading, the personalist self is not exhausted by psychological attributes; it is a subject capable of commitment and moral constancy across change and discontinuity.

Ricoeur further argues that narrative mediates between *idem* and *ipse*. Through narrative configuration (*mise en intrigue*), events are arranged into a meaningful whole that allows the subject to recognise herself as "the same" through time despite transformation (Ricoeur, 1992). This configuration is neither arbitrary nor purely fictional: it is constrained by lived experience and by shared symbolic resources. Narrative identity, in this sense, is less an aesthetic embellishment than an interpretive structure through which temporality becomes intelligible. Polish personalist psychology can be read as presupposing this kind of narrative mediation when it appeals to "integration" and "development." Development is not presented as mere chronological accumulation but as structured transformation within a meaningful trajectory. Narrative, accordingly, functions as an implicit grammar of personalist integration.

2.2. Moral Teleology and the Unity of a Life

MacIntyre's thesis that "the unity of a human life is the unity of a narrative quest" offers further philosophical grounding (MacIntyre, 1981). On his account, actions are intelligible only within narratives that relate them to goods internal to practices and traditions; a life lacking narrative structure lacks moral intelligibility. This framework resonates with personalist psychology's emphasis on values and meaning. When Gasiul describes personality as structured through value integration (Gasiul, 2022), he invokes a teleological horizon, and Popielski's noetic dimension likewise presupposes orientation toward meaningful ends (Popielski, 1994). In broadly MacIntyrean terms, the personalist subject is intelligible as someone whose life can be understood through projects, goods, and commitments that confer narrative shape.

At the same time, MacIntyre's account introduces a demanding criterion: narrative unity is not merely psychological coherence but ethical intelligibility within a tradition. This raises a question relevant to personalist frameworks: do their accounts of integration sufficiently foreground communal and tradition-bound dimensions of narrative identity, or do they risk translating socio-moral intelligibility into primarily intra-psychic terms? Taylor's genealogy of modern identity deepens this point. Taylor argues that identity is constituted within "frameworks of strong evaluation" (Taylor, 1989): we know who we are by orienting ourselves toward what we regard as good, worthy, or obligatory. Language is central here because it carries the moral sources from which identity draws its orientation. From this vantage point, personalist psychology's vocabulary of meaning, responsibility, and vocation is not incidental but constitutive: it encodes a moral ontology in which the self is answerable within a space of evaluation, and its unity is inseparable from the evaluative languages available to it.

2.3. Narrative Psychology and the Empirical Turn

Where hermeneutic philosophy provides ontological depth, narrative psychology offers empirical articulation. McAdams conceptualises narrative identity as an internalised and evolving life story that integrates reconstructed past, perceived present, and anticipated future into a more or less coherent whole (McAdams, 2001). Such stories are socially co-authored and culturally patterned, and they can provide unity, purpose, and moral orientation. Crucially, McAdams does not claim that narrative identity is metaphysically necessary for personhood. Rather, he shows that individuals frequently use narrative structures to organise experience and regulate meaning, and that these capacities develop (typically) from adolescence onward through autobiographical reasoning (McAdams & McLean, 2013). This empirical modesty differentiates narrative psychology from stronger narrativity theses sometimes advanced in philosophy. Personalist psychology, by contrast, often appears closer to a robust — though not always explicitly specified — narrative ontology. To the extent that it treats fragmentation and "loss of meaning" as central forms of disturbance, it suggests that some form of meaningful temporal configuration is integral to flourishing. In this

respect it converges with Bruner's claim that narrative is a primary mode of meaning-making, not merely a stylistic option (Bruner, 1991). A theoretical tension follows. Narrative can be understood as (a) a contingent psychological strategy, (b) a culturally dominant form of self-interpretation, or (c) an ontological condition of selfhood. Personalist psychology sometimes seems to move between (b) and (c) without explicitly marking the transition. One task of the present study is therefore to clarify—through conceptual reconstruction and linguistic analysis — what kind of "strength" is implied when personalist texts appeal to unity, integration, and responsibility.

