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La liturgia eucaristica nei documenti conciliari del primo millennio cristiano

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Astratto

Sappiamo che le singole cerimonie della Messa nacquero nelle celebrazioni delle comunità cristiane. Le comunità erano autonomi, il che portò in conseguenza alla creazione dei molti riti diversi nella Chiesa. Ma nel corso degli anni il vescovo e i sinodi provinciali ebbero un'influenza crescente sul modo in cui fu celebrata l'Eucaristia. La domanda è: anche i concili ecumenici ebbero questa influenza? In questo articolo sarà presentato se e quali soluzioni dei consigli generali nel primo millennio abbiano avuto un impatto sulla formazione dei riti di messa.

Parole chiave

Eucaristia, Messa, concilium, liturgia, canone

Abstract

The Eucharistic Liturgy in the conciliar documents of the first christian millennium

We know that the individual ceremonies of the Mass originated within the celebrations of Christian communities. These communities were autonomous, which consequently led to the creation of many different rites within the Church. However, over the years, bishops and provincial synods exerted an increasing influence on the way the Eucharist was celebrated. The question remains: did ecumenical councils also have such an influence? This article examines whether, and which, decisions made by the general councils during the first millennium impacted the formation of the rites of the Mass.

Keywords

Eucharist, Mass, council, liturgy, canon

Dagli inizi del cristianesimo la Chiesa locale veniva amministrata dal vescovo. Cominciarono però a verificarsi situazioni di crisi che, per essere risolte, richiedevano l'accordo dei vescovi di una regione più grande[1]. Dalla fine del II secolo all'Oriente cominciano perciò le riunioni dei vescovi per giudicare problemi dottrinali o disciplinari[2]. Vennero chiamati sinodi, dal termine greco *synodos* che significa: riunione, assemblea, congiunzione[3]. Da qui nacque l'istituzione dei concili che radunavano i rappresentanti di tutta la Chiesa per risolvere questioni di suprema importanza[4]. Nell'antichità il concilio costituiva una riunione dei vescovi convocati dall'imperatore, i cui decreti venivano di solito confermati dal vescovo di Roma[5]. Di comune accordo vengono riconosciuti ecumenici i primi sette concili di: Nicea (325), Costantinopoli (381), Efeso (431), Calcedonia (451), Costantinopoli II (553), Costantinopoli III (681) e Nicea II (787)[6]. A partire dall'XI secolo anche il Concilio di Costantinopoli IV (869) è riconosciuto all'Occidente come ecumenico[7]. In questa riflessione verranno presentate le decisioni riguardanti l'Eucaristia che si trovano nei documenti degli otto concili della Chiesa indivisa.

Concilio di Nicea (325)

Il motivo per cui diventò necessario convocare la riunione ecumenica dei vescovi fu l'insegnamento di Ario, sacerdote di Alessandria[8]. Egli negava la divinità di Gesù Cristo e la più importante verità cristiana – la tesi sulla Santissima

[1] Cf. M. Cholewa, M. Gilski, *Wprowadzenie do problematyki soborów*, in: *Sobór Watykański II. Złoty Jubileusz*, a cura di M. Cholewa, S. Drzyżdżyk, M. Gilski, Wydawnictwo «scriptum», Kraków 2013, p. 21.
[2] Cf. K. Schatz, *Sobory powszechne. Punkty zwrotne w historii Kościoła*, WAM, Kraków 2002, p. 15.
[3] *Słownik grecko-polski*, a cura di Z. Abramowiczówna, vol. 4, PWN, Warszawa 1965, p. 226.
[4] Cf. K. Schatz, *Sobory powszechne*, p. 15.
[5] Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 2016, p. 195.
[6] Cf. W. Kowalska, *Sobory*, in: *Słownik wczesnochrześcijańskiego piśmiennictwa*, elab. J. Szymusiak, M. Starowieyski, Poznań 1971, Księgarnia Świętego Wojciecha, pp. 615–616.
[7] Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów ekumenicznych*, Instytut Wydawniczy Odrodzenie, Warszawa 1968, pp. 7–8.
[8] Cf. H. Pietras, *List Konstantyna do Aleksandra i Ariusza a zwołanie Soboru Nicejskiego*, "Vox Patrum" (2006) n. 49, p. 531.

Trinità[9]. Il secondo motivo di convocazione del concilio furono anche i problemi legati al modo di calcolare la data per la celebrazione della Pasqua[10]. L'imperatore decise di convocare nel 325 il concilio di Nicea (80 km all'est da Costantinopoli). La riunione cominciò probabilmente il 20.05.325 e i dibattiti si conclusero il 25.08.325[11].

Una delle questioni regolate dal Concilio era la necessità di rispettare precisamente il sistema gerarchico dei gradi dell'Ordine sacro: episcopato, presbiterato e diaconato. I vescovi risiedevano nelle città, intorno alle quali si sviluppavano le chiese rurali, da cui nascevano le parrocchie con i presbiteri posti a capo di esse[12]. Un grande ruolo svolgevano anche i diaconi. Essi aiutavano i vescovi in molte attività liturgiche e amministrative[13]. I presbiteri che in teoria avevano la priorità, spesso erano presenti soltanto durante la liturgia, non esercitando alcune attività. Ulteriori prerogative in altri sacramenti, nonchè la vicinanza alla persona del vescovo, qualche volta portavano alla situazione in cui i diaconi cominciarono ad innalzarsi sopra i presbiteri[14]. Nel canone 18 del Concilio di Nicea leggiamo:

> In alcuni luoghi e città i diaconi danno la comunione ai presbiteri malgrado i sacri canoni e la consuetudine proibiscano che chi non ha il potere di consacrare dia il corpo di Cristo a chi puo consacrarlo. Il concilio è venuto a conoscenza anche che alcuni diaconi ricevono l'eucarestia perfino prima dei vescovi. Tutto ciò deve cessare i diaconi rimangano nei propri limiti, considerando che essi sono ministri dei vescovi ed inferiori ai preti. Ricevano, quindi, l'eucarestia, secondo l'ordine dopo i sacerdoti, e per mano del vescovo o del sacerdote. Non è neppure lecito ai diaconi sedere in mezzo ai preti[15].

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[9] Cf. C. G. Paluzzi, *I concili ecumenici*, Ente Provinciale per il Turismo di Roma, Roma 1962, p. 9.

[10] Cf. H. Pietras, *List Konstantyna*, pp. 532–535.

[11] Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, p. 27.

[12] Cf. J. Dudziak, *Zalążki ogólnokościelnej dyscypliny duchowieństwa w świetle postanowień I Soboru Nicejskiego (325)*, "Vox Patrum" (1987) n. 12–13, pp. 108–109.

[13] Cf. H. Pietras, *Sobór Nicejski (325). Kontekst religijny i polityczny, dokumenty, komentarze*, WAM, Kraków 2013, p. 162.

[14] Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, p. 57.

[15] *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, a cura di G. Alberigo, G. L. Dosetti, P. P. Joannou, C. Leonardi, P. Prodi, EDB, Bologna 1991, pp. 14–15.

Abbiamo qui una sistemazione della questione di dare la comunione ai presbiteri da parte dei diaconi. Il concilio decide che i diaconi devono ricevere la comunione dalle mani dei vescovi o dei presbiteri, e soltanto dopo di loro. Quest'ordine deve essere assolutamente rispettato, e se qualcuno non obbedisse a quelle prescrizioni, poteva essere minacciato con la pena di espulsione. I Padri conciliari non volevano che in questo più importante atto della Chiesa si fosse creata una confusione causata dalle ambizioni umane[16].

La seconda decisione liturgica del concilio riguardava l'atteggiamento di stare in ginocchio che i alcuni fedeli assumevano durante l'Eucaristia celebrata la domenica e nel periodo pasquale:

> Poiché vi sono alcuni che di domenica e nei giorni della Pentecoste si inginocchiano, per una completa uniformità è sembrato bene a questo santo concilio che le preghiere a Dio si facciano in piedi (c. 20)[17].

I cristiani dei primi secoli pregavano in piedi, perché un tale atteggiamento esprimeva la convinzione che essi fossero uomini liberati da Dio[18]. Il stare in piedi è anche simbolo della Risurrezione di Cristo e di una gioiosa ascensione del cuore e dell'anima umana al cielo[19]. In quel tempo l'inginocchiarsi non veniva ancora trattato come un atto di adorazione, riverenza o omaggio[20]. Stare in ginocchio era allora soltanto un atteggiamento di penitenza, assunto dai penitenti o catecumeni. Non si dovrebbe perciò inginocchiare la domenica o nel periodo di Pasqua[21].

Al Concilio di Nicea emerse ancora un'importante questione liturgica. Si trattava della data di celebrazione della Pasqua. Sorgevano infatti divergenze intorno alle due tradizioni di festeggiare la Pasqua. La prima era legata ai quartodecimani, i quali, soprattutto sul terreno dell'Asia Minore, richiamandosi alla tradizione di san Giovanni, festeggiavano la Pasqua nel giorno stesso in cui cade la Pesah ebraica – il 14° giorno del mese di Nisan. Nella seconda tradizione, presente

16 Cf. J. Dudziak, *Zalążki ogólnokościelnej dyscypliny*, p. 110.
17 *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 16.
18 Cf. M. Cholewa, M. Gilski, *Dziedzictwo soborów*, Wydawnictwo «scriptum», Kraków 2019, p. 34.
19 Cf. M. Kunzler, *Liturgia Kościoła*, tłum. L. Balter, Pallottinum, Poznań 1999, p. 179.
20 Cf. B. Nadolski, *Wprowadzenie do liturgii*, WAM, Kraków 2004, p. 185.
21 Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, p. 59.

a Roma o Alessandria, la Pasqua veniva festeggiata la domenica successiva al primo plenilunio di primavera[22].

Non si sono conservate però alcune descrizioni dei dibattiti, ma soltanto il documento postconciliare "Lettera del sinodo di Nicea agli Egiziani"[23]:

> Si decise allora che, messa da parte ogni contesa e ogni contraddizione, anche i fratelli d'oriente facessero come i Romani, gli Alessandrini e tutti gli altri, di modo che tutti, unanimemente, nello stesso giorno, elevassero le loro preghiere nel santo giorno di Pasqua[24].

La decisione del concilio non era però univoca. Vediamo in essa la mancanza di una data concreta della festa, né chi la deve proclamare, ma vi è soltanto la constatazione di non festeggiarla insieme agli ebrei. A Nicea si scelse probabilmente il modo alessandrino di calcolare la data del primo plenilunio di primavera[25].

Concilio di Costantinopoli I (381)

Il secondo concilio ecumenico fu convocato dall'imperatore Teodosio I[26]. Il motivo diretto per convocare il concilio fu la dottrina che negava la divinità dello Spirito Santo presentandolo come uno strumento di Dio, potenza, creatura o uno degli spiriti destinati al servizio. Questa eresia, apparsa intorno al 360, veniva indicata con il nome dei *macedoniani*[27].

Il concilio durò da maggio al 9 luglio del 381[28]. Il suo risultato fu quello di elaborare il Simbolo di Fede[29]. Il concilio non si occupava di alcune questioni

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22 Cf. J. W. Boguniowski, *Misterium Paschalne w roku liturgicznym*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe PAT, Kraków 1997, p. 36.
23 Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, p. 35.
24 I. Ortiz de Urbina, *Storia dei concili ecumenici*, vol. 1: *Nicea e Costantinopoli*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 1994, p. 241.
25 Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, pp. 36–37.
26 Cf. C. G. Paluzzi, *I concili ecumenici*, p. 14.
27 Cf. M. Cholewa, M. Gilski, *Dziedzictwo soborów*, pp. 37–38.
28 Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, p. 58.
29 Cf. *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych. Tekst grecki, łaciński, polski*, vol. 1, a cura di A. Baron, H. Pietras, Kraków 2005, WAM, p. 47.

legate all'Eucaristia. Bisogna sottolineare però che nel "Credo" apparse e questo sarà d'ora in poi visibile nella formulazione di preghiere della messa[30].

Concilio di Efeso (431)

L'imperatore Teodosio convocò questo concilio per inquietudini concernenti gli insegnamenti del patriarca di Costantinopoli Nestorio, il quale sosteneva che in Cristo ci fossero due persone – divina e umana[31]. Di conseguenza i nestoriani rifiutavano anche il titolo di Maria *Theotokos – Genitrice di Dio*[32]. Il concilio iniziò il 22 giugno del 431[33], e in realtà si concluse solamente nel 433[34].

I canoni postconciliari regolavano soprattutto le questioni giurisdizionali legate all'eresia nestoriana[35]. Mancano riferimenti alla liturgia eucaristica. Però la conferma del titolo *Theotokos* spettante a Maria contribuì allo sviluppo delle solennità in suo onore. Di conseguenza cominciarono a nascere anche preghiere in onore della genitrice di Dio, recitate durante la celebrazione eucaristica[36].

Concilio di Calcedonia (451)

L'incoronazione del dibattito sulla relazione tra la divinità e l'umanità di Cristo si ebbe al Concilio di Calcedonia. Il concilio fu convocato per dirimere l'eresia monofisita (gr. *mone* – una e *fysis* – natura). Il suo divulgatore, monaco Eutiche, affermava che Cristo avesse solo la natura divina che aveva assorbito la natura umana[37]. L'imperatore Marciano convocò il concilio a Nicea per il 1° settembre del 451. Visto che l'imperatore non ci poteva arrivare, il concilio venne spostato

30 Cf. *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, p. 68.
31 Cf. M. Cholewa, M. Gilski, *Dziedzictwo soborów*, p. 43.
32 Cf. C. G. Paluzzi, *I concili ecumenici*, p. 15.
33 Cf. K. Schatz, *Sobory powszechne*, p. 49.
34 Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, p. 83.
35 Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, pp. 93–102.
36 Cf. M. Augé, *Rok liturgiczny to sam Chrystus, który trwa w swoim Kościele*, trad. K. Stopa, Wydawnictwo Homo Dei, Kraków 2013, p. 257.
37 Cf. M. Cholewa, M. Gilski, *Dziedzictwo soborów*, pp. 51–52.

in uno dei quartieri di Costantinopoli – Calcedonia[38]. Definitivamente il concilio si svolse lì dall'8 ottobre al 1° novembre del 451[39].

Nei canoni postconciliari appare il sostantivo *leiturgia* e il verbo *leiturgeo*. Queste parole sono usate nel contesto del divieto di prestare il servizio. Il sostantivo *leiturgia* si riferisce alle diaconesse, che dopo aver esercitato per un certo tempo il ministero (*leiturgia*), si sono sposate. In tal situazione sia la diaconessa, sia il suo sposo furono esclusi dalla Chiesa[40].

Il verbo *liturgeo* invece appare nel contesto dei precetti, comandando ai chierici di prestare il loro servizio soltanto nella chiesa, per la quale erano stati ordinati. Questo canone introduce ordine nella liturgia più importante come l'Eucaristia. I religiosi non possono liberamente trasferirsi da città in città. Se qualcuno però si comportasse in questo modo, sia il chierico che il vescovo, dovevano essere esclusi fino al momento in cui il chierico non ritorni alla sua chiesa materna (c. 20)[41].

Del fatto che il religioso non dovrebbe servire in due chiese diverse, parla anche il canone 10:

> Non è lecito che un chierico eserciti il suo ministero contemporaneamente in due città, in quella, cioè, nella quale fu ordinato, e in quella, nella quale si rifugiò, per desiderio di vana gloria, credendola migliore. Quelli che facessero così, devono essere richiamati alla propria chiesa,per la quale da principio erano stati ordinati, e lì soltanto prestare il loro servizio (c. 10)[42].

Se il chierico dovesse prestare servizio liturgico al di fuori della sua città, deve possedere le lettere di raccomandazione dal proprio vescovo (c. 13)[43]. Vediamo dunque che fin dall'antichità esisteva nella Chiesa la convinzione che attraverso il sacramento dell'ordinazione l'uomo si offre non solo al servizio di Dio o degli uomini in generale, ma di una concreta città o comunità cristiana. Ciò veniva percepito come una specie di sposalizio mistico tra il sacerdote e la chiesa locale[44].

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[38] Cf. J. Grzywaczewski, *Sobór Chalcedoński. Kontekst historyczny, teologiczny, następstwa*, "Vox Patrum" (2012) n. 58, p. 155.
[39] Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, p. 124.
[40] Cf. *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, pp. 238–239.
[41] Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 96.
[42] *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 92.
[43] Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 93.
[44] Cf. J. Dudziak, *Zalążki ogólnokościelnej dyscypliny*, p. 111.

