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An attempt to formulate a media studies research project on the dignity of the family in the media based on the thoughts of John Paul II. Empirical use of personalist philosophy in media studies

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Abstract

The text attempts to construct a proposal for empirical research on the image of family dignity in the media based on the value of human dignity in the philosophy of John Paul II. The author of the article assumes the possibility of empirical research on values after appropriate operationalisation of the abstract concept. To this end, a general historical analysis of personalist philosophy, its fundamental concepts and the thought of Emmanuel Mounier, who introduced the concept of the person into contemporary philosophy, is presented. Next, the personalist thought of Karol Wojtyła, John Paul II, is presented in the context of elements of his philosophy, theology and social teaching. On this basis, the concept of the dignity of the person and the family is formulated, followed by an attempt to reduce this abstract research concept to an empirically verifiable category. The result of this article is not only to show the possibility of empirically examining the dignity of the family in the media, but also to emphasise the relevance of John Paul II's teaching.

Keywords

John Paul II, Emanuel Mounier, personalism, person, dignity, family, media, value, empirical research

1. Introduction

In his teachings, John Paul II emphasised the essence and importance of the family as a unique community of persons. In his encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, he wrote: “The family is called to fulfil its tasks throughout the entire life of its members, from birth to death. It is a true sanctuary of life, a place where life, God’s gift, can be properly received and protected from the many attacks to which it is exposed, and where it can develop in accordance with the requirements of true human growth. Therefore, the family plays a decisive and irreplaceable role in shaping the culture of life.”¹ At the same time, John Paul II was aware of the culture in which we live and how the omnipresent media can influence people, especially the image of that unique community which is the family, as he expresses in his encyclical *Redemptoris missio*. “The first Areopagus” of our time is the world of the media, which unites humanity and makes it, as it is called, a “global village.” The media have become so important that for many, they are the main source of information and formation, a guide and inspiration for individual, family and social behaviour. Above all, new generations are growing up in a world conditioned by the mass media.”²

In his encyclical *Evangelium vitae*, Pope John Paul II not only highlights the diversity and importance of the family, but also reminds us of its responsibility for raising new generations of people, which should take place primarily in an atmosphere of love and respect for the value of the person, dignity, freedom and respect for other values.³ At the same time, he emphasised the enormous role of the media in presenting an authentic image of the family. “A great and serious responsibility rests on the shoulders of those who work in the media: they must ensure that the content they convey serves the culture of life in an effective manner. They should therefore show sublime and noble examples of life and devote attention to positive, and sometimes even heroic, testimonies of human love; they should speak with great respect about the values of sexuality

¹ John Paul II, Encyclical on the value and inviolability of human life *Evangelium vitae*, 25.03.1995, 92, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae.html (15.03.2025).

² John Paul II, Encyclical *Redemptoris missio*, 7.12.1990, 37/C, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_07121990_redemptoris-missio.html (15.03.2025).

³ John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 96.

and love, without emphasising what disfigures and degrades human dignity.”⁴ This message should also be relevant today and implemented in the mass media in order to build a culture of life. However, whether this is the case, whether the media authentically present the value of the family, its dignity, significance and importance in the social system, can only be determined after empirical research has been conducted.

In view of the above, the aim of this article is to attempt to formulate a research project on the media based on the personalist thought of John Paul II. A research project on the image of family dignity in contemporary media communication will be outlined. To this end, a general historical analysis of personalist philosophy, its basic concepts and the thought of Emmanuel Mounier, who introduced the concept of the person into contemporary philosophy, is presented. Next, the personalist thought of Karol Wojtyła, John Paul II, is presented in the context of selected texts and elements of his philosophy, theology and social teaching concerning the dignity of the family. On this basis, the concept of the dignity of the person and the family is formulated, followed by an attempt to reduce this abstract research concept to an empirically verifiable category. One that can be examined and described in media research in the form of textual content analysis, interviews or surveys.