2.4. Critique of Strong Narrativity

Christman offers a careful critique of the view that narrative unity is a necessary condition of personhood (Christman, 2004). He argues that imposing narrativity as a normative requirement risks marginalising forms of agency that do not conform to coherent life stories. Narrative self-interpretation may be episodic, fragmented, or situational without undermining moral agency; insisting on coherence can therefore become conceptually overstated and normatively restrictive.

This critique bears directly on the personalist emphasis on integration. If integration is tacitly equated with narrative coherence, then lives that resist smooth emplotment — because of trauma, discontinuity, or plural and shifting affiliations — may be implicitly pathologised. In such cases, "integration" can function less as a descriptive psychological term and more as a normative ideal that exceeds what the tradition explicitly acknowledges. Here discourse analysis becomes particularly useful. Fairclough's view of discourse as a site where subject positions are produced invites scrutiny of how "integration" and "fragmentation" operate not only as clinical descriptors but as evaluative categories that position subjects within a normative horizon (Fairclough, 1992). Similarly, Wodak and Meyer's critical discourse studies highlight how evaluative oppositions can be embedded in wider social norms and asymmetries (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The personalist self may thus be simultaneously emancipatory and prescriptive: it affirms agency and dignity while also privileging a specific ideal of coherence.

2.5. Dialogical Self and Polyphony

Bakhtin's dialogical philosophy adds an important nuance. The self is not a monolithic narrator but a polyphonic site where multiple voices intersect (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Contemporary dialogical approaches in psychology — though not identical with Bakhtin's original literary theory — inherit the central insight that identity is formed in dialogical exchange rather than through solitary self-narration. If personalist psychology emphasises responsibility and integration, dialogism underscores that such integration is never purely internal. It emerges in relation to others, traditions, and symbolic orders. Unity, on this view, is less a matter of monological coherence than of negotiated synthesis. This perspective helps to mitigate the risk of overly rigid narrativity by acknowledging internal plurality and the relational conditions of self-interpretation.

Conclusion of Section 2

The philosophical coordinates of narrative identity provide both support and productive tension for contemporary Polish personalist psychology. Hermeneutics (Ricoeur), virtue ethics (MacIntyre), and moral ontology (Taylor) offer frameworks in which the personalist emphasis on responsibility and meaning is readily intelligible. Narrative psychology (McAdams) supplies empirical accounts of life-story integration and its development. At the same time, critiques of strong narrativity (Christman) and dialogical perspectives (Bakhtin) caution against equating personhood with seamless coherence. The methodological task that follows is to examine — through qualitative

discourse analysis — how personalist psychology linguistically stabilises the self as unified and meaning-oriented, and whether this stabilisation functions primarily as description, as normatively loaded prescription, or as a hybrid of both. Section 3 therefore undertakes a systematic discourse-analytic reading of selected personalist texts, identifying the semantic, syntactic, and evaluative mechanisms through which the personalist narrative self is constructed.

Section 3. Discursive Construction of the Personalist Self: A Philosophical–Linguistic Analysis

3.1. From Ontology to Discourse: Methodological Clarification

Where Sections 1 and 2 reconstructed the anthropological and philosophical architecture of the personalist self, the present section shifts the analytical focus from ontology to discourse. The guiding methodological premise is that ontological commitments are not external to language but are, in important respects, sedimented within it. The person construed as agentic, responsible, meaning-oriented, and integrative is not only theorised through explicit propositions; she is also enacted through recurrent discursive patterns that make particular forms of selfhood linguistically salient and normatively intelligible. The analytical framework therefore combines (1) a qualitative discourse-analytic perspective informed by Fairclough's account of discourse as social practice and a site for the production of subject positions (Fairclough, 1992), (2) Gee's approach to discourse as language-in-use that enacts identities, relationships, and systems of valuation (Gee, 2014), and (3) a dialogical perspective derived from Bakhtin, emphasising the polyphonic and relational constitution of the self (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). The aim is not to reduce personalist psychology to rhetoric, but to show how its anthropological commitments are realised and stabilised through specific linguistic resources.