Concilio di Costantinopoli II (553)

Le controversie teologiche intorno alla persona di Cristo non cessarono dopo le decisioni del Concilio di Calcedonia, ma continuarono nei decenni successivi. Il monofisismo continuava a svilupparsi in Egitto, Siria o Armenia[45]. Per terminare definitivamente questa controversia venne convocato a Costantinopoli un altro concilio. Si aperse il 5 maggio del 553 e si concluse il 2 giugno del 553[46].

Al fine di raggiungere l'unità doveva servire la formula teologica detta *condanna di tre capitoli*, vale a dire delle tesi di tre teologi della scuola antiochena (Teodoro di Mopsuestia, Teodoreto di Cirro e Iba di Edessa), i quali in modo più forte si schieravano contro i monofisiti[47]. Il risultato delle discussioni dogmatiche erano gli anatematismi che condannavano le eresie cristologiche[48]. Negli anatematismi appaiono alcuni concetti che più tardi saranno legati alla liturgia eucaristica, come: *anafora* tradotta qui ancora come *relazione* (anatematismo 6)[49] oppure *doxa* nell'espressione *Signore della gloria* (anatematismo 10)[50].

Concilio di Costantinopoli III (680–681)

Nel VII secolo apparse l'eresia che sosteneva l'esistenza di una sola forma di attività in Cristo. Essa viene definita monoenergismo (gr. *mone* – una, *energia* – attività)[51]. Ad essa è strettamente legata l'eresia del monotelismo (gr. *mone* – una, *thelema* – volontà) che sosteneva l'esistenza di un'unica volontà in Cristo[52]. L'imperatore Costantino IV, per ripristinare la pace religiosa nella Chiesa, aveva convocato perciò il concilio a Costantinopoli che si tenne dal 7 novembre 680 al 17 septembre 681. Dopo numerose discussioni venne accolta *La professione*

45 Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, p. 109.
46 Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, p. 91.
47 Cf. C. G. Paluzzi, *I concili ecumenici*, p. 22.
48 Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, pp. 162–167.
49 Cf. *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, p. 290.
50 *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, p. 294.
51 Cf. C. G. Paluzzi, *I concili ecumenici*, p. 25.
52 Cf. M. Pyc, *Tajemnica Jezusa Chrystusa w wykładzie wiary Soboru Konstantynopolskiego III*, "Studia Gnesnesia" 29 (2015), p. 69.

di fede che subordinava la volontà alla natura e non alla persona, il che fu sottoscritto da tutti i partecipanti del Concilio[53].

I decreti del Terzo Concilio di Costantinopoli contenevano soltanto affermazioni dottrinali concernenti il monotelismo, non contenevano invece alcuni canoni giuridici o disciplinari[54]. Non ci sono perciò riferimenti diretti alla liturgia eucaristica, compare di nuovo però il concetto di *anafora* spiegata come *relazione*[55].

Concilio di Nicea II (787)

Il Secondo Concilio di Nicea era collegato alla risoluzione della lotta dogmatica condotta all'Oriente, legata alla venerazione dei quadri e figure. Nel VIII secolo la lotta con il culto delle immagini divenne sempre più intensa. Venne chiamata iconoclastia (gr. *eikone* – quadro, immagine, *klaasis* – rottura, distruzione). Il primo a cominciarla fu l'imperatore Leone III Isaurico (717–741)[56], il quale ordinò di distruggere la famosa immagine di Cristo posta su una delle porte del palazzo imperiale di Costantinopoli[57]. Anche i suoi successori si opponevano al culto delle immagini. I papi invece si schieravano al suo favore[58]. Soltanto ai tempi dell'imperatrice Irene (780–795), veneratrice delle immagini, si verificarono circostanze favorevoli per terminare questa controversia. Il concilio riprese i lavori il 24 settembre 787 a Nicea[59] e si concluse il 28 ottobre 787[60].

Nella definizione della fede (*Horos*) si distinse la venerazione delle immagini (*proskynesis*) dall'adorazione spettante soltanto a Dio e Cristo (*latreia*). Questa distinzione era molto importante dal punto di vista della celebrazione eucaristica. Essa poteva essere celebrata davanti a figure e quadri. Il rifiuto della venerazione delle immagini sarebbe anche legato a grandi cambiamenti nell'ambito

53 Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, pp. 134–135.
54 Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, p. 144.
55 Cf. *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 1, pp. 314, 316.
56 Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, pp. 195–197.
57 Cf. M. Cholewa, M. Gilski, *Dziedzictwo soborów*, p. 71.
58 Cf. C. G. Paluzzi, *I concili ecumenici*, p. 27.
59 Cf. S. Włodarski, *Siedem soborów*, pp. 200–201.
60 Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, pp. 167–169.

dei vasi e paramenti liturgici, nonché agli altri ornamenti che accompagnano la celebrazione eucaristica[61].

Nella definizione della fede troviamo perciò la critica di quelle persone che essendo contrarie alla tradizione della Chiesa, hanno rifiutato le decorazioni usate durante la celebrazione del culto di Dio (3)[62]. Le sacre immagini di Cristo, Maria, Angeli e santi possono essere perciò esposte sulle vesti e vasi liturgici, usati durante l'Eucaristia:

> Noi definiamo con ogni rigore e cura, che a somiglianza della raffigurazione della croce preziosa e vivificante, così, le venerande e sante immagini sia dipinte che in mosaico, o in qualsiasi altro materiale adatto, debbono essere esposte nelle sante chiese di Dio, nelle sacre suppellettili, sui sacri paramenti, sulle pareti e sulle tavole, nelle case e nelle vie (14)[63].

Per questo motivo non è lecito usare i vasi liturgici destinati al culto per scopi quotidiani e indegni, e coloro che lo facessero devono essere eliminati dall'ufficio o dal convento (19)[64].

Anche tra i canoni legali si trovano tali che riguardano il luogo della celebrazione, i paramenti o vasi liturgici utilizzati. La prima questione riguarda le chiese in cui viene celebrato il Santissimo Sacrificio. In occasione della discussione sulla venerazione delle immagini emerse anche la questione dell'ammissibilità di usare le reliquie nel culto cristiano. Dalla seconda metà del IV sec. nel cristianesimo si era infatti arrivati al collegamento tra le reliquie e il luogo di celebrazione dell'Eucaristia, e la loro presenza cominciò a garantire la sacralità del posto dell'assemblea[65]. Di solito si richiedeva di metterci le reliquie di due santi, anche se per la validità della consacrazione ne bastava uno solo[66]. E proprio il Secondo Concilio di Nicea prese la decisione (c. 7) di mettere le reliquie sugli altari di quelle chiese che prima erano state consacrate senza le reliquie dei santi

61 Cf. K. Schatz, *Sobory powszechne*, pp. 85–88.
62 Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 133.
63 *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, pp. 135–136.
64 Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, pp. 136–137.
65 Cf. A. Stróż, *Najstarsze świadectwa związku ołtarza i relikwii w bazylikach chrześcijańskich*, in: *Sympozja kazimierskie poświęcone kulturze świata późnego antyku i wczesnego chrześcijaństwa*, vol. 6, a cura di B. Iwaszkiewicz-Wronikowska, D. Próchniak, TNKUL, Lublin 2008, pp. 193–194.
66 Cf. Z. Wit, *Ołtarz w aspekcie teologicznym i liturgicznym*, in: *Ku liturgii nadziei*, a cura di R. Biel, Biblos, Tarnów 2005, p. 222.

martiri. La presenza delle reliquie nel luogo della celebrazione dell'Eucaristia diventa d'ora in poi una necessità e ogni vescovo che non avesse adempito a quel obbligo, doveva essere escluso dall'ufficio[67].

Un'altra decisione che mostrava la preoccupazione del concilio per il luogo della celebrazione del culto cristiano riguardava la ragionevolezza nel progettare la costruzione delle cappelle. Il concilio proibì (c. 17) di cominciare la costruzione delle cappelle, se non c'erano mezzi sufficienti per terminarla. Tra i compiti del vescovo ci sarà d'ora in poi quello di controllare se i costruttori hanno mezzi sufficienti per finire la loro opera[68].

Nel canone 4 si trova invece un ammonimento per i vescovi di non sospendere dall'ufficio nessun sacerdote per motivi di avidità e richiesta di pagamento, né di chiudere davanti a loro le porte della chiesa, non ammettendoli in questo modo alla celebrazione liturgica, soprattutto dell'Eucaristia. Infatti tali situazioni dovevano veramente aver luogo, se i padri conciliari presero le difese di questi chierici, decretando che i vescovi indegni dovrebbero essere esclusi[69].

Un'altra questione discussa dal concilio concerne la liturgia della parola durante la Santa Messa. Il concilio fa ricordare che le lezioni possono essere lette soltanto da chi era stato ordinato lettore, su cui il vescovo, il corepiscopo oppure, nel caso dei monaci il priore, aveva imposto le mani. Si verificavano infatti situazioni in cui le Sacre Scritture venivano lette dall'ambone da coloro che avevano ottenuto la tonsura clericale solo nell'infanzia. I padri conciliari difendono in questo modo i diritti derivanti dal grado dell'ordine sacro ricevuto (c. 14)[70].

Concilio di Costantinopoli IV (869–870)

La tensione tra i fautori della venerazione delle immagini (iconoduli) e i loro avversari (iconoclasti) fu ancora presente nella Chiesa. Il Concilio di Costantinopoli aveva soprattutto il compito di consolidare il magistero cattolico sul

67 Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 145.
68 Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, pp. 151–152.
69 Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 141.
70 Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 149.

tema delle immagini[71] e risolvere il conflitto di competenza tra Roma e Bisanzio, concernente la giurisdizione sulla Bulgaria[72].

Il Concilio si tenne dal 5 ottobre del 869 al 20 febbraio del 870[73]. Inizialmente non era considerato un incontro ecumenico. Soltanto nell'XI secolo si cominciò a mettere in rilievo la sua importanza e trattarlo all'Occidente come un ottavo Concilio ecumenico[74].

Il Concilio ordina perciò in primo luogo che la venerazione delle immagini fosse la stessa di quella dimostrata nel Libro dei Sacri Vangeli. I padri conciliari sono infatti convinti del grande ruolo svolto dalle immagini nel trasmettere agli uomini il magistero sulla salvezza[75].

Nei canoni appaiono anche alcuni riferimenti alla liturgia eucaristica. Uno di essi, che aveva indegnato molto i padri conciliari, era la questione di parodiare la liturgia vescovile da parte di alcuni laici:

> Sotto l'imperatore che ha regnato recentemente, vi furono alcuni laici appartenenti all'ordine senatorio che, secondo la dignità rivestita a corte avvolgevano e riponevano i loro capelli in trecce, parodiando la dignità sacerdotale per mezzo di dalmate e ornamenti sacerdotali; e, almeno cosí si crede, che si facessero passare per vescovi, rivestiti del superhumeralibus, cioè del pallio e indossando tutti gli altri ornamenti episcopali. Inoltre, scegliendo come proprio patriarca colui che era loro capo e principe in queste farse ridicole, loro insultavano e volgevano al ridicolo tutte le cose divine sia le elezioni, le promozioni e consacrazioni dei vescovi (c. 16)[76].

Il concilio decise di penalizzare per quelle indegne profanazioni sia i fedeli che le facevano, sia gli aiutanti, come anche i superiori laici ed ecclesiastici che sapendolo, non avevano opportunamente reagito. L'imperatore e l'aristocrazia potevano essere puniti con il biasimo da parte dell'attuale patriarca di Costantinopoli fino all'anatema, se non avessere mostrato pentimento. Coloro che aiutavano nel parodiare la liturgia dovevano fare penitenza per tre anni secondo

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[71] Cf. T. D. Łukaszuk, *Święty obraz-ikona w doktrynie Soboru Konstantynopolitańskiego IV*, "Analecta Cracoviensia" 28 (1996), pp. 266–267.
[72] Cf. M. Starowieyski, *Sobory niepodzielonego Kościoła*, pp. 183–185.
[73] Cf. C. G. Paluzzi, *I concili ecumenici*, p. 30.
[74] Cf. T. D. Łukaszuk, *Święty obraz*, p. 265.
[75] Cf. T. D. Łukaszuk, *Święty obraz*, p. 277.
[76] *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 178.

la disciplina ecclesiastica antica. Invece se il patriarca e i suoi vescovi ausiliari, sapendo di quelle scelleratezze, non reagivano, dovevano essere privati di stima, deposti dai loro uffici e privati delle attività sacerdotali[77].

Visto che la liturgia è un compito della Chiesa, così importante e sacro, i metropoliti che ne stanno a capo dovrebbero celebrare da soli tutti i sacri servizi, la cui celebrazione costituisce il loro dovere. Invece succedevano situazioni in cui affidavano i propri compiti liturgici non solo ai vescovi ausiliari, ma anche ai semplici ecclesiastici:

> Alcuni metropoliti, precipitati all'ultimo grado della negligenza e dell'inerzia, convocano con un ordine presso di sé i loro vescovi suffraganei e affidano loro nella chiesa metropolitana la recita dell'ufficio sacro delle litanie e tutte le funzioni sacre inerenti al loro ministero. In tal modo essi, per mezzo di questi vescovi, celebrano tutto ciò che avrebbero dovuto compiere pesonalmente con ardore (c. 24)[78].

Il Concilio fa ricordare allora la disciplina ecclesiastica, a cui tutti i metropoliti dovrebbero sottomettersi. Ognuno di loro, nel caso continuasse a trascurare in tal modo i suoi compiti, dovrebbe essere punito dal suo patriarca, e se non migliora – deposto dall'ufficio[79].

Ai compiti dei vescovi apparteneva la cura per la situazione materiale della Chiesa. Al vescovo era proibito vendere qualsiasi oggetto prezioso[80]. C'era però in questa materia un'eccezione che riguardava gli oggetti preziosi e i vasi liturgici. Il Concilio ordinò:

> che nessuno vescovo potrá vendere o alienare, non importa in che modo, gli oggetti preciosi e i vasi consacrati, salvo il caso, già previsto dagli antichi canoni, di pagamento del riscatto dei prigionieri (c. 15)[81].

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77 Cf. *Dokumenty doborów powszechnych. Tekst grecki, łaciński, polski*, vol. 2, WAM, Kraków 2003, p. 85.
78 *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 184.
79 Cf. *Dokumenty soborów powszechnych*, vol. 2, p. 101.
80 Cf. M. Cholewa, M. Gilski, *Dziedzictwo soborów*, pp. 81–83.
81 *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 177.

La libertà del cristiano costituiva un valore così grande che era perfino permesso di vendere, usati per la Santa Messa e consacrati, calici o patene[82].

Un altro problema collegato alla liturgia eucaristica era la celebrazione della liturgia senza l'autorizzazione nella chiesa non sua, che qualche volta commettevano i presbiteri e i diaconi. Il Concilio ha ricordato che in una data chiesa la liturgia viene celebrata soltanto da quell'ecclesiastico che era stato ad essa destinato. Nessuno può entrare in una chiesa estranea e celebrarci la sacra liturgia (c. 23). Similmente agli altri casi, le persone che trasgredivano la legge promulgata, potevano essere punite, compresa l'espulsione dall'ufficio[83].

Conclusione

Analizzando i decreti e canoni dei concili del primo millennio vediamo che essi riguardavano soprattutto le questioni dogmatiche e disciplinari. Venivano convocati infatti a causa di problemi legati alla predicazione di insegnamenti erronei, minacciando di inquietudini e di rottura l'unità della Chiesa. Nei documenti conciliari si è riusciti però a trovare alcuni riferimenti alla liturgia eucaristica, anche se più spesso essi hanno un carattere piuttosto legale.

Alcuni di essi riguardano però la celebrazione stessa. Già il primo concilio di Nicea, riconoscendo la gioia e la libertà del cristiano, proibisce di mettersi in ginocchio durante l'Eucaristia domenicale e nel Periodo Pasquale.

Al Secondo Concilio di Efeso si ordinò di eliminare gli abusi legati alla lettura della Sacra Bibbia durante la Liturgia della parola. In quel tempo venne anche definitivamente sancita la necessità di esporre le reliquie nell'altare, sul quale viene celebrato il Santissimo Sacrificio. Superando le tendenze dell'iconoclastia venne pubblicato il decreto in cui si decide che nella celebrazione eucaristica è possibile usare i paramenti, i vasi e gli ornamenti con immagini di Cristo, Maria e santi.