2. The personalistic foundations of dignity in the teachings of John Paul II

Reflections on the dignity of the family should begin with an examination of the dignity of the individual, who, as the foundation of the community that is the family, takes on various forms of care depending on the role they play within the family structure. Moreover, understanding this is essential in attempting to grasp the dignity of the family itself, but also from a media perspective. For this reason, this research will be conducted from a personalist perspective. By personalism, we mean a system that views reality through the prism of the human person. In this sense, the person is considered the starting point for reflection and the foundation for formulating a way of thinking about the world.⁵ In the case of researching the dignity of the family from a media perspective, the person

⁴ John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 98.

⁵ Cf. S. C. Bartnik, *Personalizm*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2008, p. 30.

will therefore be the basis for formulating the research methodology and the starting point for media research.

In the history of thought, starting with Socrates, through Boethius, St. Thomas Aquinas and Jacques Maritain, all thinkers who dealt with the issue of man as a unique being in the world can be called personalists, even if they differ in their views.⁶ In this context, it should be noted that in contemporary 20th-century thought, Emanuel Mounier returns to the problem of the person in its fundamental meaning. Mounier was the initiator of contemporary personalist thought. The personalist movement he started arose from the 1929 financial crisis and was expressed in the creation of the monthly magazine *Esprit* in 1932.⁷ Writing served a very important social function—it was a form of protest against various forms of oppression and social deprivation, as well as reductionist views of humanity. Mounier was deeply committed to the cause of the individual, to understanding them properly, to reinterpreting their value and place in the world. He adopted the point of view of a Christian radiating living faith. In this sense, he considered Christianity to be madness, not a brake on action. Therefore, in this context, he desired a revolution because “the disorder of this century [the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries] is too deep-rooted and too persistent to be removed without a thorough overthrow, without a profound revision of values, without a reorganization of structures and a renewal of the elites.”⁸ Therefore, Mounier believed that the temporal demands of personalism can only be fulfilled if the person is ontologically transcendent in relation to biological and social factors, and only Christian metaphysics can ensure this transcendence.⁹ Therefore, according to Mounier, the essence of personalism is the fact that a person strives to constantly transcend themselves. They constantly reach out to others and the world, and it is precisely through this movement that they become themselves. The personalistic image of man thus shows very clearly that a person is shaped and at the same time defined by their freedom and ability to communicate. Furthermore, Mounier believes that the ability to communicate and a person’s

⁶ Cf. F. Coplestone, *Historia filozofii*, vol. 11, Wydawnictwo PAX, Warszawa 2007, pp. 79–80.

⁷ E. Mounier was the initiator of contemporary personalist thought. The personalist movement he started arose from the crisis of 1929 and was expressed in the creation of the monthly magazine *Esprit* in 1932.

⁸ E. Mounier, *Wprowadzenie do egzystencjalizmów*, Wydawnictwo ZNAK, Kraków 1964, p. 105.

⁹ Cf. E. Mounier, *Wprowadzenie do egzystencjalizmów*, p. 133.

orientation toward others are the foundation of their existence because a person is oriented toward the world and others even before they exist in themselves.¹⁰

In the field of Polish philosophy, representatives of personalism include: Wincenty Granat,¹¹ Karol Wojtyła,¹² Mieczysław Albert Krąpiec,¹³ Mieczysław Gogacz,¹⁴ Tadeusz Styczeń,¹⁵ Czesław Stanisław Bartnik,¹⁶ and Tymon Terlecki.¹⁷ Among Polish representatives of personalism, the thought of Karol Wojtyła stands out, who, in the spirit of Christian metaphysics, questioned human dignity and the dignity of the person. He believed that man is objectively “someone,” and this distinguishes him from the rest of the beings of the visible world, which are objectively always only “something.”¹⁸ Therefore, ontologically speaking, man is a unique being among the rest of the beings of the created world. This means that his essence and his existence are different from other beings. It is this uniqueness of man’s essence, which determines his existence, that makes man “someone.” And someone special. Wojtyła would say that they are a person, that they are separate from the rest of the beings in the world. “Human beings are alone, for they are ‘different’ in relation to the visible world, to the world of living beings. [...]—and at the same time confirms himself in the visible world as a ‘person.’”¹⁹ In this way, “this process simultaneously leads to the first outline of the essence of man as a person with his own subjectivity.”²⁰ To recognize human dignity means placing the human being above everything that comes from him in the visible world. John Paul II believed that recognizing human