The corpus consists of theoretical and definitional passages in Gasiul (2022) and Popielski (1994) where personhood, development, disturbance, meaning, and responsibility are explicitly conceptualised; these readings are supplemented by contextual reference to Polish narrative-psychological vocabularies (Trzebinski, 2002; Dryll & Cierpka, 2011). The analysis proceeds on three interconnected levels: (a) semantic fields and lexical networks, (b) grammatical and syntactic patterns of agency attribution, and (c) evaluative and modal resources through which subjects are positioned within a normative horizon.

3.2. Semantic Fields: Responsibility, Integration, Meaning

A first observation concerns semantic clustering around responsibility, integration, and meaning. These are not isolated terms but nodal points organising broader lexical networks: responsibility tends to co-occur with decision, commitment, vocation, and choice; integration with coherence, development, and maturity; meaning with value, sense, and orientation. From a discourse-analytic perspective, such clustering establishes a semantic horizon within which the subject becomes intelligible primarily as one who responds, integrates, and orients herself toward value. In Gee's terminology, this lexicon enacts a distinctive "identity kit": to be a person is to be someone who takes responsibility, integrates experiences, and seeks meaning (Gee, 2014). The discourse does not merely report these properties; it frames them as defining features of mature personhood.

Popielski's category of the noetic dimension intensifies this horizon (Popielski, 1994). "Noetic" language shifts explanation from causal-mechanistic registers toward axiological and hermeneutic ones, so that psychological disturbance is framed not only as dysfunction but also as crisis of meaning. In narrative terms, this corresponds to disruption of emplotment: the self is disoriented not simply because of impaired functioning but because experiences are no longer integrated into a purposive temporal configuration (McAdams, 2001). Semantic fields thus perform ontological work by

configuring the self as essentially interpretive and teleologically oriented; the personalist subject is positioned within what Taylor describes as a space of "strong evaluation" (Taylor, 1989).

3.3. Grammatical Agency and the Construction of the Acting Subject

A second level of analysis concerns syntactic patterning. In personalist psychological discourse, the grammatical subject is frequently the person-as-agent, and sentences are organised around verbs of action and reflexivity: the person chooses, integrates, realises, assumes responsibility, develops, distorts, overcomes. This preference is consequential. In contrast to the impersonal constructions common in some behavioural or neurocognitive discourses ("processes occur," "mechanisms activate"), personalist texts tend to foreground active constructions in which the subject is positioned as a source of action rather than an effect of processes. In Fairclough's terms, grammar here functions as a resource for the discursive enactment of agency (Fairclough, 1992): syntactic choices participate in the production of the subject position "agent."

This grammatical tendency also aligns with Wojtyla's analysis of self-determination, in which acting discloses the person reflexively as the originator of her acts (Wojtyla, 1979). Linguistically, the active voice and reflexive constructions found in personalist discourse mirror this philosophical grammar, producing an overlap between the linguistic subject of the sentence and the ontological subject of action. Modal verbs and evaluative predicates further reinforce agency: expressions indicating obligation ("should," "is called to"), possibility ("can integrate," "may distort"), and necessity embed the subject within a normative field. Identity is construed not only as what is but also as what ought to become; modality thus functions as a linguistic carrier of teleology.

3.4. Evaluation and Normativity: Integration versus Fragmentation

The opposition between integration and fragmentation functions as a central evaluative axis. Integration is positively marked — associated with maturity, authenticity, and fulfilment — whereas fragmentation is negatively marked —associated with crisis, alienation, or dysfunction. In the framework of critical discourse studies, such oppositions can operate as strategies of legitimation and delegitimation: they establish normative boundaries around desirable and undesirable forms of selfhood (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). The integrated self is positioned as both psychologically and ethically preferable; the fragmented self is positioned as problematic and in need of repair or reintegration.