Una parte di canoni venne dedicata al servizio liturgico dei chierici. Essi dovrebbero celebrare la liturgia nella chiesa per la quale erano stati ordinati, gli è proibito di passare da una città all'altra di propria volontà (Concilio di Calcedonia) e senza un permesso entrare nella chiesa non loro per celebrarci l'Eucaristia (Concilio di Costantinopoli IV). Dall'altra parte si chiama i vescovi

[82] Cf. M. Cholewa, M. Gilski, *Dziedzictwo soborów*, p. 86.
[83] Cf. *Conciliorum oecumenicorum decreta*, p. 183.

di non chiudere senza giustificazione davanti ai presbiteri le porte della chiesa e di non vietargli di celebrare lì la liturgia (Secondo Concilio di Efeso). Anche i metropoliti furono chiamati a celebrare di persona la liturgia nella propria città, non scaricando questo dovere sui vescovi ausiliari o perfino sui presbiteri (Concilio di Costantinopoli IV).

Anche se non tutti i concili affrontavano gli argomenti liturgici, pure loro influivano indirettamente sulla celebrazione eucaristica. Un esempio ne sono i primi concili di Costantinopoli e Efeso che hanno contribuito alla formulazione delle preghiere della messa indirizzate a Cristo e a Sua Madre.

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The humanism in the thought and in the spirituality of saint Bernard of Clairvaux: The fundamental attitude discovered in cistercian mystics and cistercian art

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Abstract

This paper is dedicated to humanism in the thought, spirituality and teaching of Saint Bernard. Bernard's way of thinking and his spiritual, interior life were the object of study by many scholars. However, only a few concentrated their research on his humanism. The background of humanism is the concept of human nature. Evidently, Bernard discovered the nature of man in three stages. In the beginning, human nature is noble and splendid among God's creatures because it is created on the image and likeness of God. Then it became a fallen creature because he lost his likeness. However, a man could recover the splendid nature—image and likeness thanks to Christ—by renovation and reformation. Consequently, his nature could be fulfilled. It is a rather mystical experience of human nature. In this background, Bernard built the pedagogical concept of restoration and reformation of human person, which consists of three levels of formation. First, it is recognition of himself, which brings humility and experience of truth. The second level is consideration and contemplation, which makes it possible to discover the invisible God. The third level is the love of God and love on neighbor, which guide to communion with God. this process of formation and education of man in the monastic milieu (environment) is the humanism of Bernard. Consequently, the process of renovation concludes in the humanity of Christ and his corporeality. The work of redemption presumes his suffering and his death. Therefore, Christ's body and human body were pictured in the Cistercian book painting.

Keywords

medieval humanism, Bernard of Clairvaux, cistercians, cistercians spirituality, cistercian art, human nature, human body

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Introduction

When we study the work of R. W. Southern on scholastic humanism, we discover that the research and consideration of human nature was a crucial point of intellectual culture of the XII and XIII centuries.[1] In fact, the great synthesis of God's word and God's image didn't pass over the human being and human nature.

This book was inspiration to penetrate the texts of Bernard and to ask the question: Could we find the outlines of humanism in the Bernard's way of thinking and in the Bernard's mystical experience?

Many scholars studied Bernard's thought and in his research took in consideration the bernardian reflection on human beings and the human nature of Christ. Étienne Gilson studies his mystiques and has published considerable works.[2] We find also some valuable indications for the research on humanism in the texts of Michael Casey. In 1992, he published a study on the fundamental topics of Bernard's spirituality.[3] In 2011, appeared his synthesis of Bernard's message.[4] Michaele Casey sketched out outlines of Bernard's theological anthropology, giving inspiration to the search for humanism.

Marinus B. Pranger was interested in the literary works of Bernard.[5] However, he emphasized his experience of Christ's mystery and the human nature of Savior.

Emilia Jamroziak dedicated a chapter in his study on the Cistercians in the Middle Ages to the theological anthropology of Bernard.[6]

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1 R. W. Southern, "*Medieval Humanism*" *and other studies*, Oxford 1970; R. W. Southern, *Scholastic humanism and the unification of Europe*, vol. 1: *Fundations*, Wiley–Blackwell, Oxford–Cambridge, MA 1997; R. W. Southern, *Scholastic humanism and the unification of Europe*, vol. 2: *The heroic age*, Wiley–Blackwell, Maiden, MA 2001.

2 É. Gilson, *La théologie mystique de saint Bernard*, Vrin, Paris 2000; É. Gilson, *La cité de Dieu de s. Bernard*, in: *Saint Bernard homme de l'Église*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris 1953; É. Gilson, *Saint Bernard. Un itinéraire de retour à Dieu*, CERF, Paris 1964.

3 M. Casey, *Le spirituel: les grands thèmes bernardins*, in: *Bernard de Clairvaux: histoire mentalité spiritualité: Colloque de Lyon–Cîeaux–Dijon*, CERF, Paris 1992, pp. 605–635 (Sources Chrétiennhes, 380).

4 M. Casey, *Reading Saint Bernard: the man, the medium, the message*, in: *A companion to Bernard of Clairvaux*, ed. B. P. McGuire, BRILL, Leiden 2011, pp. 62–107 (Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition, 25).

5 M. B. Pranger, *Bernard the Writter*, in: *A companion to Bernard of Clairvaux*, pp. 220–248.

6 E. Jamroziak, *The Cistercian Order in medieval Europe 1090–1500*, Routledge, London–New York 2013.

We take into account also a study of Rafal Tichy,[7] a polish philosopher on Bernard's concept of human nature. The systematic, logical, and well-disposed dissertation brings to light the human nature in its dynamism and means in its development. But the line of man's growth has been put into the contexts of mystical experience and in the relationship with God.

It is naturally necessary to mention a series of studies on Christian humanism in the Middle Ages.[8] There are some essays dedicated to the humanist thought and attitudes of Anselm of Canterbury, William of Saint Thierry, Abelard, Hugh of Saint Victor, and Peter Lombard Aelred of Rievaulx.[9] This text brings a new, critical look at the problem of 12th century humanism.

David Appleby studied the concept of human nature in the spirituality of Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.[10] In his paper, the author confronted the general conviction that the 12th century was and specifically Bernard was anti-humanist. However, in his study of Bernard'sconcept, he discovers dignity, knowledge, and virtue as God's gift to man. Consequently, he studied the relationship between necessities and human nature in the states of fall and recovery. In fact, his point of departure is conviction that Bernard was rather anti-humanist. The considerable remarks on the man's concept are in the large monography on the humanism of R. W. Southern.

More importantly, we need to emphasize, that our goal is the humanism of Bernard's thought and mystics. Therefore, we need to distinguish between theological anthropology and the concept of humanism. Consequently, we try

7 R. Tichy, *Mistyczna historia człowieka według Bernarda z Clairvaux*, FLOS CARMELI, Poznań 2011.

8 *A companion to medieval Christian humanism: Essays on principal thinkers*, ed. J. P. Becket, CERF, Leiden–Boston 2016.

9 B. Brown, *The humanism of William of Saint Thierry*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism: Essays on principal thinkers*, ed. J. P. Becket, CERF, Leiden–Boston 2016, pp. 88–100; E. Sweeney, *Abelard's Christian Socratism*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 101–121; A. Salzmann, *The soul's reformation and the arts in Hugh of St. Victor: A book written twice without*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 142–167; J. T. Slotemaker, *Peter Lombard and the imago Trinitatis*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 168–188; J. S. Russell, *Conceiving the soul: Aelred of rievauls and the sanctifying labor of the mind*, in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 189–211.

10 D. Appleby, *"Bodily need is a Kind of Speech": Human dignity and bodily necessity according to Bernard of Clairvaux,* in: *A companion to medieval Christian humanism*, pp. 122–141.

to find the answer to the questions: What is humanism? Therefore, our point of departure is the concept of human being. So we start to analyze it.

In order to reach the truly and real concept of Bernardian humanism, we need to make a survey of the concept of human being. In fact, Bernard in his writings rethought human nature designing a spiritual journey. The concise analysis of this journey, inspired by the work of Rafal Tichy but based on the writings of Bernard, should be the foundation of our description of humanism.

1. The human condition designed by Bernard as a journey

The most splendid creature

Bernard collocated a man among God's creatures. Naturally, he accepts ontological division of spiritual and material creatures. Consequently, he considers the spiritual beings as superior. In fact, there is a great distance between spiritual and material words. Unquestionably, for him, there is also a hierarchy among the spiritual creatures. The highest is God, below stands angels, men, and in the lowest positions are animals. Among this hierarchy, Bernard discovered a particular condition and particular role of man. The man, whose ontological character consists of the unity of body and soul, is extraordinary, being different from the angels and animals. Bernard wrote[11]:

> Nullus enim deo vicinior gradu inter omnes quae sub soli habitans creaturas, quam anima humana (*Sermones de diversis* 9, 2).

Thus, the human being is the highest creature in the material word, but the lowest creature in the spiritual world. This position in the border between two categories of beings makes him a particular creature. Bernard asserts that man is *nobilis creatura*.

In fact, this is the point of departure of Bernardian anthropology, bernardian consideration of human nature. More importantly, Bernard don't hesitate

[11] Bernardus Claraevallensis, *Sermones de diversis* 9, 2, in: *S. Bernardi* […] *opera omnia*, vol. 2, ed. J.-P. Migne, Parisiis 1862, col. 566 (Patrologiae Cursus Completus. Series Latina, 183).

to make profound this concept of nobility. In his work *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, he describes that man creates *ad imaginem et similitudinem Dei.*[12] In fact, this image of God in man is essential. This likeness to God supposes *liberum arbitrium*—the faculty of free choice. Bernard wrote[13]:

> Hinc est fortassis, quod solum liberum arbitrium sui omnino defectum seu diminutionem non patitur, quod in ipso potissimum aeternae et incommutabili divinitatis substantive quaedam imago impressa videatur (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 28).

The fallen creature

We discover the antithesis of *similitudo Dei*. This is the state of fall and deterioration of human beings. The man made a free choice because he enjoys freedom. It gives him the possibility to make a free decision without any external pressure. But it is necessary in particular to add that a man received an opportunity not to commit sin, possibility not to choose evil. Bernard wrote[14]:

> Soli inter animantia datum est homini potuisse peccare, ob praerogativam liberi arbitrii Datum est autem, non ut perinde peccaret, sed ut gloriosior appareret si non peccaret, cum peccare posset (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 22).

This is the fundamental assertion of Bernard because this possibility is granted to man to avoid sin and evil and to develop his own excellence. Bernard considered the two greatest causes of the evil choice. The first is excessive pride and vain glory—*superbia*. The second cause is ignorance. Both vices are defined by Bernard by Latin terms: *propria voluntas*, which means pride and vain glory, and *proprium concilium*, which could be translated as ignorance.

However, a man has freely chosen evil, and the consequences of this choice appeared. The most striking consequence of bad choice is the loss of divine similarity. Indeed, the human creature, created according the divine model, had lost its similarity and has been deteriorated. Bernard analyzed these bad

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12 Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, introductions, trad., notes et index par F. Callerot, CERF, Paris 1993 (Sources Chrétiennes, 393).

13 Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, p. 304.

14 Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 294–296.

transformations in Sermo 81 of Cantiques.[15] He asserts that the similitude has been changed in the *disssimilitudo*. So, the man has lost divine features.

In the *De gratia et libero arbitrio*, Bernard asserts that the human person, created by God, is formatted on a model called *imago Dei*. However, in the original fall, this *imago* was deformed and lost its original ability to reflect the divine nature. Bernard wrote:[16]

> Puto autem in his tribus libertatibus ipsam, ad quam conditi sumus, Conditoris imaginem atque similitudinem contineri, et imaginem quidem in libertate arbitrii, in reliquis autem duabus bipertitam quondam consignari similitudinem (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 28).

> …hoc est imaginem suam, quae nativo spoliata decore, sub pelle peccati sordens, tamquam in pulvere latitabat, inventam tergeret etr tolleret de regione dissimilitudinis… (*De gratia et libero arbitrio* 32).

The revived creature

Bernard discovered the way to reconstruct God's image and restore human nature. The first step of this restoration is to consider himself and his proper condition. Indeed, the cognition of his own condition is the point of departure of this journey to renewal. Bernard in his work *De consideratione* inspires the recognition of his own misery and his own lie.[17] But this is only one point of view. *Doctor melliflus* focused also on the rationality and dignity of fallen man. So he didn't hesitate to integrate in human beings 304, 314 both features—the spirit of life and the mud of misery (*De consideratione*, 2, 18). The cognition of himself initiates the fundamental attitude of man—humility.

But cognition of himself and humility are only the starting point of restoration. Bernard started to contemplate Christs, who is the Son of God, the Word of God, and the Image of God—*Filius Dei, Verbum Domini, and Imago Dei*. This

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15 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 5: *Sermons 69–86*; texte latin de s. *Bernardi Opera* par J. Leclercq, H. Rochais, Ch. H. Talbot; préf. M. Zink; introd. et notes P. Verdeyen; trad. R. Fassetta; index Abbaye Sainte-Marie de Boulaur, CERF, Paris 2007, pp. 296–319 (Sources Chrétiennes, 511).

16 Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 304, 314.

17 Bernard de Clairvaux, *De la considération*, trad. P. Dalloz, CERF, Paris 1986.

last definition is the most important in Bernard's anthropology. Jesus Christ *imago Dei*, the image of God perfectly reveals the nature of God. Bernard says in sermo 80 in *Cantica canticorum*[18]:

> Verbum est veritas, est sapientia, est iustitia: et haec imago Cuius. Iustitiae, sapientiae, veritatis. Est enim Imago haec iustitia de iustitia, sapientia de sapientia, veritas de vertitate, quasi de lumine lumenm de Deo Deus (*Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 80, 2).

However, this is an image of God existing in his eternal existence. But to set a man on the way of renewal, it was necessary to display him the incarnated image of God. Christ, the true God and true man, the incarnated Son of God, is the subject who frees a fallen man from misery and gives him back a true and perfect image of God. In this excellent image, a man discovers a true image of man created *ad imaginem dei*. In fact, a man created and formed, who experienced before *degeneration and deformation*, recovers in Christ his own image of God in *renovation and reformation*.

Christ is a perfect model in which a man rediscovers his dignity and similarity to God and enters the continual process of conformation to Christ. This process supposes two fundamental attitudes of cognition. On the one hand, a man gets to know his miserable condition and starts to cleanse his mind and his will. On the other hand, he gets to know his God self, his own dignity, and the similitude of man to God. Bernard wrote[19]:

> Atque hoc modo erit gradus ad notitiam Dei, tui cognition; et ex imagine sua, quae in te renovatur, ipse videbitur, dum tu quidem revelata facie gloriam Domini cum fiducia speculando, in eamdem imaginem transformaris de claritate in claritatem, tamquam a Domini spiritu (*Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 36, 6).

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18 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 5, p. 276.

19 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 3: *Sermons 33–50*, texte latin de s. *Bernardi Opera* par J. Leclercq, H. Rochais, Ch. H. Talbot; introd., trad. et notes par P. Verdeyen, R. Fassetta, CERF, Paris 2000, p. 120 (Sources Chrétiennes, 452).

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The fulfilled creature

It was very difficult for Bernard to say something about the heavenly reality. In particulars, it is necessary to say that he experienced a strong inability to describe the eschatological reality. Because of this, the last point of this anthropological itinerary is enough to present only some remarks. On the one hand, he underlines the spiritual union of God and human being. This is the total unification of both natures—divine and human—mutual cognition and mutual love of both persons, God and man. (Cantica canticorum 82, 7). On the another hand he emphasized deification, which means ontological transformation of human nature, which makes a total agreement of human substance with divine model and muster. It presumes the transformation of the human incomplete and imperfect image of God into the perfect and complete image of the Supreme Being.

Mystical experience of human nature

We have studied Bernard's concept of human nature. Naturally, it wasn't an academic concept of anthropology. Bernard's experience of humanity was an experience of a mystic, no scholastic, an experience of a contemplator, no scholar. Therefore, we have got only some remarks of it. These are only some statements of a monk, contemplator, and spiritual director, which came from his own meditative experience. It is needless to say that his cognition of human nature is cognition in himself coming from his personal prayer, rather than from his personal studies. But the mystical anthropology and spiritual description of the human condition, even attributed to monks and contemplators, is not at the core of humanism.