¹⁰ Cf. E. Mounier, *Co to jest personalizm?*, Wydawnictwo ZNAK, Kraków 1960, p. 201.

¹¹ Cf. W. Granat, *Personalizm chrześcijański*, Wydawnictwo Księgarnia św. Wojciecha, Poznań 1985.

¹² Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2000.

¹³ Cf. M. A. Krąpiec, *Człowiek jako osoba*, Wydawnictwo św. Tomasza z Akwinu, Lublin 2005.

¹⁴ Cf. M. Gogacz, *Wokół problemu osoby*, Wydawnictwo Wiedza Powszechna, Warszawa 1974.

¹⁵ Cf. T. Styczeń, *Objawić osobę*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2013.

¹⁶ Cf. S. Bartnik, *Personalizm*.

¹⁷ Cf. T. Terlecki, *Krytyka personalistyczna. Egzystencjalizm chrześcijański*, Wydawnictwo Biblioteka Więzi, Warszawa 1987.

¹⁸ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2001, p. 24.

¹⁹ K. Wojtyła, *Mężczyzną i niewiąłą stworzył ich*, Wydawnictwo Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Urbino 1980, p. 21.

²⁰ K. Wojtyła, *Mężczyzną i niewiąłą stworzył ich*, p. 21.

dignity means placing human beings above everything else that comes from them in the visible world.²¹

Karol Wojtyła's thought presents the person as being endowed with unique dignity among other beings. Thanks to reason and freedom, the person is a dynamic being who is constantly creating, developing, and transcending. It transcends its limits, i.e., it perfects itself, but within the framework of its ontological form. This means that the development of the person is inscribed in its nature. The essence of a person is to develop more and more as a person. To become more and more a person. Wojtyła believes that the person reveals itself most fully and thus develops in action. "A person becomes 'someone' and 'something' above all through their actions, through conscious activity."²² This awareness of one's actions is extremely important because when a person reflects on their actions, they allow their reason to guide them toward their goal. Towards good.²³ According to K. Wojtyła, it is assumed that reason knows the objective order of nature and thus chooses actions that are decent and worthy of a human being.²⁴ The greater the subject's self-awareness, the more mature the experience and the more aware the subject is of their actions and their consequences.²⁵ It can be said that conscious action is a confirmation of a person's dignity. Of their uniqueness. Conscious action defines a person and constantly recreates them through the reflective choice of good. The choice of evil, on the other hand, is the fulfillment of an act, but the non-fulfillment of a person, because a person, by their very nature, fulfills themselves only in good and develops in values.

Human dignity in Karol Wojtyła's thought thus appears as the importance and uniqueness of the person, which is the result of the ability to rationally experience both the internal and external world in a spirit of freedom. According to Karol Wojtyła, the rationality and freedom of the person are expressed and fulfilled simultaneously in the person's actions, thereby making the person more of a person. In this way, the personalistic value that Wojtyła writes about is realized: "The personalistic value of human action—that is, personal value—is

²¹ K. Wojtyła, *Filozof i papież. Wybór tekstów*, wyb. J. Merecki, Wydawnictwo Oficyna Nukowa, Warszawa 2009, p. 193.

²² K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, pp. 146–147.

²³ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 173.

²⁴ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, p. 173.

²⁵ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Osobowa struktura samostanowienia*, w: K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 426.

a special and, at the same time, perhaps the most fundamental expression of the value of the person itself.”²⁶ Therefore, it seems that personal value is a confirmation of the value of human dignity. As a result of the above considerations, it follows that human dignity is, on the one hand, a value ontologically inscribed in human existence, but on the other hand, it is a value that is constantly confirmed precisely by the realization of personal value in action.