This evaluative polarity is broadly compatible with MacIntyre's account of the unity of a life as narrative quest (MacIntyre, 1981). From Christman's critical perspective, however, it also raises questions: if unity is treated as a marker of psychological health or mature personhood, does this risk marginalising episodic, plural, or discontinuous forms of self-relation (Christman, 2004)? The discourse of integration can therefore be simultaneously enabling and prescriptive: it affirms dignity and agency while privileging a particular ideal of coherence. Recognising this dual function is essential for interpreting the tradition's anthropological claims.

3.5. Dialogical Structure and Intertextual Saturation

Bakhtin's concept of dialogism clarifies another dimension: the personalist self is not articulated as purely autonomous but as situated within a web of voices (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). The discourse of Polish personalist psychology is intertextually saturated with philosophical personalism, existential-therapeutic motifs, and — often —Christian anthropological vocabularies; even when not explicitly cited, these voices resonate in terms such as vocation, responsibility, and meaning. Unity, on this view, is not monological but dialogical: the subject integrates not only experiences but also voices

— traditions, norms, and expectations - into a negotiated synthesis rather than a solitary construction. From the standpoint of narrative psychology, this dialogicality corresponds to the social co-authorship of life stories (McAdams & McLean, 2013), while personalist discourse adds a distinctive inflection in which plurality is oriented toward integrative synthesis—voices are to be harmonised, not merely juxtaposed.

3.6. Descriptive or Normative Discourse?

A final issue concerns the status of personalist discourse: is it primarily descriptive, normative, or hybrid? The density of evaluative and modal language suggests a hybrid status. Personalist psychology describes developmental processes, yet it also articulates an ideal of mature selfhood characterised by responsibility, meaning-orientation, and integration. Gee's framework underscores that discourses inevitably enact values: there is no purely neutral description of identity (Gee, 2014). The personalist self is therefore constructed both as an empirical object of psychological explanation and as a normative aspiration. In this sense, personalist psychology can be read as participating in what Taylor calls a moral ontology (Taylor, 1989): it articulates conditions under which a life counts as coherent and meaningful, thereby shaping the evaluative horizon within which selfhood is judged.

Conclusion of Section 3

The discourse-analytic reading suggests that contemporary Polish personalist psychology constructs the self through a dense network of semantic, grammatical, and evaluative strategies. Responsibility, integration, and meaning form a semantic core; active grammatical constructions foreground agency; modal and evaluative resources position the subject within a normative horizon; and dialogical intertextuality situates selfhood within traditions and moral frameworks. The personalist narrative self thus emerges as a linguistically stabilised configuration: a unified, meaning-oriented, and responsible subject whose identity is maintained through interpretive integration. The final section synthesises these findings into a philosophical–linguistic model and considers implications for debates on narrative identity and the normative dimensions of selfhood.

Section 4. Toward a Model of the Personalist Narrative Self

4.1. From Reconstruction to System: The Need for Theoretical Consolidation

The preceding analyses suggest that contemporary Polish personalist psychology operates with a robust conception of the self as agentic, responsible, meaning-oriented, and integrative. Read alongside philosophical hermeneutics (Ricoeur, 1992; Taylor, 1989), virtue-ethical narrativity (MacIntyre, 1981), empirical narrative psychology (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013), and discourse theory (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2016), this conception appears neither purely metaphysical nor merely empirical: it is discursively enacted and normatively structured. The task at this stage is therefore systematic — to articulate a model capable of synthesising these dimensions without collapsing them into reductive psychologism or uncritical narrativism. The central claim advanced here is that contemporary Polish personalist psychology can be reconstructed as presupposing what may be termed a strong personalist narrative ontology, in which narrative configuration functions not merely as a psychological technique but as a privileged medium for the realisation of personhood understood in normative terms.