Just in this moment is necessary to repeat with zeal the question: What is humanism, whose Bernard was an author and outstanding person? We have a first answer. Humanism is not equal with the concept of human nature. But where is the just and precise answer?

We can search this answer in the considerable works of Bernard *De consideratione.*[20] This work has been dedicated to pope Eugen, a friend of Bernard. The three first chapters of this book contain the remarks, advices, and admonitions given to friends to make them easier and fruitful the fulfillment of his pope's

[20] Bernard de Clairvaux, *De la considération*.

office. This work displays the area of research on humanism. In fact, in the center of Bernard's interest stays the human person, her condition, her personal development, and her growth in spiritual life. Bernard takes care of his friend because he is aware of the dangers and ambushes which come against Eugene the pope.

So, we discover Bernard as an abbot, spiritual director, and master of monks, but not only of monks. Certainly, his area of activity is monastic milieu, where lives the Cistercian community, trying to pray and to work. In fact the Cistercians practiced *officium divinum, lectio divina and labor manuum*. Therefore, Bernard engages his abilities and experience to teach and educate the monks in the true way of life.

The humanism of Bernard could be described as his personal activity and the activity of the monastic community, whose goal is to educate the human person in the context of his own life and his own choice. Is this really monastic humanism? We can answer positively because its effect has been presumed to be in the monastic milieu. However, this is also the universal humanism because it gives a project of renewal and growth of the human person. Bernard proposes the tools, which have been used in monastic convents.

2. Humanism as a system

After these analyses above, we can assert that the humanism of Bernard of Clairvaux isn't a concept of human nature but a series of recommendations, instructions, activities, attitudes, behaviors and practices, which guide a person to the renovation of human nature and to restitution in him an image of God. It was rather a system of monastic pedagogy, which shows how to educate a conscious person, able to contemplate God and receive salvation.

This is the system because we discover logical connections between different sectors of that. But bernardino concept of human being is really a foundation of whole humanism because pedagogy takes its inspiration from the concept of man. We can consider some great sectors of humanism, understood as recommendations and attitudes on the way to the ideal of the mature and well-formed monk.

Humility and truth

The first sector of this educative way of humanism is the truth of hu,man condition. A man recognizes in it his own condition and his own misery. It is the misery of fallen existence and fallen nature. The most important Bernard's work, which treats the way of humility, is *De gradibus humilitatis et superbiae*.[21] The knowledge of himself is a necessary condition of personal development and renewal of his human nature. What is the gate to true knowledge? According Bernard the humility is the necessary way to true knowledge. He asserts that a man who wants to know himself must eliminate pride because pride obscures the light of knowledge (*De gradibus humulitatis et superbiae* 15).[22] Humility is an attitude in which a man recognizes his own deteriorated condition. He describes the twelfth grades of humility, in antithesis toward twelfth grades of excessive pride and vain glory (superbia). Consequently, a human being I lives in ignorance because he neglects the knowledge of himself. Bernard wrote in his commentary on the Cantique of continues[23]:

> Audi ergo sponsum liquid et aperte in anima etiam animae ignorantiam condemnantem, Quid enim dicit? Non utique si Deum, sed "Si ignorans te inquit, et cetera. Patet ergo quia ignorans ignorabitur, sive se, sive Deum ignorare contigat" (*Sermones in Cantica canticorum* 35, 9).

The fact is that humility guides a man to the truth, but there are three levels of truth. The first level of truth is to know himself and also recognize his own misery and the state of deterioration. The second level of truth is to recognize the misery of his neighbor, but not to condemn him. This grade of truth calls a man to feel empathy and compassion withy his neighbor. The third level of truth is to purify his hearth to watch God self.

But this watching guide us to another sector of humanism. Humility has its place in the In the monastic tradition. Gregory the Great developed in his writing the concept of compunction. It means the recognition of his own sin. Gregory emphasised the *computio cordis* (compunction of heart) and *compuctio*

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21 Bernard z Clairvaux, *O stopniach pokory i pychy*, tłum. S. Kiełtyka, WAM, Kraków 1991, pp. 34–36.
22 Bernard z Clairvaux, *O stopniach pokory i pychy*, pp. 34–36.
23 Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 3, pp. 100–102.

amoris (compunction of love).[24] Both initiate the desire of God, which guides a monk to personal contact and unity with God.

Considerationa and contemplation

Bernard in his work *De consideratione* researched the problem of vision and recognition of God.[25] Bernard distinguishes two ways of cognition: the consideration and the contemplation and creates exact definitions: The consideration is a mind's effort to research truth. The contemplation is the truly and sure cognition of an object or the direct and sure cognition of truth. Both stay in a strong relationship.

But it is necessary to recognize the context of the theory of prayer, which is considered. The work is addressed to pope Eugene, so the author respects his tasks and engagements. This is practical work to support the papal service and help him in his spiritual life. He is aware: it is impossible in this life to contemplate directly the essence of thing and to contemplate directly God. Therefore, he must consider invisible God as a visible creature. However, consideration in its three grades guides the human person to the contemplation of God in his nature. The first grade is ordering consideration, which discerns things by senses. The second grade is evaluating consideration, which judges every created thing and evaluates it as a tool of God's cognition. The third consideration is speculative consideration, which unite a person through grace with God self (*De consideratione* V, 4). Contemplation is one of the most splendid activities of man, but there is also something important that marks human nature. This is love. The contemplation lets us be touched by love.

The consideration is in relationship with the activity, which is described and displayed in the Rule of saint Benedict. These are *lectio* and *meditatio*. A monk, whose life is totally dedicated to God practiced reading of Bible and its commentaries and meditated on its content. In fact, hi was giving his thought to the Word of God, and hi directed his mind to divine realities revealed in the text.

[24] See J. Leclercq, *L'amour des lettres et la désir e Dieu. Initiation aux auteurs monastiques du Moyen Age*, CERF, Paris 1957, pp. 34–36; J. Leclercq, *Miłość nauki a pragnienie Boga*, trans. M. Borkowska, Tyniec Wydawnictwo Benedyktynów, Kraków 1997, pp. 40–42 (Źródła Monastyczne, 14).

[25] Bernard de Clairvaux, *De la considération*.

However, meditation was only some stage of this spiritual activity, which guided the contemplation of God.[26]

God's love and man's love

This particular question marks the first paragraph of Bernard's work *De diligendo Deo*[27]: "Why God merits our love? Why we have to love God" (*De diligendo Deo* 1). He gave a direct and simple answer. We are called to love God because God has loved us as his own enemies. He loved them only out of mercy. The mercy and grace free given are God's motivation for love. We have to love God because he merits to be loved by human persons. We also need to love God because he is a supreme good, and he grants us goods we need in every stage of our life (*De diligendo Deo* 1).[28] Therefore, it is possible for man to love God, but only with his support and his assistance. So, Bernard designed a pedagogy of love for the human person. In fact, according to Bernard, there are four stages of love. The first stage is love, when a man loves himself only for his won sake. This stage of love also summons the love of his neighbor (*De diligendo Deo* 23, 24).[29] The second stage of love is to love God because of the benefits a man receives from him. A man in oppression is touched by the generosity of God who grants him his support and his help (*De diligendo Deo* 26).[30] The third stage consists of loving God for the sake of God. In fact, a man experiences the goodness of God and love him because he recognizes his nature (*De diligendo Deo* 26). The fourth stage of love is to love himself because God loves him. In this regard a man recognizes that God loves him as a first. When a man loves God, he loves also himself for the sake of God (*De diligendo Deo* 27–29).[31]

This is the highest level of love, but it doesn't exclude a particular way in which a human being starts to progress in this way of love. It does not eliminate the gradual growth of human love. The most important inspiration of human love is the human nature of Christ and the human body of Savior.

[26] See J. Leclercq, *Miłość nauki a pragnienie Boga*, pp. 20–24.
[27] Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre.*
[28] Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 60–62.
[29] Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp.116–122.
[30] Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 125–127.
[31] Bernard de Clairvaux, *L'amour de Dieu. La grâce et le libre arbitre*, pp. 128–130.

Love and the relationship between God and soul, or person are rooted in the patristic and monastic traditions. In fact, Origen's commentary on the Song of Songs put in emphasis the body, the members of the body, but recognize in it the soul. Consequently, he studied love, understood as a desire of Christ achieved by the Word of God.[32]

3. Christ the man and human body of Christ

Bernard in the 7th paragraph of *De diligendo Deo* introduces us to the economy of love and shows us the object of love. This is the crucified Jesus. In fact, the crucified Jesus revealed the love of God. Bernard displays the Church as the Bride, who stays before our eyes. In fact, the bride looks at Jesus, the only begotten Son, who is flagellated and bears the cross. He is insulted, nailed to the cross, and pierced by a spear. Jesus in the end gave his soul for his friends. The Bride—the Church and the soul observe all these actions and enter the garden of the Bridegroom. She desires to meet him, and she picks up red apples and white flowers—symbols of death and resurrection. So, we discover how important and fundamental is the body of Christ in the experience of God's love.

There is also another image and metaphor. Bernard reveals the particular relationship in sermon 61 of *Sermones in Cantica canticorum*. He reported the conversation between the bride and groom and between someone mysterious and the Dove. The Dove hides in the *foramina petrae*—in the cleft of rock. The cleft of rocks is the wound of Christ. Practically, the mysterious person—the bride is the Christ, who is wounded and crucified. The dove is conscious of her own sinfulness, but she searches for mercy in the wounds of Christ. More, the wounds open access to the entrails of Christ, which are displayed as a symbol of mercy and salvation.

32 See D. Robertson, *Lectio divina. The medieval experience of reading*, Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MI 2011, pp. 159–163.

Bernard states:

> Patet arcanum cordis per foramina corporis
> Patet magnum illud pietatis sacramentum
> Patet viscera misericordiae dei nostri (Sermo 51, 4).[33]

This fragment and also the text of *De diligendo Deo* and *Sermones super Cantica Cantocorum*, considerable works of Bernardian mystics, convince us that the human nature of Christ plays an indispensable role in the development and in the ways of growth of human person. The three stages of humanistic, monastic pedagogy—Humility and Truth, Consideration and Contemplation, God's love, and man's love conclude in the humanity of Christ and in his corporeality. The writings of Bernard inspire us to make a particular statement. The development of human nature and his completion out of the relationship with human nature of Christ is impossible.

Thus, in this regard, the experience of the human body and human nature of Christ is the core of humanism of Bernard. But the human body of Christ and the human body of monks have in the context of Bernardian humanism a particular ability to create an image.

4. Christ's and Cistercian body pictured

We discover that the consequence of humanist thought and spirit is the creation of pictures. Someone could assert that it is only creations in the margin. But if we analyze some examples of pictures painted in the Cistercian books, we need to revise our point of view.

The initial Q(*uamvis omnem scientiam*) 9r, from *Moralia in Iob Sancti Gregorii magni* from Cîteaux collected in Dijon (Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 173) comprises the letter Q, which is composed of two bodies—the body of dragon and the body of man.[34] A man is fighting with dragon—a dangerous creature that is trying to devour a man. A role of the human body is fundamental in this

[33] Bernard de Clairvaux, *Sermons sur le Cantique*, vol. 4: Sermons 51–68, texte latin de s. *Bernardi Opera* par J. Leclercq, H. Rochais et Ch. H. Talbot; introd., trad. et notes par P. Verdeyen, R. Fassetta, CERF, Paris 2003, p. 250 (Sources Chrétiennes, 472).

[34] Cf. Y. Załuska, *Manuscrits enluminés de Dijon*, CNRS, Paris 1991, pp. 60–61, fig. C.

situation. In fact, a man using his abilities tears the dragon's maw, defending himself. His body is full of tension, but his gesture is appropriate and efficient. The man is determined to fight an evil.

This is the initial A(*d te levavi*) 2r from the Cistercian gradual from Lubiaż (Wrocław, University Library IF 411).[35] The sophisticated bush of tights is the network, where we discover three human person, who have a human body. The behaviors and gestures of the body are fundamental features because they reveal the situation of this person. We gaze at a man, who fights with the monsters, trying to devour him and catch his right leg. In the center of the network, we discover David, a harpist and singer, proclaiming the praise of God. In the left corner of the letter above, we notice a monk kneeling and praying with risen hands. But we can more precisely remark, that this man is levitating in the highest.

The Cistercian initial displays the splendid paradigm of spiritual development and growth. In fact, a man is passing from the entanglement to evil by meditation on the Word to the highest contemplation of divine realities.

We find also another model of contemplation. This initial A(*n tertio regni*) from Jerome's commentary (Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipal, 132) contains an image of the prophet Daniel among lions.[36] In the middle of mortal danger sits a man in prayer sitting among the animals. In fact, his attitude ensures it. He is quiet, but he is determined to stay in contact with God.

There is also an extraordinary picture, who corresponds with the main idea of Bernard's humanism and his concept of monastic education. *Legenda sanctae Hedvigis*, a famous manuscript, including some texts concerning Saint Hedvig of Andechs-Meranien (Malibu, Cal, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 83. MN. 126) gives us a double miniature on one side.[37] The first part above represents saint Bernard sitting before the desk and writing. The second part depicts saint Bernard among the young monks. Two pictures visualize not only the contemplation but also the teaching and sharing of contemplated things. They show us also the process of teaching and education. Theological content of contemplation has been transformed in the moment of teaching in the particular tools of education and formation.

35 Cf. D. Tabor, *Iluminacje cysterskich kodeksów śląskich XIII wieku*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2004, pp. 104–105.

36 Cf. Y. Załuska, *Manuscrits enluminés de Dijon*, pp. 71–74.

37 See *Der Hedwigs-Codex von 1353: Sammlung Ludwig*, ed. W. Braunfels, vol. 1: Faksimile der vollständigen Handschrift, Gebr. Mann, Berlin 1972.

We discover in the same manuscript of Saint Hedvig another miniature. We decipher two events: Mission of Gabriel imposed by God the Father and Annunciation to Mary. A little, difficult to realize element of this picture is a little body of Christ Baby. Naturally, we have a paradigm of the Incarnation. The body of Christ and his human nature are the central reality of this image. In this moment, we can ask: Is the human nature of Christ part of Bernard's concept of pedagogy? In order to mark some possibilities of solution, it could be very useful to show another picture.

The miniature Baptism of Christ, from the famous Psalter of Trzebnica (Wrocław, University Library IF 440), is one of the series of full-page miniatures of this psalter, written and depicted in the years 30. of 13th century.[38] This miniature depicts the episodes of three Christological cycles—the cycle of the Incarnation, the cycle of the Passion and Resurrection, and the cycle of the Glory. Christ is the central protagonist of every miniature. We have before our eyes the representation of baptism. In fact, the nude body of Christ emphasizes the importance and excellence of the human nature of Christ in his mysteries. When we analyze another miniature, we can assert that the body of Christ is also the central reality of these episodes, and the human nature of Savior is highlighted. Thus, we can consequently affirm that Cistercian images bring confirmation: In fact, the human nature of Christ is an integral part of Bernard's humanism, and the emphasis on the body of Christ is the fruit of Bernard's mystics.

Conclusions

We found the answer to the fundamental question: What is the concept of humanism in the Bernardian thought and spirituality. But to achieve this answer, we had to study his concept of human nature. It has been described in three stages: noble nature, fallen nature, and revived nature. The nobility of human nature consists of the image of God and its similarity to God. The fall of a human being is due to vain glory and ignorance. Concerning the restoration and recovery of human nature, cognition of himself and humility are the core of the process of recovery. In fact, human nature has been dynamically described, but

38 Cf. D. Tabor, *Beatus vir: chrystologiczny Psałterz trzebnicki w Bibliotece Uniwersyteckiej we Wrocławiu (IF 440) wobec egzegezy biblijnej i duchowości cysterskiej XIII stulecia*, Księgarnia Akademicka, Kraków 2020.

this is a description of mystic and contemplator. The consequence of this concept of humanity is the series of recommendations and design of some spiritual way, which is practically monastic pedagogy. It is able to transform human person and restitute his dignity. This is humanism, which Bernard created and applied in the procedure of monastic formation. This is humility and truth, consideration and contemplation, love of man, and love of God. All three compose the system for human growth and human development, but it is rather recommended to the monastic Cistercian milieu.