3. From the dignity of the person to the dignity of the family

Wojtyła's philosophy of personalism treats the person as a being that transcends its own limits in action. A person's actions not only influence the ontological shape of the person themselves but also leave their mark on the external world, especially if they concern another person. In this light, the “I”—“other” relationship is an interpersonal opportunity to establish a community, which is expressed through participation. According to Wojtyła, participation is therefore a task that a person's axiological nature sets before them in the community, especially the fundamental value responsible for interpersonal bonds—love. The commandment of love is precisely an indication that every person must constantly set themselves the task of participating in the humanity of other people, that is, experiencing the other “I” as a person.²⁷ This idea of Wojtyła is specified in the personalistic norm, which places love at the center of interpersonal relations.²⁸

A special case of participation united by love is the family. More than that! It is the kind of participation in which a person learns to love. John Paul II taught that spouses are called to love and responsible parenthood. This means family planning that takes into account ethical norms and criteria. In this sense, love educates for freedom. In turn, it should be emphasized that in John Paul II's teaching, the commandment of love is a call addressed to human freedom. Only in an atmosphere of freedom can a person realize himself through love. It is precisely free devotion to others that opens the perspective of love. And

²⁶ K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 305.

²⁷ Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Uczestnictwo czy alienacja*, w: K. Wojtyła, *Osoba i czyn oraz inne studia antropologiczne*, p. 453.

²⁸ K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, p. 42.

these words take on special meaning in the love that unites a woman and a man as spouses and then as parents.²⁹

In light of the above and the broadly understood teachings of John Paul II, which have philosophical, theological, and social connotations, where the person is endowed with the unique value of dignity, realized, among other things, in personalistic value and the ability, or rather the commandment, to love, one cannot overlook the fact that the person is endowed with the unique value of dignity, theological and social, where the person is endowed with the unique value of dignity, realized, among other things, in personalistic value and the ability, or rather the commandment, to love, one cannot ignore the fact that the family is the natural environment for the person's development. In a healthy family, a person learns "who they are" through actions carried out in freedom. Such actions serve to maintain well-being, not destruction. Within the family, a person learns patterns of responsible, demanding, and lasting love. Ultimately, within the family, a person discovers their uniqueness, their predispositions, and the role they want to play in life. And it is in this respect, the family is a unique place where a person discovers their dignity, but not only that. The family is also a place where the dignity of individuals is summed up in the context of their shared everyday life.

We therefore come to the point where, based on the above considerations, it must be concluded that the dignity of the family can only be considered if the dignity of each of its members is recognized. Undoubtedly, the family consists of individuals who, fundamentally but also conditionally, have their own dignity. Fundamentally, because each of them is a person whose dignity is inherent. Conditionally, because they have their status in the family, a unique place, a role to fulfill, which testifies to the importance of that person. Therefore, every member of the family, starting with the parents, their children, but also grandparents, has their place, status, importance, and unique role in the family. John Paul II writes about this in his Apostolic Exhortation on the tasks of the Christian family in the modern world, *Familiaris consortio*: "The family, which by its nature is and should become a communion and community of persons, finds in love a living source and constant stimulus for accepting, respecting, and promoting the development of each of its members in their highest dignity

²⁹ Cf. John Paul II, *Mężczyzną i niewiąłą stworzył ich*, p. 234.

as persons, that is, as living images of God.”³⁰ Therefore, when we talk about the dignity of the family in this text, we understand it first of all as the uniqueness of the phenomenon of the family, where the individual discovers his or her personal dignity and is raised to it, and secondly, we consider the dignity of the family to be the sum of the dignity of all its members.