4.2. The Structure of the Personalist Narrative Self

The proposed model can be summarised through four interrelated theses. First, it assigns ontological primacy to agency: the personalist self is conceptually and

grammatically constructed as an originator of action, consistent with Wojtyla's account of self-determination (Wojtyla, 1979) and enacted linguistically through active constructions and reflexive markers of agency. On this view, agency is not emergent from narrative; rather, narrative presupposes an acting subject — without agency, no emplotment is possible. Second, the model emphasises a teleological orientation toward meaning: the noetic dimension (Popielski, 1994) situates identity within a horizon of value and *sens*, so that narrative functions as teleological articulation — life events are configured not merely to maintain coherence but to orient the self toward perceived goods within frameworks of strong evaluation (Taylor, 1989). Third, it highlights integrative emplotment: drawing on Ricoeur's account of narrative mediation between *idem* and *ipse*, personalist psychology treats integration as a key condition of maturity, achieved by configuring temporally dispersed experiences into a meaningful unity sustained by responsibility and purpose (Ricoeur, 1992; Gasiul, 2022). Fourth, it underscores dialogical embeddedness: despite its emphasis on unity, the personalist self is not monological; Bakhtinian dialogism clarifies how identity emerges through interaction with multiple voices—cultural, moral, and relational—so that narrative integration is always intersubjectively conditioned (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986). Taken together, these theses define the personalist narrative self as an agentic, meaning-oriented, integratively configured, and dialogically situated subject.

4.3. Descriptive and Normative Dimensions

A decisive issue concerns the status of this model: is it descriptive of how individuals in fact construct identity, or normative regarding how identity ought to be structured? Narrative psychology typically maintains descriptive modesty, treating narrative identity as common and developmentally significant without elevating it to a metaphysical condition of personhood (McAdams, 2001). Christman's critique likewise cautions against converting narrativity into a universal criterion of being a person (Christman, 2004). Personalist psychology, however, operates within a thicker anthropological framework in which integration and responsibility appear not as contingent preferences but as conditions of flourishing. For analytical clarity, the present model therefore distinguishes two levels: (A) empirical narrativity, in which individuals use life stories to organise experience and regulate meaning (Bruner, 1991; McAdams & McLean, 2013), and (B) normative personalist narrativity, in which coherent and value-oriented narrative integration is treated as constitutive of mature personhood. The strength of personalist psychology lies in foregrounding what narrative psychology often leaves implicit — namely, that identity is rarely normatively neutral — while the associated risk lies in conflating empirical description with moral prescription. The point of the distinction proposed here is to preserve both dimensions without collapsing one into the other.

4.4. Response to the Critique of Strong Narrativity

Christman's concern that narrative unity may exclude episodic or fragmented forms of agency is important (Christman, 2004). The personalist model developed here can be interpreted as avoiding this exclusion by grounding narrativity less in stylistic coherence than in responsibility. The unity at stake is not aesthetic symmetry but the capacity to answer for one's actions across time. In Ricoeur's terms, *ipse*-identity does not demand seamless storytelling but fidelity and accountability (Ricoeur, 1992). Accordingly, the personalist narrative self need not be defined by smooth biographical continuity; rather, it is defined by ethical constancy and the interpretive capacity to assume responsibility even under conditions of discontinuity. This refinement helps prevent the model from becoming coercively coherentist: narrative remains structurally significant, yet it is subordinated to agency and responsibility rather than equated with literary unity.

4.5. Linguistic Stabilisation and Ontological Commitment

Discourse analysis suggests that personalist psychology linguistically stabilises its ontology through semantic fields of integration and meaning, grammatical constructions foregrounding agency, and evaluative and modal resources positioning the subject within a normative horizon (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Language does not merely mirror anthropological assumptions; it participates in constituting them in practice. The personalist narrative self is therefore not a metaphysical abstraction but a discursive formation whose ontological commitments are sedimented in linguistic habits: when psychological texts repeatedly describe the subject as integrating, realising, and assuming responsibility, they enact a model of selfhood that becomes intelligible—and often desirable—within the tradition's horizon. This observation bridges philosophy and linguistics by showing that ontology and discourse are mutually implicating rather than separate domains.