The most valuable consequence of Bernardian program of human growth is appreciation of the humanity of Christ and attribution of his human nature in the process of personal development. Although we attribute the humanity of Christ to the process of human growth and development, we put the question of the place of Christ's body in Bernard's humanism. Is it part of christology or belongs to anthropology? Why the body of Christ, it means that the human nature of Christ was so necessary and important in Bernard's experience? Where comes the contemplation of the suffering body of Christ? The answer is fundamental because we study the role of image in Cistercian culture.

But in this moment, these are the problems, which should be the object of serious research.

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Fig. 1. Initial Q(*uamvis omnem scientiam*) 9r, *Moralia in Iob Sancti Gregorii magni*” from Cîteaux (Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 173).

Fig. 2. Initial A(*d te levavi*) 2r, the Cistercian gradual from Lubiaż (Wrocław, University Library IF 411).

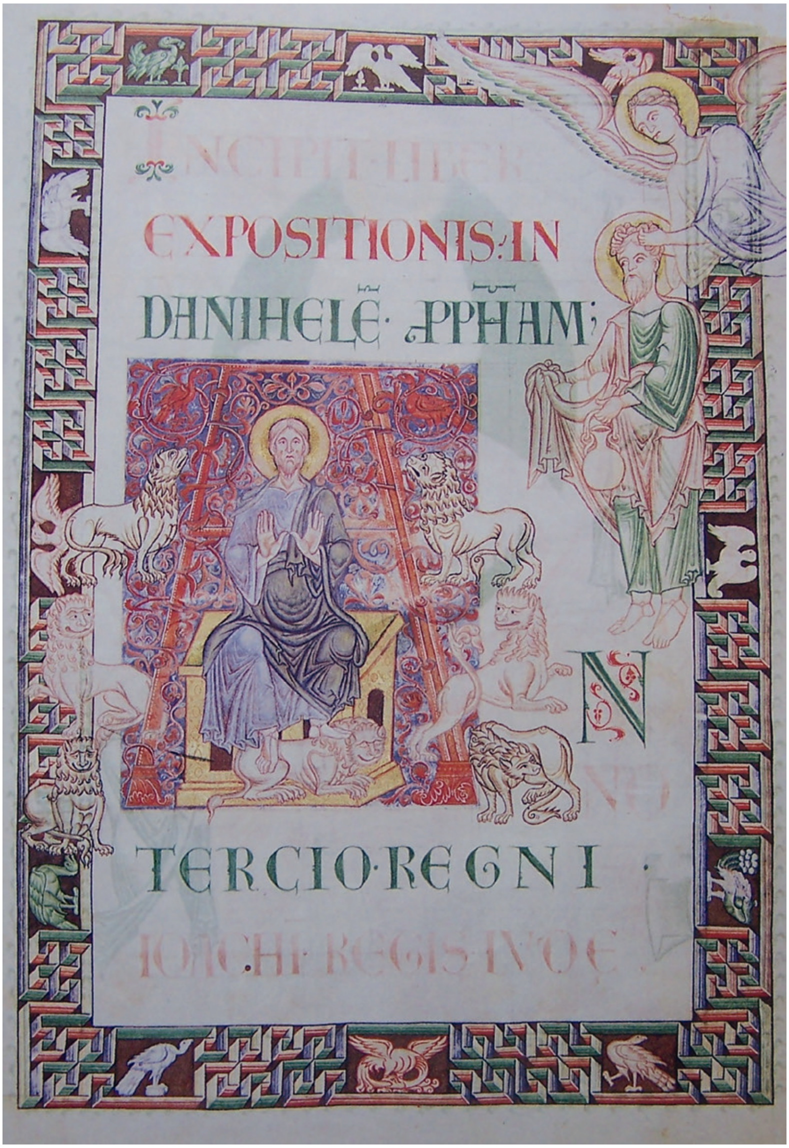

Fig. 3. Initial A(*n tertio regni*) 2v, Hieronimus sanctus, *Commentarii in Danielem; Commentarii in Prophetas minores; Commentarii in Ecclesiastem* (Dijon, Bibliotheque Municipale, 132).

Fig. 4. Miniature *Saint Bernard writing and teaching*, *Legenda sanctae Hedvigis*, 167r (Malibu, Cla, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 83. MN. 126)

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Fig. 5. Miniature *Mission of Gabriel imposed by God the Father and Annunciation to Mary*, 167v *Legenda sanctae Hedvigis* (Malibu, Cla, The J. Paul Getty Museum, 83. MN. 126)

Fig. 6. Miniature *Baptism of Christ*, 7v, Psalter of Trzebnica (Wrocław, University Library IF 440)

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Stefan Wyszyński's Christian personalism

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to present Stefan Wyszyński's personalism based on the mystery of God, especially on the creation and salvation of human beings. The most important issue in Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński's personalism is the integral vision of the human person. At the same time, attention is drawn to the extent to which personalism can constitute a basis for shaping pedagogy, especially in relation to the contemporary reality.

Keywords

Stefan Wyszyński, personalism, integral vision

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Questions about human beings, their lives, identity, and transience are the subject of inquiry in various academic disciplines. Anthropologists, philosophers, theologians, psychologists, and educationalists continuously seek answers to these questions, while emerging social movements are often described as "personalist."

Contemporary personalism encompasses various currents, including Thomistic, axiological, existential, and socio-economic perspectives. A thorough analysis of its content reveals the following dimensions: the metaphysical, which emphasizes that the essence of being is personal in nature; the epistemological, which asserts that knowledge is expressed through personality; the ethical, which highlights the importance of aesthetic experience; and theological, which refers to the concept of a personal God.[1]

Based on the subjectivity of the person and objective axiology, Christian personalism advances the concept of teleological moral education. In essence, personalist pedagogy is an integral part of anthropology. While exploring the nature of human beings, it simultaneously defines who they should strive to become. Thus, all educational efforts, including those addressing the more foundational layers of personality, are ultimately directed toward the individual's spiritual growth. Personalism seeks ways to influence the spiritual dimension of humanity and the personal "self," with the central tenet being that individuals must be treated as subjects in education. It is essential to develop and harmonize one's body and soul, for only the harmonious integration of their faculties constitutes true perfection and forms the foundation of a noble character.[2]

1. Who is a human being?

Emerging new concepts and movements assert that a human being is their own God. These perspectives prioritize individual rights over God, our neighbors,

[1] Cf. S. Kowalczyk, *Człowiek w myśli współczesnej: Filozofia współczesna o człowieku*, Michalineum, Warszawa 1990, p. 377.

[2] Cf. J. Kostkiewicz, *Kierunki i koncepcje pedagogiki katolickiej w Polsce 1918–1939*, Impuls, Kraków 2013, p. 52; B. Gawlina, *Wprowadzenie do wybranych nurtów w pedagogice współczesnej*, in: *Wychowanie: interpretacja jego wartości i granic*, ed. B. Gawlina, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 1998, p. 11 (Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace Pedagogiczne, 26).

society, and the state. Everything is subjected to the judgment of the individual, who is morally free and liberated from social obligations. They recognize only private morality, claiming that religion is a personal matter. According to this view, the purpose of human life is temporal happiness, which may be pursued by any means. The unrestricted freedom to accumulate wealth is seen as the highest economic principle.[3]

There are also those who assert that man is nothing, devoid of any intrinsic personal value. Their worth is derived from the state and social co-existence. As a result, man is denied the fundamental rights of a person: the right to be free, to think, and to act. They must submit entirely to the ruling authority. As Stefan Wyszyński stated,

> The person is subjected to complete contempt, the unyielding rigidity of the governing system, the inhumanity of boundless bureaucratic arbitrariness, despotism, and terror. In practice, this leads to citizens being enslaved for the benefit of the collective.[4]

In light of emerging concepts, man is also denied the freedom to believe in God and worship Him. The spiritual dimension of man is disregarded, while a world devoid of God and religious morality is ushered in. Technology and technical progress become the new gods, while proletarian equality is viewed as the highest form of happiness. Human's destiny and the purpose of their life are similarly rejected. If a world without God is proclaimed, man is no longer permitted to pursue happiness in communion with God. The only goals that can be pursued are those dictated by the state. With spiritual values deemed irrelevant, man's life should be devoted to the welfare of the state, society, temporal happiness, and personal gain, ultimately leading to the deification of materialism.[5]

2. Stefan Wyszyński's personalism

The crucial characteristic of Wyszyński's personalism is the integral perception of the human being. In light of this concept, education encompasses the totality

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[3] Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, Pallottinum, Poznań 1993, p. 46.
[4] S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, p. 46.
[5] Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Miłość i sprawiedliwość społeczna*, p. 47.

of methods and processes that help a human being realize their full humanity.[6] The Primate had no doubts about this. In his view, after God, man is the greatest value on Earth.[7] Man is a rational, self-aware person, oriented toward spiritual values, and free in their actions. As such, a person should be examined from a variety of perspectives: metaphysical, moral, social, and religious perspectives. Stefan Wyszyński was an authentic defender of an integral view of human being.

On the metaphysical level, a person is an individual substance of a rational nature—an entity that is living, independent, self-aware, and self-responsible. A person is the subject of existence, as well as of creative and free actions. Endowed with spiritual faculties, namely, reason and will,[8] a person is oriented toward the highest manifestations of being: truth, goodness, beauty, and ultimately, God, who is the source of both being and values. In this context, the supernatural gifts of grace,[9] faith, hope, and love are particularly significant, as they elevate the individual to a higher level of spiritual existence. Through these gifts, humans can participate in God's life and open themselves to the mysteries of faith. In this dimension, a person can attain the highest dignity while transcending the natural order. Man is a person with a unique mode of existence, one that is entirely distinct from that of all other creatures. Transcending historical and social determinants, man is a being endowed with purposefulness and subjectivity.[10]

Another level that needs to be emphasized is the moral one,[11] where a person appears as the subject of rights and duties, a discoverer, and creator of values.

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[6] J. Tarnowski, *Człowiek – dialog – wychowanie. Zarys chrześcijańskiej pedagogiki personalistyczno-egzystencjalnej,* "Znak" (1991) no. 436, p. 69; A. Murzyn, *Filozofia edukacji u schyłku XX wieku – wybrane kwestie*, Kraków 2001, p. 37.

[7] S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, Ośrodek Dokumentacji Studiów Społecznych, Warszawa 1990, p. 681.

[8] "Man is a person, a rational and free being, the steward of creation. […]. Outside of man, there is no personality, no rationality, no freedom" (S. Wyszyński, *Społeczność przyrodzona i nadprzyrodzona*, vol. 2 (Warsaw, 18 February 1957), p. 61. This passage is a reference to J. Maritain, who argued that the person is a universe of a spiritual nature, endowed with the freedom of choice, and thus constitutes a whole independent of the world. Cf. J. Maritain, *Humanisme intégral*, Fernand Aubier, Paris 1947).

[9] God "wished that we become His children, not only in the order of nature, as the Creator of our bodies and souls, but even more so—in the order of grace" (S. Wyszyński, *W obronie praw osoby ludzkiej i kultury humanistycznej*, vol. 16 (9 April 1964), p. 2.

[10] K. Bochenek, *Personalizm jako wyznacznik chrześcijańskiej wizji społeczeństwa optymalnego*, "Nierówności Społeczne a Wzrost Gospodarczy" (2009) no. 14, pp. 30–31.

[11] Cf. U. Gruca-Miąsik, *Rozumowanie moralne – osoba, rozwój, wychowanie*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, Rzeszów 2018.

Endowed with conscience,[12] they are responsible for their actions. The freedom of the will, together with conscience, enables education, the determination of guilt, and the creation of moral, legal, and social orders that are rooted in objective norms and recognized in a free manner. Thus, a person becomes, to some extent, a self-regulator of their own destiny.[13]

On the social level, a person is open to the world of others. As Wyszyński put it, "[a person] can live and develop their faculties only because of their relations with other people."[14] A person lives in dialogue with others, thereby creating a milieu of free and rational beings, each of whom is both a subject and an object of law—each possessing intrinsic value, ontologically prior yet requiring others for their growth and happiness. A person exists for themselves and others. Therefore, one can speak of complementarity between a husband and wife, parents, and children. In this way, social cooperation becomes possible.

To grow, a religious dimension with a clearly defined purpose is of paramount importance. In the context of religious education, this means following Christ—becoming more like Him, uniting with Him, incorporating prayer, liturgy, and the sacraments into one's life, shaping one's moral attitude, and harmonizing one's spiritual life with the physical. In personalism, education involves shaping a human being with consideration of their ultimate goal while, of course, also promoting the well-being of the communities in which they live and from which they benefit. This is always achieved through the harmonious development of one's innate physical, intellectual, and moral traits, in conjunction with the religious dimension.

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12 M. Parzyszek, *Prawo wpisane w serce w nauczaniu kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Być człowiekiem sumienia. Interdyscyplinarny namysł nad fenomenem sumienia*, ed. by R. Ceglarek, M. Sztaba, Regina Poloniae, Częstochowa 2015.

13 "There are values within man that are given by God—we cannot comprehend them in a different way—which constantly stir our reason, directing it toward truth so persistently that even when a person seems to have grasped the truth, they continue to seek it, continually verifying every step of their reasoning […]. In this regard, even if they have reasoned most conscientiously and honestly, they do not stop but continue searching for truth. A person has a profound right to know the truth and desires to know it fully. At the same time, they long to see themselves in the light of the whole truth" (S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, p. 987).

14 S. Wyszyński, *U podstaw soborowej nauki o człowieku*, in: *W nurcie zagadnień posoborowych*, ed. B. Bejze, vol. 2, Wydawnictwo Sióstr Loretanek, Warszawa 1968, p. 135.

Mature religiosity is possible when a person accepts the gift of faith, practices sacramental life, engages in prayer, and lives according to the commandment of love and apostolic mission.[15]

All individuals are connected not only by shared community, biological origin, and rational nature but also by their psychology, love, and the search for truth. Since it is human nature to continuously transcend ourselves, the process of growth is meaningful only when we serve transcendent values that are rooted in God. By entering into an inner dialogue with God, a person achieves their highest realization, meaning, value, and purpose. A person is both the subject and object of love—they exist for themselves and for those they love and those who love them in return. Thus, personal reality achieves greater unity, simplicity, and harmony. The love between persons on the spiritual plane gives the personalist concept its truly social character.

Christian personalism, as presented by Stefan Wyszyński, goes beyond mere mental manifestations. In portraying a person, it delves into deeper layers of personality, primarily moral, religious, and metaphysical. It also takes into account one's supernatural gifts. Therefore, this personalism emphasizes the spiritual connections that link a person not only to the world of others but also to the supernatural order.

On the metaphysical level, therefore, persons are individual, rational, and independent substances. On the moral plane, they must be understood as oriented toward the realm of values, while on the religious plane, persons express themselves through their attitude toward God. On the psychological level, they express themselves through their intellect, character, and temperament.

Human nature is composed of both body and soul, but it is in the person that they are united. It is within the person that the faculties of body and soul, physical and spiritual energies, powers of intellect, will, and heart, and personal and social aspirations intertwine. The human spirit often "rebels" against the body, while the latter resists the spirit. Yet the body "knows" that without the spirit, it is merely a handful of dust.[16] The person, a being that is ontologically and physically unified, constantly strives to achieve a higher inner, spiritual integrity. One's complete integrity occurs when conscience, endeavours, convictions, love, and cooperation with others are harmonized.

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[15] Cf. M. Parzyszek, *Rodzina w nauczaniu kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego. Aspekt pedagogiczny*, Episteme, Lublin 2012.

[16] Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Bochen chleba*, Marianum, Poznań–Warszawa 1997, p. 139.

Subjective unity is only one aspect of the person. To fully understand who a person is, one must consider their rationality and freedom, reflective consciousness, autonomy, creativity, capacity for purposeful action, responsibility, authenticity, orientation toward values and other individuals, and commitment.

The person is the noblest form of a substantial being. As such, they are endowed with a unique value: dignity. Consequently, a person should be shown respect and regard. The dignity of a person comprises the following elements:

1. **Ontological dignity**, i.e., transcendental goodness.
2. **Physical dignity**, which depends on the integrity of the body.
3. **Functional dignity**, based on specific intellectual capabilities, creative skills, and the ability to work (professional competence).
4. **Moral dignity** in the natural order, based on honesty, wisdom, and goodwill. It manifests itself in one's righteous actions.
5. **Supernatural dignity** in the order of grace, where one is an actual or potential child of God.