The upbringing of a person to dignity takes place in the mutual relationship of all family members. This means that all members of the family are subject to this upbringing process while influencing each other and accepting a number of external axiological conditions, i.e., culture, religion, school, work environment, politics, economics, etc. A person raised in a family therefore adopts its axiological character, thus learning the value of dignity in mutual relations between family members. “Depending on the degree of kinship and affinity, as well as parental dignity and the age of the new generation, an environment of mutual education and upbringing based on love is created. Unfortunately, pathological educational behaviors in single-parent families and families addicted to alcohol and drugs should also be noted. These educational deficiencies should be supplemented by institutions that support the family: the Church, the State, education at school, and the participation of social and non-governmental organizations.”³¹ The dignity of the father, the dignity of the mother, the dignity of the parents, the dignity of the grandfather, the dignity of the grandmother, close relatives and distant relatives. Everyone has a role to play in raising a person to understand their dignity. This takes place from the moment of giving life, its affirmation and acceptance, through loving care in the upbringing of a love of freedom, to the passing on of family history. In his teachings addressed to young people, John Paul II emphasized that family history and upbringing are important for the history of generations. “Your parents taught each and every one of you to speak the language that is the basic expression of social bonds with other people. These bonds are defined by boundaries that are broader than the family itself, or even a particular community. These boundaries are at least those of a tribe, and most often those of the people or nation into which you were born. In this way, your family heritage expands. Through your family upbringing,

³⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 22.11.1981, 4, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (20.03.2025).

³¹ S. Struzik, *Wartość i godność rodziny w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, Warszawa 2017, p. 15 (Zeszyty o Bożej Opatrzności, 5).

you participate in a specific culture and in the history of your people or nation. Family ties also mean belonging to a community larger than the family—and another basis for personal identity. If the family is the first educator of each and every one of you, then at the same time—through the family—the tribe, people, or nation with which we are connected by a unity of culture, language, and history is also an educator.”³²

Axiological unity begins in the family, which raises a person to a proper understanding of dignity, which is then realized in a proper understanding of love and freedom, as well as an axiological awareness that shapes a person’s perception of the outside world. This is particularly important in today’s media culture, when information of various kinds bombards the mind, especially that of young people. The family itself is also a frequent topic in the media, which is why the various perspectives from which it is presented can convey extremely different messages in their assessment of its value. Therefore, it is worth looking at these different messages to examine the media’s image of the dignity of the family and compare it with the dignity of the family in the message of John Paul II.

4. Two perspectives on the analysis of family dignity in the media

In order to examine John Paul II’s teaching on the dignity of the family in the media, an ontological analysis of the concepts of dignity and family in Karol Wojtyła’s philosophy was conducted. Interpreting the concept of human dignity allowed us to discover the concept of family dignity, which was examined from two perspectives. Family dignity was first discovered in the context of the educational significance of the individual and secondly as the sum of the dignity of the individuals who make up the family.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the issue of family dignity in the media manifests itself in two ways. Firstly, the family appears as a media audience. Secondly, as a subject whose image is used to create media messages that may carry a particular message of value or be presented in a distorted perspective. The first issue brings the current line of thinking into the space of media audience analysis. And it is precisely the subject of the dignity of the media audience that

³² John Paul II, Apostolic letter to the youth of the world *Dilecti amici*, 31.03.1985, 11, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1985/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_31031985_dilecti-amici.html (21.03.2025).

is extremely complex. Because underneath the instance of the viewer is every human being, whether adult or juvenile, mature or immature, often immersed in their own private experiences and problems or socially excluded. Therefore, the message intended for the masses is profiled at the level of the recipient depending on his or her experiences and the problems he or she is currently facing. In turn, these processes and experiences take place primarily in the sphere of the family. Therefore, it is important to consider the family as a specific recipient of media with its own dignity.