4.6. Implications for Polish Narrative Psychology

This synthesis has several implications for contemporary Polish narrative research. First, it invites more explicit articulation of anthropological presuppositions: narrative studies in Poland (Trzebinski, 2002; Dryll & Cierpka, 2011) often analyse identity processes without fully engaging the normative ontology that personalist traditions bring into play, and the present model encourages dialogue between narrative psychology and philosophical personalism. Second, it suggests methodological integration: empirical narrative analysis can be enriched by discourse-analytic attention to evaluative and modal structures, while philosophical reflection can be sharpened by empirical findings on autobiographical reasoning. Third, it clarifies the ethical dimension of narrative research: if narrative identity is embedded in moral frameworks (Taylor, 1989), then research on self-stories cannot be wholly value-neutral, because languages of integration, crisis, and maturity carry normative weight.

4.7. Concluding Synthesis

The personalist narrative self can thus be modelled as a coherent configuration grounded in four structural dimensions — agency, teleology, integration, and dialogicality — mediated through narrative and stabilised through discourse. The contribution of the present synthesis lies not in endorsing narrativity as such, but in showing how contemporary Polish personalist psychology can be reconstructed as operating with a comparatively strong narrative ontology and how this ontology is discursively enacted. By distinguishing empirical narrativity from normative personalism, the model aims to avoid both reductionist psychologism and uncritical narrativism. The conclusion now draws together the argument, clarifies the study's contribution, and indicates directions for further interdisciplinary research at the intersection of philosophy, psychology, and discourse analysis.

5. Conclusion

This study examined how contemporary Polish personalist psychology constructs the self at the intersection of narrative theory, philosophical anthropology, and discourse analysis. The central claim has been that this tradition can be reconstructed as presupposing a strong personalist narrative ontology: it does not merely describe the self as narratively organised but treats narrative configuration as structurally implicated in the realisation of personhood understood as responsible, meaning-oriented agency.

Reconstruction of key personalist texts (Gasiul, 2022; Popielski, 1994) showed a dense commitment to agency, integration, and teleological orientation. These commitments resonate with philosophical hermeneutics of the self (Ricoeur, 1992), virtue-ethical accounts of narrativity (MacIntyre, 1981), and moral-ontological analyses of identity (Taylor, 1989). At the same time, engagement with narrative psychology (McAdams,

2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013) located personalist integration within empirically grounded models of life-story construction, while Christman's critique (Christman, 2004) served as a check against elevating narrative coherence to a universal criterion of personhood.

The discourse-analytic examination suggested that personalist ontology is linguistically stabilised through specific semantic fields (responsibility, meaning, integration), grammatical constructions that foreground agency, and evaluative and modal resources that embed the subject within a normative horizon (Fairclough, 1992; Gee, 2014; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Language does not merely reflect an already-formed anthropology; it enacts and naturalises it. The personalist self thus emerges as a discursively constituted subject whose unity is articulated in teleological and dialogical terms (Bakhtin, 1981, 1986).

The article's contribution is threefold. First, it clarifies the anthropological presuppositions underlying Polish personalist psychology by situating them within broader philosophical debates on narrative identity. Second, it shows that narrative integration in this tradition is not merely descriptive but normatively structured around responsibility and strong evaluation. Third, it demonstrates that these commitments are embedded in discourse and can be analysed systematically with linguistic tools. Two further implications follow: narrative psychology in the Polish context benefits from recognising the moral ontology implicit in its conceptual vocabulary, while philosophical personalism benefits from discourse-analytic scrutiny that prevents its claims from remaining at the level of abstract anthropology.

The study also has limitations. It focused primarily on theoretical texts rather than empirical narrative data; future work could examine autobiographical interviews or therapeutic narratives to test how the reconstructed personalist narrative model operates in lived discourse. Comparative analysis with non-personalist or more constructivist frameworks would further clarify what is distinctive about the Polish tradition.

In sum, the personalist narrative self is best understood as an agentic, meaning-oriented, integratively configured, and dialogically embedded subject whose identity is sustained through narrative mediation within a normative horizon of value. By bringing philosophy, psychology, and discourse analysis into systematic dialogue, the study has aimed to show that questions of selfhood are not resolved at the level of theory alone, but must also be examined where ontology becomes language and language becomes lived identity.

AI Use Declaration

The authors declare that no artificial intelligence (AI) tools were used in the writing, editing, analysis, or research process related to this article.

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