Czesław Bartnik observes that "the Primate rooted his concept of personalism in the infinite dignity of the human person. As he often put it, 'the dignity of a child of God.'"[17]

3. Pedagogical consequences of Stefan Wyszyński's personalism

Wyszyński's personalist vision of humanity clearly emphasizes the dual function of pedagogy: diagnostic and apologetic.

The **diagnostic function** involves uncovering the ideological influences of communism permeating society. Rooted in the principles of dialectical materialism, communism promoted a false notion of human liberation. Individuals were viewed primarily through the lens of their productive utility, while religion was deemed a "necessary evil," and religiosity was something to be eradicated from public life.[18] Political, social, economic, and cultural changes negatively impacted both individual and social life. Long-cherished values were being

[17] C. Bartnik, *Personalistyczny wymiar duchowości według Prymasa Wyszyńskiego*, in: *Gorycz proroctwa*, ed. C. Bartnik, STANDRUK, Lublin 2003, p. 117.

[18] A. Micewski, *Kardynał Wyszyński. Prymas i mąż stanu*, Société d'Éditions Internationales, Paris 1982, p. 29.

displaced and replaced by views and ideologies that undermined the essence of marriage and family.

Among the threats Wyszyński confronted were atheism, secularization, alcoholism, divorce, egoism, contraceptive mentality, lack of a spirit of sacrifice, individualism, sloth, negligence, comfort-seeking, wastefulness, and superficiality. These and many other challenges prompted the Primate's radical defense of human dignity.

Stefan Wyszyński exposed the evil that arose from the premises of communism. However, he did not criticize the system; rather, he indirectly made people aware of the moral, material, and intellectual privations inherent in the system, which inevitably led to its decline. He demonstrated that the materialist Marxist ideology was the root cause of this evil, having a destructive influence on the development of personality, both individually and socially. In fact, it hindered social transformation and the realization of genuine welfare.[19] Wyszyński argued that the solution lay in adopting the principles of Catholic social teaching.

Wyszyński discussed four dimensions of man's social nature: family, nation, international community, and work.

On the level of the family, Wyszyński's thinking is situated within Catholic personalism. Here, parental love, both paternal and maternal, should find its natural fulfillment in the integral upbringing of children, with whom parents co-create the family.[20]

The family is the primary community in which a person lives. At the same time, it is the most enduring social unit, possessing biological potency and moral, educational, social, and civic significance.[21] The family should be a place where the noblest values are recognized and developed, not only in the physical dimension (cf. CCC 2221)[22] but also in the spiritual one (cf. GS 52).[23]

19 A. Micewski, *Kardynał Wyszyński*, p. 112.

20 Cf. A. Rynio, *Rodzina środowiskiem integralnego wychowania w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, in: *Świat rodziny. Perspektywa interdyscyplinarna wobec trwania i zmiany*, ed. by J. Garbula, A. Zakrzewska, W. Sawczuk, Toruń 2013, pp. 28–56; A. Rynio, *Integralne wychowanie w myśli Jana Pawła II*, Lublin 2004, p. 360.

21 Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, p. 687.

22 "The fecundity of conjugal love cannot be reduced solely to the procreation of children but must extend to their moral education and their spiritual formation. The *role of parents in education* is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute. The right and the duty of parents to educate their children are primordial and inalienable." (John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 36).

23 "The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation

According to Wyszyński, in addition to the family, the nation contributes to one's social growth, as it shapes one's identity and fosters the development of one's personality. A nation is an accidental and relational entity that does not exist independently but through individuals, who are the true substantial beings.[24]

Wyszyński's analysis of the nation is multifaceted and focuses on two crucial elements. The first pertains to material values, such as origins, tradition, history, economic life, and material and technological civilization. The second element is subjective in nature and includes the community's self-awareness, language, spiritual culture, and, above all, religion.[25]

A person also develops their social nature within the international community, which the Primate refers to human as *familia humana*. This community serves the nations, which, in turn, should serve families, and families should be directed toward the well-being of their offspring. *Familia humana* is the subject of the Church as perceived on historical, developmental, and geographical planes.[26]

In light of Stefan Wyszyński's personalism, a human being is the subject of labour, its agent, and its purpose. Although labor may deplete physical strength, it liberates the spirit from material constraints. Moreover, it serves not only temporal good but also eternal good, fostering virtues, skills, and values of the soul that are essential for inner life.[27] Ultimately, labor shapes Christian virtues, known as the virtues of work, including patience, long-term thinking, perseverance, humbleness, and diligence.[28]

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of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children. […] Children should be so educated that as adults they can follow their vocation, including a religious one, with a mature sense of responsibility and can choose their state of life; if they marry, they can thereby establish their family in favorable moral, social and economic conditions" (D. Opozda, *Rodzina najcenniejszym dobrem ludzkości – aspekt psychopedagogiczny*, in: *W służbie rodziny*, ed. R. Bieleń, Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie, Warszawa 2000, p. 132).

24 J. Lewandowski, *Naród w nauczaniu kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, Ośrodek Dokumentacji i Studiów Społecznych, Warszawa 1989, p. 18.

25 C. Bartnik, *Chrześcijańska nauka o narodzie według Prymasa Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, RW KUL, Lublin 1982, p. 9.

26 Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Ojcze nasz*, PAX, Poznań 1977, p. 29.

27 S. Wyszyński, *Duch pracy ludzkiej*, Soli Deo, Warszawa 1991, p. 111.

28 M. Parzyszek, *Personalistyczny wymiar duchowości chrześcijańskiej w nauczaniu Stefana kardynała Wyszyńskiego*, Lublin 2003, p. 229 (typescript of a PhD dissertation).

The apologetic function of Wyszyński's pedagogical personalism is expressed in the teaching that it is necessary to undertake the demanding task of education—one that considers reason, will, and heart while affirming the intrinsic personal value of every individual. To educate a person means to help them direct their natural faculties toward God, recognize the values that God has instilled in their soul, love the world and others, unite their soul with sanctifying grace, and nurture spiritual and supernatural gifts.[29]

This type of education is comprehensive and profound, as it encompasses all aspects of human traits and endeavors. When educated in this way, a person acquires a broad worldview that embraces both earthly and heavenly matters, temporality, and eternity. This worldview compels a person to transcend themselves and seek the cause of their existence, meaning, and purpose of their life, not only within themselves but also beyond. It also teaches them to think broadly and protects against sectarian narrow-mindedness.[30]

Thus, the best form of education is Christian education, as it is the most socially oriented. It prepares us for life within the family—an irreplaceable community[31]—and within society. It teaches us to respect human beings, their rights, and their dignity. Moreover, this form of education contributes to personal growth, as it continuously requires our spiritual effort.[32] It successfully avoids the risks of one-sided education, such as naturalism, intellectualism, chauvinism, misguided patriotism, materialism, the idolization of the body, cosmopolitanism, or religious sentimentalism. This education is "self-reflective;" it harmonizes obligations, organizes priorities, neglects nothing, and neither diminishes nor exaggerates.[33]

According to Primate Wyszyński, Christian education requires that we "put out into deep water" (cf. Lk 5:4) to perfect ourselves. Spiritual work, grounded in the capacities of the human spirit and religious ideals, is the most demanding effort one can undertake to shape oneself.[34]

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[29] S. Wyszyński, *W światłach tysiąclecia*, Wydawnictwo Znak, Kraków 1961, pp. 124–125.
[30] Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 2, Soli Deo, Warszawa 1995, p. 74.
[31] Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Z królewskiego Krakowa*, Soli Deo, Warszawa 1992, p. 42.
[32] Cf. S. Wyszyński, *Nauczanie społeczne 1946–1981*, pp. 73–75; S. Wyszyński, *Dzieła zebrane*, vol. 2, p. 74.
[33] Cf. M. Romaniuk, *Życie, twórczość i posługa Prymasa Tysiąclecia*, Instytut Wydawniczy PAX, Warszawa 2001, p. 105.
[34] Cf. S. Wyszyński, *W światłach tysiąclecia*, p. 124.

The fruits of Christian education are valuable individuals, honest citizens, and good Christians who are aware of the gift of faith and shape their lives according to the example of Jesus Christ.[35]

It is through personalist pedagogy that we can most fully implement the educational process. This pedagogy perceives the "disciple" not merely as a body, a set of emotions, or subjective convictions but as a unified being of both body and spirit—one who thinks, loves, and works both for others and for themselves.

The aim of personalist education is to cultivate "champions of virtue" who, having achieved one goal, continue to seek new ones. The fundamental element of their formation is the encounter with another person.

Conclusions

The basic duty of contemporary societies should be to ensure the harmonious and integrated development of children and young people. Only when the growth of moral personality occurs—a process of becoming a thinking, free, and self-responsible individual, independent yet capable of living with others while adhering to established social norms—can we hope for an optimistic future for humanity.[36] It is only love that can ultimately bring about mutual openness, considerateness, dedication, acceptance, and respect in our relationships.[37]

Stefan Wyszyński's personalism, together with the personalist pedagogy outlined above, is a form of education that respects the nature and value of the human person—one who humanizes the world and, through self-improvement, expresses themselves. It is the individual who imparts a personal, dynamic, and social character to the community in which they function. At the same time, the individual is both the subject of education and has the right to an education that aligns with their nature and ultimate purpose.

[35] Cf. A. Rynio, *Wychowanie młodzieży w nauczaniu Kardynała Stefana Wyszyńskiego*, Redakcja Wydawnictw Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego, Lublin 2001, p. 157.

[36] U. Gruca-Miąsik, *Teoria rozumowania moralnego – zarys syntezy*, "Polska Myśl Pedagogiczna" 5 (2019), p. 138.

[37] Cf. E. Osewska, *Rodzina i szkoła w Polsce wobec współczesnych wyzwań wychowawczych*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UPJPII, Kraków 2020, pp. 226–267.

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Towards pastoral application of contemporary art spaces: Chapel of Disclosure (Belgium) facilitators' views

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Abstract

The Catholic Chapel of Disclosure is a contemporary art space established in 2011, responding to the decline of religious practices in Catholic schools in Belgium. The Chapel's pastoral process is structured and organized. It offers perspectives on how pastoral activities may be implemented in other contemporary art spaces and ways to engage with nonbelievers and individuals who have left the Church. Between 2016 and 2022, in-depth interviews with the Chapel's creators and facilitators examined the process, the significance of "emptiness" and silence, and the range of emotions experienced by participants. The study identified three main elements that contributed to the pastoral approach: participants' openness to transcendence, lack of active indoctrination during facilitation, and importance of shared communal faith in relating participants' life stories to Biblical narratives.

Keywords

contemporary art, pastoral applications, process facilitation, pre-evangelisation, silence

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1. Introduction

In recent decades, numerous artistic initiatives have focused on constructing, renovating, and repurposing derelict chapels, including Catholic ones, across the Western world. These re-envisioned or repurposed chapels serve various functions, such as liturgical events, youth gatherings, and both religious and secular educational activities, often acting as spiritual spaces without explicit religious associations or being presented as art installations. While the majority of these chapels do not pursue specific religious objectives, the Chapel of Disclosure in Belgium stands apart in its mission and vision. This Chapel has been transformed into a contemporary art space with the intention of providing an inviting environment where individuals can reconnect with a nurturing divine presence. The primary visitors are typically non-believers or individuals who do not attend church services regularly, though some may identify as Catholic or be open to experiences of transcendence. The Chapel's core objective is to foster a deliberately minimalistic and introspective atmosphere that encourages spiritual harmony, personal transformation, and renewed engagement with the divine. It represents a tangible "hermeneutical space," inspiring new interpretations and dialogue by recontextualizing its historical architecture through the interplay of external light and interior silence.[1] These experiences are guided by skilled facilitators. The purpose of this study was to gather the perspectives of these facilitators concerning the Chapel of Disclosure, examine their pastoral approaches, and understand the needs of visitors for effective pastoral care. From 2016 to 2022, both informal and formal interviews were conducted with Brother Herman Lombaerts—the visionary behind the project—as well as architect Tom Callebaut and additional team members involved in facilitating the Chape of Disclosure experiences.

1.1. The context

Many repurposed chapels serve as contemporary art spaces and public venues accessible to visitors for tourism, performances, or facilitated visits. These

[1] Ch. Hilken, *Belgium – The Chapel of Disclosure: Spiritual rest and discovery in the De La Salle Centre in Groot-Bijgaarden*, 4.10.2016, https://www.lasalle-relem.org/belgium-the-chapel-of-disclosure-spiritual-rest-and-discovery-in-the-de-la-salle-centre-in-groot-bijgaarden/ (11.10.2025).

locations typically resemble other tourist or art experiences rather than offering unique elements to provoke curiosity or provide distinct immersive encounters. For example, James Turrell's Dorotheenstadt Cemetery Memorial Chapel in Berlin (Germany) has significant immersing lighting aimed at "connecting the natural world with the spiritual one."[2] In England, Theaster Gates utilised salvaged materials from nearby sites to construct Sanctum within the remains of the Temple Church in Bristol, which hosted 522 sequential performances, including spoken-word poetry and gospel choirs. Gates noted that this project attempted to make space inside a sacred space that people might connect with another.[3] Comparable projects exist in the United States, such as the Rothko Chapel in Houston, Texas, established by Dominique and John de Menil as an interfaith sanctuary integrating art, architecture, and spirituality [4]. The chapel was designed to promote a meditative atmosphere rather than resembling traditional religious spaces, encouraging introspection. Dominique de Menil described the chapel as a location for shared orientation, whether towards God or broader human aspirations and conscience.[5]

Kelly's Austin Chapel (2015) installation was constructed on the grounds of the Blanton Museum of Art in Austin, Texas, USA, and is frequently compared to the Rothko Chapel.[6] Its design draws influences from Romanesque and Byzantine architecture, featuring Kelly's distinctive use of colour, light, and shaped stained-glass windows. The chapel is intended as a public space for contemplation, without religious associations or prescribed practices.

The Chapel of Disclosure in Belgium stands out due to its development by a Catholic institution for the use of the De La Salle Brothers' Catholic Schools Network.[7] Established in 2011, its creation was a response to the observed decline in traditional sacramental devotion within Belgium. While nearly 70% of schools continue to identify as Catholic, both educators and students have

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2 A. Alexa, *From Matisse to Turrell, 8 artists who designed transcendent chapels*, 10.04.2017, https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-matisse-turrell-8-artists-designed-transcendent-chapels (11.10.2025).

3 A. Alexa, *From Matisse to Turrell.*

4 A. Alexa, *From Matisse to Turrell.*

5 A. Alexa, *From Matisse to Turrell.*

6 E. Kelly, *Chapter 4: Conceiving Austin: 1986–2015*, 2018, https://blantonmuseum.org/permanent-collection/austin/primer/conceiving-austin/ (11.10.2025).

7 Br. G. Van Grieken, FSC, *The Chapel of Disclosure*, 2021, https://lasallianresources.org/product/the-chapel-of-disclosure/ (11.10.2025).

largely moved away from conventional Catholic beliefs and practices.[8] Many chapels throughout Belgium, including those within the Flemish Lasallian Perspective school network, have been repurposed as libraries or instructional spaces.[9] Comprehensive research into Catholic school identity has confirmed this trend across most Belgian Catholic schools.[10]

Professor Herman Lombaerts and architect Tom Callebaut[11] aimed to create a Chapel of Disclosure, which is tactile and physical, where "an unforgettable, dramatic turning point in peoples' personal lives' could take place." At the core of the Chapel of Disclosure experience is not a "controlled" content of faith but rather a facilitated experience where, in silence, a person is encouraged to embark on a journey of discovering the deep meaning of traditional Christianity, "translated" through contemporary art, space, objects, and images.

The principal theological foundation of the Chapel of Disclosure project is Christ's resurrection and the personal encounter with the risen Christ in a place where an individual's eyes can be opened and where they might recognise Jesus.[12] Professor Lombaerts contends that this need for a tangible, real space is rooted in the Gospel passages: Luke 24:31, "their eyes were opened, and they recognised him on their way to Emmaus;" Luke 24:33, "there they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled in Jerusalem;" and Matthew 16:7, "they discussed this among themselves in Galilee." These experiences were intensely tactile, physical, and locally situated. They proved to be decisive and transformative: from the shocking confrontation with the unacceptable death of Jesus the Nazarene—the rejected, condemned, and tried Jesus—people were moved to recognise and confess Him as the "Messiah, the Christ, the living" (Matthew 16).