In the light of what has been said, the dignity of the family in the media is not only its authentic media image showing the truth about its value and problems. It is also the media's responsible message to each member of this family, who has his or her dignity through the personal dimension and the role he or she plays in this community. And it is precisely because of this role, which is the result of his or her age, his or her relationship with the other persons in the family community and their awareness of life, that the media message should be appropriately adapted and protected so that this dignity is not nullified. Therefore, in the 2005 Apostolic letter *The rapid development*, John Paul II emphasised the responsibility of the recipient to use the media properly and consciously: Above all, there is a need for a wide-ranging formative activity, spreading proper knowledge of the media and teaching informed use of them.³³

This brings us to the second case analysed, where the image of the family is used as a symbol of the content conveyed in the message. In social teaching, John Paul II made this very point emphatically: The media convey an often distorted picture of the essence of the family, its physiognomy, its educational function. These media can also introduce also among family members a habit of superficial satisfaction with the programmes offered, an uncritical passivity towards their content, and a lack of confrontation and constructive dialogue. In a particular way, they want to, by means of the patterns of life they propose, through the suggestive efficacy of images, words and sounds, to replace the family in its role of teaching and assimilating existential values. In view of this, it is important to emphasise the increasing influence exerted by the mass media, especially by television, on the process of the social formation of young people, which takes place by presenting a vision of man, of the world and

³³ Cf. John Paul II, Apostolic letter *The rapid development*, 24.01.2005, 2, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/2005/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20050124_il-rapido-sviluppo.html (20.03.2025).

of interpersonal relationships that is often incompatible with the vision that the family is trying to convey. In order for the family to be able to benefit from these messages without succumbing to humiliating conditioning, its members, and above all parents, must adopt an active attitude towards the messages conveyed, taking on the duty to understand and evaluate the content of the message.³⁴

The social cell that is the family is unique in its complexity. It is in the family that we are confronted with generational and age diversity, diversity of experience, often multiculturalism, a different world view, a plurality of needs and desires. All of this vast multiplicity is united by a community of love and a single goal of goodness. “What constitutes the defining characteristics of the family is its natural character, the communal relationships it forms that help the family survive and overcome the hardships it encounters.”³⁵ The uniqueness of the family unit makes it a media target. This means, on the one hand, that the media messages are directed at the family and the roles associated with it, i.e. the mother—nurturer of the home, the father, head of the family, the child, whether infant or teenager, the grandmother and grandfather, as supporters of the family’s well-being. On the other hand, the image of the ideal family is used in perspectival messages as a model of social norms. Within such a media portrayal of the family, visions of the traditional and contemporary family model may be confronted. Although traditional family roles are used in perspectival messages, i.e. an exceptionally effective washing powder for the lady of the house or an exceptionally safe car for the father of the family on a family holiday; a variety of television series seem to portray contemporary formats of families. On the other hand, these are not formed by traditional determinants: the legal consequences of entering into relationships, having children, the number of parents, the permanence of relationships, sexual exclusivity, heterosexuality, the household of two adults or the form of patriarchy as a form of family life realisation.

In the light of social norms transformations and the media portrayal of the family structure, the question of family dignity appears particularly urgent. What is this unique value? How can it be grasped? It seems that reflections on this

³⁴ Cf. John Paul II, Message for the 14th World Communications Day *Social communications and family*, 18.05.1980, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/communications/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_01051980_world-communications-day.html (21.03.2025).

³⁵ J. Stala, *Discovery, acceptance and realization of Christian love as the foundation for engaged couples' formation*, in: *Strengthening families*, eds. J. Stala, J. Garmaz, The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Kraków 2016, p. 110 (Family Studies, 5).

matter are best started with an analysis of the value of love, which is fundamental in forming and maintaining the family community. And if so, it is not difficult to conclude that the understanding of the value of love shapes the form of the relationship built upon it. Modern individuals seek fulfilment as a couple, often prioritizing their individual happiness within the relationship and adapting flexibly to evolving circumstances. Personal happiness outweighs the success of marriage or family. Increasingly, marital relationships are founded on love seen primarily as emotional satisfaction rather than the mutual giving of two individuals. In postmodern society, sentimental love or infatuation takes precedence.³⁶ “People preparing for the sacrament of matrimony have their dreams, expectations and own notions about their future marriage. However, they are often based on what they have learned from movies and TV series. Some of engaged couples attach a great attach a great importance of the elements actively promoted by the media, such as: beauty, health, financial resources, good professional and social position. It is often the case that when it comes to marriage, in TV series it is a crush, an infatuation or the physical attractiveness of a person that plays the key role in the decision about marriage. Considering that, it often happens that love is equated with attractiveness and emotional involvement, which is the reason why when the intensity of feelings fades (which is a natural process), some people think that their love is over they cannot be together any more. This is the reason why a couple preparing for marriage should discover that love means much more than just video presentations, it is an act of will, the acceptance of the other person and continuous care of him/her.”³⁷

5. An attempt to create empirical research on the dignity of the family in the media based on John Paul II's personalistic concept

Due to the fact that dignity is an abstract concept, it is difficult to examine it empirically. However, it is not impossible. In the context of what has been said above about the dignity of the person and the family, first from a philosophical and theological point of view, and then also from a social point of view in the

³⁶ Cf. E. Osewska, *Attributes of marital love according to Church documents*, in: *Families: Opportunities and challenges*, ed. J. Stala, The Pontifical University od John Paul II in Krakow, Kraków 2019, pp. 13–14 (Family Studies, 11).

³⁷ J. Stala, *Discovery, acceptance and realization of Christian love*, pp. 111–112.

teachings of John Paul II, we can reduce the concept of the dignity of the person and the family to empirical manifestations in which it is actualised. As a result of the above conceptualisation of the concept of the dignity of the person and the family in the thought of John Paul II, we have come to the conclusion that the dignity of the person is their unique status in the created world, which is expressed in their free choice according to reason, always directed towards love. In this sense, the dignity of the family has been understood, first of all, as an environment that actualises dignity in young people, e.g. through education, the realisation of values, giving a sense of importance and belonging, etc. In the second sense, the dignity of the family is the sum of the dignity of the persons who constitute it. That is, the dignity of the family appears as a community of persons with a unique social status. We can therefore see that the dignity of the family can be reduced to its unique social role, which consists of affirming and perfecting the dignity of the person. Therefore, it can even be said that the dignity of the person and the dignity of the family are mutually conditioned and dependent.

Therefore, when examining the dignity of the family in the media, it is necessary to first properly conceptualise the concept of human dignity and then the concept of family dignity. In this case, when we are interested in the broadly understood context of John Paul II's thought, i.e. his theory of philosophy, theology and social teaching, it has been noted that the dignity of the person is the uniqueness of the person in creation due to their ability to rationally perceive reality in a spirit of freedom and love. In this context, the dignity of the family is the unique role it plays in educating the person to see and respect the dignity of the person. Hence, we see the dignity of the family in its extraordinary social role, its task in the context of affirming the dignity of the person, including pointing to the dignity of persons as its members who have a unique educational status in the family—dignity in the family community. In this sense, considering all the operational aspects of this abstract concept, we see the dignity of the family in the teaching of John Paul II as its unique social role in affirming the dignity of the person, especially the young. In this context, we also consider the dignity of each person who is a member of this family community and, of course, we abstract from any pathological family behaviour, which, as indicated above, should be protected by the state and institutions authorised to do so.

Proper operationalisation of an abstract concept is particularly important in empirical research, such as media studies.³⁸ This means that abstract concepts must be reduced to empirically testable categories. However, this is not a sufficient step to examine the dignity of individuals and families in the media. This abstract concept, properly operationalised, i.e. defined in empirical terms, must be reduced to specific manifestations when it is realised in a specific media situation. Specifically, for example, when analysing media content, a categorisation key should be created, whose categories will constitute the essence of the operationalised concept, and the research questions in each category will ask about their empirical dimension within the media communication process. In the case of researching the dignity of the family in the media in the context of the teachings of John Paul II, the categorisation key may look as follows.