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8 *CEEC* [*European Committee for Catholic Education*], 2021, https://cogree.org/members/ceec/ (10.09.2025).

9 K. Teugels, *Kapel van de ontluiking bekroond*, 3.10.2012, https://kriesteugels.wordpress.com/2012/10/03/kapel-van-de-ontluiking-bekroond/ (11.10.2025).

10 D. Pollefeyt, J. Bouwens, *Dialogue as the future. A catholic answer to the 'colourisation' of the educational landscape*, 2013, https://theo.kuleuven.be/apps/press/ecsi/files/2019/04/7.-Pollefeyt-Bouwens-Dialogue-as-the-Future.pdf (11.10.2025).

11 T. Callebaut, *Kapel van de Ontluiking*, 2021, https://www.vai.be/en/buildings/onderwijsinfrastructuur/kapel-van-de-ontluiking-groot-bijgaarden (11.10.2025).

12 H. Lombaerts, *The Chapel of Disclosure: Discovering a new self-understanding via emptiness*, transl. by J. Arblaster, 2020.

Since its opening in 2011, the Chapel of Disclosure has welcomed several thousand participants representing a wide range of cultural, economic, and professional backgrounds, as well as diverse ages and genders.[13] They came from different cultural, economic, and professional backgrounds, ages, and sex. The Chapel is not a place for tourism or curiosity, but the whole experience is carefully planned and accompanied by well-trained facilitators. The format of interaction within the Chapel varies according to group size, participants' needs, and age, with no fixed scenario for engagement. The central objective is to encourage visitors to reflect more deeply in their life situations. Attendees hold a variety of worldviews, ranging from those raised in the Catholic faith, those who have left the Church, and individuals with no prior religious affiliation. This Chapel could be analysed as one of the pastoral experiments encouraged by Pope Francis in *Evangelii gaudium*, where he invites "everyone to be bold and creative" in the task of rethinking "the goals, structures, style and methods of evangelisation" by allowing the flock to strike out on new paths" to address catholic disaffiliation.[14] This qualitative research project asked the facilitators about their views and experiences of people who came to the Chapel and their pastoral insights.

1.2. What happens in the Chapel of Disclosure?

Access to a Chapel of Disclosure is typically managed through advance registration. The aim is to ensure that participants are supported by a facilitator who guides them throughout the experience. Although there is no universally standardised scenario suitable for every group, individual, or event, it is expected that the facilitation process remains focused on the participants' needs.[15]

The visit to the Chapel may last several hours. Upon arrival, participants proceed along the designated corridor. The architect has explained the rationale

[13] *Kapel van de Ontluiking*, http://www.dagvandearchitectuur.be/2015/website/programma/Vlaams-brabant/kapel-van-de-ontluiking (12.01.2021).

[14] Francis, *Apostolic exhortation on the proclamation of the Gospel in today's world Evangelii gaudium*, 24.11.2013, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html (30.12.2020).

[15] H. Lombaerts, *The Chapel of Disclosure: Discovering a new self-understanding via emptiness*, transl. by J. Arblaster, 2020.

behind the corridor's design, stating that it is intended to create a more immersive transition into the Chapel experience:

> The corridor is basked with the full red colour effect in a direct opposite to the white of the Chapel, which will appear even whiter when a journey from the dark to the light begins. The space before the main space is just as important in the total concept of the Chapel and gives you the context for the interpretation or feeling for the next space. (Architect Tom Callebaut, 169–173)

Upon entering the Chapel, individuals remove their shoes and encounter a spacious area distinguished by white-panelled walls and a white ceiling. The floor is covered with warm white sand to enhance the sensory environment. Art installations within the Chapel are intentionally selected for their specific function. Architect Tom Callebaut has articulated his reasoning regarding the choice of red for the floor as well as the incorporation of red lines and shapes. He notes that the addition of red establishes structure and rhythm in the space. The vertical red line, in particular, evokes the presence of a person, enabling physical interaction and reflecting human scale. The red floor is designed to become visible when participants draw or write in the sand, offering a deliberate choice to highlight these marks. The red elements complement the white features; the white ceiling, notably, softens and absorbs sound. Both walls and floor are tactile surfaces, inviting touch and contributing to sound absorption (127–146).

When the Chapel door closes, participants remain in silence without a defined orientation point. They may choose to sit on wooden seats with soft lighting or move around the space. The experience can begin by viewing a contemporary art image, followed by the display of the original chapel's stained-glass windows, or all panels may be opened simultaneously to reveal the Chapel with its windows and altar. This process may vary for individuals and groups, creating different circumstances for facilitators. The facilitator monitors participant interactions and, if needed, offers support to encourage self-directed exploration. Individual responses range from being at ease in the silence and engaging with surfaces like sand and walls to experiencing discomfort in an unfamiliar setting. Although the Chapel is not explicitly intended as a pre-evangelisation project, its format and activities may correspond with aspects of such initiatives.

2. Method

Over the course of six years (2016–2022), I conducted multiple visits to the Chapel of Disclosure. During this period, I held numerous informal interviews with Brother Herman Lombaerts, whose vision shaped the Chapel, as well as meetings with architect Tom Callebaut and other key team members involved in facilitating the Chapel of Disclosure experiences. Additionally, I recorded more than 15 hours of formal, in-depth interviews with three facilitators, who discussed their roles in guiding and welcoming a diverse range of individuals and groups across various age brackets. The facilitators provided reflections and pastoral insights without identifying any individuals, instead referencing general categories of visitors. Their perspectives on facilitation processes, objectives, and outcomes offer valuable guidance for adapting or developing pastoral initiatives within contemporary art spaces.

The study adhered to BERA[16] requirements, ensuring that participants contributed their perspectives voluntarily and retained the right to withdraw at any point. Unstructured interviews were conducted to provide respondents with greater flexibility in sharing their experiences and insights, each lasting approximately 90 minutes. Contributions were anonymised to protect confidentiality. All data were transcribed verbatim, with line numbers assigned for clarity. Analysis of the comprehensive dataset revealed several significant themes.

3. Findings

3.1. Role of a facilitator

When asked about the role of a facilitator in the Chapel of Disclosure experience process, all facilitators were very clear: it is neither intrusive nor suggestive. A facilitator is prepared for different scenarios depending on participants' needs and experiences. Therefore, their involvement ranges from simply being present (most likely for those not visiting the Chapel for the first time) to gently and reassuringly addressing newcomers' fears or anxieties, helping them reconnect

[16] British Educational Research Association, *Ethical guidelines for educational research*, 4th ed., London 2018, https://www.bera.ac.uk/researchers-resources/publications/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018.

with their inner selves. All facilitators agreed that their role should be 'as small as possible'. They believed that they should allow the stories of the people to be heard. Thus, it is about people's life stories, not their own.

Most importantly, according to the facilitators, everyone should feel welcome and at ease. They should be helped to feel free and open to talk about their lives. Only when a person opens up about their life story can a facilitator "try to connect their story to my story" (Facilitator 1, 170). Leaders concurred that the stories should focus on the people who come into the Chapel and how their experiences affect them. "This is why the people come to the Chapel for the first time" (Facilitator 1, 175). That is why facilitators do not have a particular agenda in mind; the participants bring the content they are going through in their lives to work with in the Chapel. This finding may have significant implications for our pastoral efforts when encouraging nonbelievers or those who have left the Church. There is often an impression that facilitators of religious experiences have a prescribed agenda or curriculum for those who are to be evangelised, and this approach might miss the opportunity to reach people on a much deeper level, meeting them where they are at that point in their lives.

3.2. The process

All facilitators observed that newcomers typically experience discomfort when entering the corridor leading to the Chapel, where they are required to remove their shoes. Facilitator 1 noted that participants often expressed surprise at this practice. Many display signs of unease coupled with curiosity and report feelings of vulnerability, acknowledging that there is no need to project strength (Facilitator 1, 180–183). At times, participants appear apprehensive, likened to individuals preparing themselves for a challenge. Upon entering the quiet and open space of the Chapel, facilitators allow participants time to acclimate and select a resting place. Frequently, some choose to sit close to the sand or retreat into the corners, seeking privacy against the walls, while others gravitate towards the centre (Facilitator 1, 180). While initial reactions vary among participants, the process of engaging with the space is unique to each individual. Facilitators consistently uphold an atmosphere of silence, which has proven effective in supporting participant adjustment. According to Facilitator 1, there have been no instances where participants initiated conversation during this stage; instead, silence prevails as individuals seek comfort within the environment (Facilitator 1, 186–190).

After entering the Chapel from the vestibule, participants are generally left in silence for five or ten minutes. During this time, facilitators noticed two distinct behaviours: some participants appeared comfortable, while others began to feel anxious and nervous. When someone starts to feel particularly uncomfortable, a facilitator gently reassures the participant, explaining that it is perfectly normal to feel that way:

> I think that it is important that there is someone there who can help you like a guide. […] [a facilitator] is a little like the person […] who helps them to enter and clarify their feelings. (Facilitator 2, 271–285)

Facilitators are particularly careful to be attentive listeners and not to impose their agenda on those attending for the first time. Their role is to support participants in listening to their own stories and becoming aware of their feelings, fears, and what is happening within themselves. All facilitators agreed that the initial experience in the Chapel serves as an introduction to a process that extends beyond a single visit. Therefore, facilitators are always cautious about introducing anything immediately. Instead, they strive to listen to people first, assess participants' experiences and emotions, and help them construct their life stories based on those experiences. The participant's life story is then connected to the Biblical narrative (Facilitator 1, 176–180).

A different approach is taken with those who are not attending for the first time. The facilitator's role is to further encourage deeper reflection on the participant's experiences. A piece of art or a Biblical story may be used as a stimulus, such as a stained-glass window or a painting from the Chapel walls (Facilitator 1, 186–194). The purpose of providing a stimulus for reflection is not to initiate a group conversation but rather to prompt individual contemplation on the topic. Often, a facilitator will have prepared something in advance, offering input and possibly inviting participants to speak with one another, though not as an entire group. Sometimes, people share their reflections in smaller groups, as "it is safer and easier for people to talk in smaller groups of two or three than to the entire group" (Facilitator 2, 200–202).

All facilitators agreed that most of the time, participants leave the Chapel feeling more at peace with themselves and in a state of tranquillity. They usually do not wish to leave the Chapel surroundings immediately, but instead linger outside the building or stroll slowly through the park, "at a different speed than the one that they came into the Chapel" (Facilitator 2, 290–294).

3.3. The notion of "emptiness"

One of the facilitators described the Chapel as an inclusive environment that serves as an effective tool for evangelisation. Its sense of "emptiness" offers individuals the opportunity for personal reflection and exploration. This concept of "emptiness" provides a foundation from which participants are invited to contemplate and potentially share their own experiences. The main objective of maintaining silence and "emptiness" is to bring forward aspects that may remain hidden within individuals, allowing them to reflect thoughtfully and make conscious, independent decisions regarding faith and social justice:

> The emptiness is the main scenario of the Chapel, but you can open stories or bring the light on the Bible stories. You can deal with the silence of the empty space in any way that suits you best. Not in the way that it gives you an answer but will motivate you to formulate an opinion and thus to take a position. (Facilitator 2, 114–121)

The majority of visitors are struck by the peacefulness of the silence and, most notably, by the unexpected presence of sand within the Chapel. This artistic installation contributes to a sense of calm, creating an atmosphere that feels "still, tranquil!" (Facilitator 1, 358–362). Many participants enjoyed interacting with the sand, often running their hands along the walls, opening and closing the panel doors, and relishing the freedom to move in and out of the space. The entire "physical structure" is an integral element of the facilitated experience and plays a pivotal role in the overall process (Facilitator 1, 358–379).

3.4. Transcendence

Although no explicit Christian symbols are visible in the Chapel when the panels are closed, facilitators concurred that many individuals from religious traditions immediately recognise them upon entering the Chapel. For instance, one facilitator recounted an experience with a participant who entered the Chapel, lay down on the large wooden platform, looked up, and remarked, "Now I am looking at heaven." For this individual, the ceiling or the bright lights behind it symbolised the Transcendent. Facilitators observed that only a few participants express such sentiments openly (Facilitator 1, 358–362).

The facilitators found the Chapel's process effective in guiding participants towards an encounter with the Transcendent. They believe it serves as an excellent model for working with individuals seeking direction in life and who are dissatisfied with their current circumstances, particularly when they feel there must be “something more” to discover and ultimately wish to connect with the Transcendent (Facilitator 1, 332–335). While participants most frequently speak about God and transcendence, the facilitators themselves do not directly refer to God in the Chapel. Nevertheless, the theme of transcendence frequently emerges in participants’ reflections. Facilitator 2 believes that the participants’ initial movement is towards transcendence in their hearts. The second movement then leads participants to contemplate actions they can undertake in their daily lives—whether for themselves, their families, or others. According to Facilitator 2, the energy and impetus for this practical reflection stem from the initial movement towards transcendence (Facilitator 2, 298–302).

In conclusion, it may be argued that facilitators observed two distinct movements within the Chapel, both of which opened participants’ hearts to transcendence and inspired them to commit to living in accordance with Christian values. The first movement is an internal inclination towards transcendence experienced by participants, whereas the second is a subsequent commitment to these values.

3.5. A range of emotions

Facilitators observed a range of emotions among participants, including sadness and tears, as well as serenity and calmness. Facilitators are never certain what experiences they will encounter on the day, what participants will bring with them from their lives, or their objectives for the visit. One facilitator noted that most participants initially experience a sense of unease; however, they eventually come to appreciate the silence, which encourages self-reflection. The initial discomfort gradually dissipates, and most participants begin to wonder how long the silence will last. This phase of the experience may be the most challenging for facilitators, as their aim is to support participants in reaching a reflective state (Facilitator 3, 210). This stage cannot be rushed; rather, resilience and confidence in the facilitation process are essential.

Facilitator 3 observed this aspect of the process and suggested numerous reasons why participants do not reach the stage of self-reflection. Factors may include events preceding their entry into the Chapel, ongoing circumstances in their lives, and their motivations for attending. At this stage, it is crucial to “give them all sufficient time to connect to themselves” (Facilitator 2, 210–219).

When participants identify an "anchor" or a familiar object or symbol within the space, they tend to settle more quickly. Otherwise, they may feel somewhat disoriented. Facilitator 1 recounted an instance in which a participant, who initially expected to embrace the experience, felt somewhat lost. This feeling of displacement subsided when the stained-glass window was opened. The participant remarked, "OK, this is better for me as there is still something familiar to me which I connect to a Chapel and the Church" (Facilitator 1, 52–58).

Overall, all facilitators commented that most participants do not necessarily have negative experiences when visiting the Chapel. Nevertheless, they strongly emphasised that the Chapel experience should not be conflated with "Eucharist and going to a Church as a building" (Facilitator 3, 72–75).

3.5.1. Positive vs experiences of feeling lost

When asked whether everyone enjoyed visiting the Chapel, one facilitator remarked that "it is a difficult question" as "not everyone who comes to the Chapel has a positive experience" (Facilitator 1, 15–17). The reasons for this may vary, ranging from feeling lost or threatened in an unfamiliar environment to responses arising from their deepest sense of self. Some individuals may not find what they expected, may be unprepared, or may not feel any connection with their religious tradition. One of the leaders commented that "sometimes people feel lost in the Chapel because of the lack of orientation points" (Facilitator 3, 25). This leader described an instance where a religious person sought a focal point—something to associate with being in a chapel. Facilitator 3 assumed that she might have felt threatened and insecure because she did not find in the Chapel what she anticipated in a "normal" chapel. Facilitator 3 recalled this particular case as extreme and somewhat unusual. However, they also reiterated that every individual arrives with different expectations and brings a variety of life experiences that are awakened "when you open the access doors or a glass-stained window and there is always still something left." Nevertheless, as soon as people begin to establish connections and links to their tradition, their insecurities dissipate (Facilitator 3, 25–47).