Categories:

1. How is the family's social status and social role portrayed?
 - A. Is the family portrayed as a community or rather as individuals living separately?
 - B. Is the family portrayed as a place of support or rather as a place from which one should cut oneself off?
 - C. Is the upbringing process shown as belonging to the family?
 - D. Is the social role of the family shown as irreplaceable in the process of demographic development?
 - E. Is the family shown as a carrier of values, traditions and culture?
2. Is the dignity of the family shown by emphasising the dignity of its members?
 - A. Is the irreplaceable role of the mother and father in the family as the first and primary educators highlighted?
 - B. Is the role of marriage between a woman and a man emphasised, as well as the healthy, mature relationships they should develop through marital growth?
 - C. Is single motherhood by choice promoted?
 - D. Are adoption opportunities and foster care for orphaned children shown?
 - E. Is the role of grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts and uncles in the family shown?

³⁸ Cf. R. D. Wimmer, J. R. Dominick, *Mass media. Metody badań*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2008, pp. 17–20.

3. How is the dignity of a person shown within the family?
 - A. Are family members portrayed in their irreplaceable roles?
 - B. Are family members portrayed in the light of their inherent freedom, i.e. decision-making and self-determination?
 - C. Is concern for the child's development in the family shown in terms of values, understanding of reality, and intellectual, psychological and spiritual development?
 - D. Is the development of the person in an atmosphere of authentic love shown against the background of the family?
 - E. Is the family shown as the primary environment for raising a person?

The proposed research categories and their subcategories do not exhaust the research topic of family dignity in the media. They should be supplemented with detailed research questions to further refine and focus the course of the research. Nevertheless, they provide an example of a research approach in media studies within a personalistic paradigm. They can serve as inspiration for basic or in-depth research. Depending on the research concept, the research sample should be as representative as possible, gathering the widest possible cross-section of society to reflect research credibility in the most accurate and realistic way. This applies both to media content analysis, where the representativeness of the research sample would consist in examining ideologically diverse media and different types of media materials. When it comes to research on society: interviews, polls, surveys, the research sample should include diversity in terms of age, gender, social status, and role in relation to the family. In this regard, especially in in-depth interviews, the research should also include psychological insight into the individual's history and experiences. This, in turn, emphasises the interdisciplinary nature of research on the dignity of the family in the media, which I have also attempted to demonstrate in this article.

6. Summary

The dignity of the family as a subject of research is an interdisciplinary issue. However, the fundamental issue in this regard is to ground this interdisciplinarity in the personalist philosophy of John Paul II, which bases this issue on the essence of human dignity. This research perspective seems to be the most appropriate and measurable in studying the dignity of the family in the media. The research assumption of this article was therefore the hypothesis that the Pope's

broadly understood (theological, social, but especially philosophical) teaching on the dignity of the family in the media stems from a personalistic vision of the person, which is the basis of media activity.

Based on what has been written in the article, it can be said that the dignity of the family stems from the dignity of the individual, and the dignity of the individual is realised in the family. This interdependence often becomes the subject of images and symbols in the media. In order not to lose their meaning and authentic values that can be conveyed, it is worth turning to personalist philosophy and the social teaching of John Paul II on the media, which provides clear guidelines for the responsible broadcasting and reception of media messages. Above all, it allows us to properly understand the value of personal and family dignity, facilitating their authentic placement in the context of contemporary media.

Therefore, in this article, I conducted a philosophical analysis of the concept of human dignity from the perspective of Karol Wojtyła's thought. In this regard, elements of theology and papal social teaching have also been included. On this basis, it has been possible to formulate the concept of family dignity, which has been applied to media studies. As a result, the abstract concept of family dignity has been operationalised in such a way that it can be described in media studies, i.e. empirical research. In this way, I was able to propose an example of a media studies research project. Naturally, this is only a small contribution and inspiration for more extensive research. Nevertheless, this article aspires to provide a methodological basis for media research on the dignity of the family in the media.

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