3.5.2. "Out of the comfort zone"

All facilitators with whom I spoke reported encountering individuals who felt lost and insecure at the outset of the experience. Recognising situations that remove individuals from their comfort zones and familiar environments is an integral part of the process. Many participants attempt to anchor themselves to something familiar as a means of avoiding this sense of discomfort. One of the facilitators made several insightful observations that may shed light on the effect of the Chapel and why emotions may appear more intense for many individuals. This phenomenon may relate to the confrontation with oneself, which is occasionally unexpected and, as such, can be intimidating, as Facilitator 2 elaborated:

> If he [a participant] is nervous, he will become even more nervous, as the Chapel acts like an amplifier, and that is entirely understandable because the Chapel helps you to meet your inner self, which can be frightening or fulfilling. (149–151)

3.6. First-time comers

Facilitators identified two distinct groups among the participants: those attending for the first time and those returning for a second or third visit. Typically, newcomers experience heightened surprise and curiosity, often commencing their participation with a sense of discomfort; they are unfamiliar with the expected behaviour and may not be accustomed to prolonged periods of silence. One facilitator observed that first-time participants often felt unprepared and uneasy, sometimes even concerned about minor matters such as the condition of their socks, but, more significantly, they tended to feel anxious without fully understanding the situation (Facilitator 3, 186).

In contrast, individuals who visit the Chapel regularly perceive the act of removing their shoes and walking barefoot on the sand as a ritualistic practice, and the experience becomes routine for them. Consequently, it is important that all new participants receive some guidance regarding expected conduct prior to taking part in the Chapel experience. They should be informed that extended silence is a core aspect and that entering the Chapel barefoot is required. Nevertheless, facilitators noted that, despite being briefed, newcomers frequently find the experience startling and are often caught off guard.

Adapting to the silence and sparse environment is a gradual process, with facilitators encouraging participants to explore the space until they find a place where they feel comfortable to settle in silence. This adjustment phase is time-consuming, as one facilitator explained: participants do not immediately engage in self-reflection but initially spend time observing their surroundings. For some, the discomfort associated with silence and uncertainty about appropriate behaviour persists for a considerable period (Facilitator 2, 186–206).

One particular challenge for facilitators is to assist participants in moving beyond their initial curiosity, allowing them to settle and achieve a deeper level of silence. For instance, a facilitator recounted the experience of a first-time visitor who initially struggled to overcome his curiosity. Eventually, he became withdrawn and described his experience as sitting on a stool within a personal, empty space, stating that this area constituted his entire world and fulfilled his needs, expressing a desire simply to remain present in that moment (Facilitator 3, 5–19).

Facilitators generally agreed that, following the initial unease and sense of displacement, participants begin to engage in introspection, with various aspects of their lives and personalities surfacing. The lack of visual stimuli, emptiness, and silence encourage participants to contemplate deeper matters that may have previously been suppressed. As noted by Facilitator 3, when external distractions are absent, participants may undergo a profound internal experience. The silence and absence of focal points support individuals in focusing inward, potentially facilitating personal exploration (Facilitator 3, 5–19).

3.7. Those who return

The facilitators formed the impression that most individuals who attend the Chapel wish to return for subsequent visits and that each visit tends to offer a novel experience. Facilitator 2 recounted the case of a person who visits the Chapel at least once a year. For returning participants, the motivation is no longer mere curiosity. Rather, the facilitators agreed that these individuals return for a different purpose: to deepen their connection with themselves and, perhaps, with their conception of God. One facilitator shared a remark from a returning participant that clearly exemplifies this perspective:

> I know that the shutters can be opened. It is not a surprise for me; that part has already gone, and at that point, you can be there and enter the space and time. (Facilitator 2, 250–255)

According to the facilitators, while many first-time participants seek to anchor themselves by finding a familiar object or symbol associated with their religious tradition, others prefer the opposite—they wish for everything to remain "closed" to them. This latter attitude is typically observed among those attending the space for a second or third time.

The facilitators indicated that participants are granted the freedom to determine the extent of their exploration and to choose an environment most conducive to their individual needs. For instance, Facilitator 1 noted that some people prefer to have the panels closed and say, "This is my Church or my Chapel or the place as I wish to experience it" (72). Their choices may be influenced by their perception of Christian traditions or the Church, as "both factors, tradition and experience, come into play here" (Facilitator 1, 72–75).

According to the facilitators, returning visitors may have varied intentions and often possess a clear sense of purpose for their visit. However, many individuals come to the Chapel primarily to connect with themselves, rather than with the Christian religion per se. For instance, some attendees reported feeling a sense of connection with themselves within the Chapel, but not in a specifically Christian, religious, or traditional manner. Facilitator 1 observed that such individuals "do not ask to open the stained-glass windows but seek to deepen their spirituality—that is, their own spirituality" (109–115). The facilitators expressed little concern about this, as they are convinced that "these people connect to the Transcendent, although they do not know about God as such" (Facilitator 1, 109–118).

3.8. Different needs and age groups

All facilitators placed considerable emphasis on the individual experiences of different people and the necessity of remaining receptive to their needs:

> I believe the experience is highly personal. For some individuals, their perspectives may be challenged when we open a panel, and they respond, "No, I do not need it and cannot cope with it at the moment." For people of my age—as I am nearly fifty—if you open a panel and see the stained glass with traditional designs, it may conflict with my beliefs. Some participants no longer wish to see traditional imagery. (Facilitator 2, 191–195)

The facilitators' perspectives differed regarding the experiences of various age groups, including children and young adults. One facilitator did not observe any difference in the ways people react or behave within the space, while two others elaborated further, explaining that every age group is welcome in the chapel and can benefit from the experience.

3.8.1. Young people

Some facilitators observed that individual needs vary according to participants' age. For example, younger people are inclined to engage with the sand in silence, treating it almost as a playground where they can externalise their thoughts and process them kinaesthetically. Facilitator 3 believed that this approach enables young people to perceive their life questions more clearly and feel inspired to address them (260–264). Facilitator 2 concurred with this perspective and noted that young people respond differently to the Chapel than older adults. One notable distinction between the age groups is the variation in their vocabularies; younger generations often lack the language to articulate their experiences in the same way as older participants (Facilitator 1, 77–82).

Teenagers posed additional challenges. Their responses encompassed a wide spectrum, ranging from laughter to deep contemplation. Facilitators found it difficult to determine the motivations behind this age group's behaviours and to discern their emotional responses within the Chapel. One facilitator remarked, "Younger people usually are not well connected with their heart and mind and do not connect with the Christian tradition" (Facilitator 1, 224). Some may perceive the Chapel as "just nonsense;" however, it remains challenging to ascertain whether their laughter stems from insecurity (Facilitator 1, 225). Facilitator 3 summarised this by stating that young people aged 16–18 may sometimes remain silent yet share profound thoughts (Facilitator 3, 241–242). Facilitator 2 also agreed with these observations, adding that many adults assume that youth are incapable of silence or detachment from their devices:

> They (young people) surprised me because I saw that they were calm and relaxed and interested in their surroundings […] there was not much friction within the space. (Facilitator 2, 95–97)

Conversely, older adults appeared to experience "more friction in the space" than younger people (Facilitator 2, 98–99). This facilitator also acknowledged that the younger generation lacks a connection with tradition, viewing the Chapel as a beautiful space devoid of historical ties. According to Facilitator 2, younger generations possess more freedom than their elders, as "the older generation had no choice but to be religious" (Facilitator 2, 200).

However, not all young people, including those in teacher training programmes, were receptive to the Chapel as an effective learning environment. Facilitators suggested that these individuals may regard religion as irrelevant to their lives and, consequently, believe that it should not be taught in schools. This attitude could be attributed to a lack of interest in religious traditions during childhood and within their families. All facilitators agreed that proper motivation and openness to transcendence are prerequisites for visitors hoping to benefit from their experience in the Chapel. Furthermore, individuals need to be accustomed to reflecting on their experiences. Facilitator 1 reflected on their experience training teachers in Belgian Catholic schools, noting that while students were impressed by and appreciated the Chapel's beauty, they did not feel a personal connection akin to those from deeply Catholic backgrounds. Nevertheless, they were still able to experience something extraordinary: "They felt at home in the Chapel and saw it as a rarely special place" (Facilitator 1, 88–104).

3.9. "Extreme" reactions and "aha" moments

On some occasions (not many), each facilitator has an experience with a person in the chapel whose reaction was either extreme or very strong. Some saw participants crying or even wanting to take all their clothes off to feel naked (Facilitator 3, 159), which was not allowed. Depending on the person, almost everyone experienced some "aha" moments in the Chapel, but on different occasions and at different times in the process. Facilitators noted that usually, first comments do not show what they feel at the beginning of the Chapel experience. However, later on, participants cannot hide their surprise and "aha" moments at certain points in the process, such as when the apse doors are opened and the altar and the resurrection stone are revealed. However, at the same time, there is always something left "hidden." A mystery remains. When people come for the second or third time to the Chapel, they usually aim to experience something on a deeper level. Then, it happens. People cry or get so touched emotionally that it becomes obvious that "something profound is happening" (Facilitator 1, 123–143).

4. What makes the Chapel an effective tool for pre-evangelisation?

All three facilitators I spoke with agreed that the Chapel is an effective tool for pre-evangelisation.

The summary of the findings might have pastoral implications and possible application and transfer to different pastoral contexts when working with non-believers and those who left the Church.

First, all facilitators felt that the Chapel was a safe place where a person could explore their life story and life views freely. According to the facilitators, a Chapel's aim is primarily to lead to pre-evangelisation in a broader sense. Therefore, each visit is carefully planned, and participants know the expectations or code of being in the Chapel before arriving at the place and before entering it. Therefore, visiting the Chapel as a tourist is not an option (Facilitator 2, 103–110). The Chapel is intended to become a safe place where participants can search for the true meaning in their lives and a place participants can trust:

> The Chapel gives you the trust to say OK, let it come and let it flow. And we will see what will happen. And the Chapel becomes a tool to help you to search. (Facilitator 2, 48)

All facilitators suggested that Christ becomes "real" to the participants if and when they dwell deep into their life experiences. Facilitators reiterated that the process in the Chapel depends on who the participants are and their worldviews. They were aware that participants' life histories, human conditions, and those who surrounded them from birth and through their lives might have limited the scope of "positive theology" facilitators could propose in the process.

Regardless of how individuals might desire to be with God, connecting with him without even consciously knowing, they still might not "capture" Him or "frame" Him. All facilitators tried to find a delicate balance between "positive" and "negative" theology when addressing each participant's needs. All facilitators concurred that no one was judged in the Chapel, nor were attempts made to indoctrinate.

> What I like about the Chapel is that it gives you a lot of opportunities to evangelise as people do not expect anything. There is no strict ritual or real agenda, and I try to keep it open, allowing for any possibility and not imposing a definitive structure and forming a ritual. This allows you to talk about the Christian tradition in different ways. And for that reason, the Chapel becomes a settle conduit, thus facilitating evangelism. (Facilitator 1, 233–239)

Facilitators observed that those with a traditional Catholic upbringing and who left the Church often expect to be indoctrinated in the Chapel. However, their guards are often "dropped" after realising that indoctrination will not happen. The Chapel opens many pastoral opportunities for participants to open up and explore the depths of their motivations and search for life meetings. The process does not rely on a prescription of what a participant should think or do. Allowing personal freedom, a participant is trusted to find the meaning of life and, eventually, God. Facilitators recognised that a personal choice to answer God's call remains within the person.

Many visitors to the Chapel felt that the space was somehow sacred. One of the facilitators explained the process using the term of a mediator, saying that "the Chapel acts as a facilitator and as a conduit for mediation" and that people feel there is "a sacred place" (Facilitator 1, 148–150). Something there makes participants feel that way. According to the facilitators and the architect, there should be certain necessary ingredients in the personal attitude towards the transcendence for the Chapel to be experienced as sacred by the participants. This idea is about openness to transcendence. Also, it is about reliving personal life in the light of living a Christian story as lived by community, a sense of togetherness, which results in reconciliation:

> The Chapel is not just a tool for pre-evangelisation, but it also an environment which inspires people to reconcile their feelings and come to terms with themselves, which eventually leads to God. (Facilitator 1, 154–161)

Facilitators believed that openness to the transcendence and feeling part of faith community are essential ingredients of the effective "methods" or "approach" when helping adults to return to the Church and initiating them into the Christian tradition, which is reenvisioned and re-contextualised.

5. Conclusions

The Chapel of Disclosure exemplifies a contemporary approach to spiritual engagement, blending art, architecture, and pastoral care to create an inclusive environment that invites reflection and personal transformation. Through its minimalistic design and carefully facilitated experiences, the Chapel fosters openness to transcendence and encourages visitors to explore their life stories without the constraints of traditional religious expectations. The insights gathered from facilitators highlight the Chapel's effectiveness in supporting pre-evangelisation, particularly for those who have distanced themselves from institutional religion or seek a renewed sense of spiritual connection. Ultimately, the Chapel stands as a model for innovative pastoral practice, demonstrating how reimagined sacred spaces can nurture individual journeys towards meaning, reconciliation, and faith within a pluralistic society.

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On fortitude

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Abstract

A comprehensive coverage of Saint Thomas Aquinas' elucidation of the virtue of fortitude is presented. It is revealed that fortitude is needed to strengthen human persons in the good of virtue in the face of danger, chiefly the danger of death. The principal acts of virtue are endurance and attack, and enemies fear, fearlessness, and daring. The annexed virtues of magnanimity, magnificence, patience, and perseverance as well as the vices opposing these potential parts are also identified and taken up.

Keywords

St. Thomas Aquinas, cardinal virtues, fortitude

Introduction: the virtue of fortitude

In Aquinas' theological anthropology human beings possess the faculties of intellect ("knowing") and will ("loving") needed to fulfill their God-given vocation. Gifted with these properties, human beings alone are persons, "the peak of cosmic perfection."[1] Aquinas begins his discussion of fortitude, the ability to face difficulties well, by asking if it is a virtue and whether it is a cardinal virtue. He concludes that it is, but relays that it is a secondary virtue. It is not the greatest of virtues, nor does it stand by itself. The virtues form a unified whole. Thus, Aquinas begins his exposition of fortitude by explaining where it ranks within the cardinal virtues and the role it plays in safeguarding the good of reason.

Human virtues are those qualities of character that make us good and our acts good. As rational animals, our good is to live in accordance with reason. Our sensible appetites or desires must be controlled for this good to be realised. A mapping of the cardinal virtues follows from this understanding of the basic powers of the human constitution.

Power	Cardinal Virtue
Practical Intellect	Prudence
Rational Will	Justice
Irascible Appetite	Fortitude
Concupiscible Appetite	Temperance

This illustration makes it possible to follow Aquinas' explanation of where fortitude properly fits within the cardinal virtues.

> Augustine says (*De Trinitate*, vi, c. 8), "In things that are great, but not in bulk, to be great is to be good:" wherefore the better a virtue the greater it is. Now reason's good is man's good, according to Dionysius (De Div. Nom., iv, 4) prudence, since it is a perfection of reason has the good essentially: while justice effects this good, since it belongs to justice to establish the order of reason in all human affairs: whereas the other virtues safeguard this good, inasmuch as they moderate the passions, lest they lead man away from reason's good. As to the

[1] R. E. Brennan, *Thomistic psychology*, Cluny Media, Tacoma (WA) 2016 (reprint of 1941 MacMillian Company edition), p. 217.

> order of the latter, fortitude holds the first place, because fear of the dangers of death has the greatest power to make man recede from the good of reason: and after fortitude comes temperance, since also pleasures of touch excel all others in hindering the good of reason. Now to be a thing essentially ranks before effecting it, and the latter ranks before safeguarding it by removing obstacles thereto. Wherefore among the cardinal virtues, prudence ranks first, justice second, fortitude third, temperance fourth, and after these the other virtues.[2]

Every person knows from experience that life can be hard. Every person must weather certain storms in his life. Every person encounters obstacles and hurdles in the pursuit of good. These difficulties engage the irascible appetite. We become irate at the barriers that have been placed in our way. Fortitude moderates this anger, moderates the powers of the irascible appetite, so that we can act with steady resolve.

Aquinas defines fortitude variously as "the deliberate facing of dangers and bearing of toils," "bearing and withstanding grave dangers,"[3] "standing firm against all kinds of assaults."[4] He brings forward the profound Christian perspective on the virtue by presenting the definitions given by Church Fathers Gregory and Augustine. For Gregory, the special virtue of fortitude is "to love the trials of this life for the sake of an eternal reward."[5] For Augustine fortitude is "love ready to bear all things for God's sake."[6] As a general virtue or condition of every virtue, fortitude denotes a certain firmness of mind—i.e., it is requisite for every virtue to act firmly, so fortitude is integral to all virtues.

Virtues are moral habits. In possession of a virtue, one's acts become so habitual as to be second nature. For example, the honest man immediately returns an overpayment of change at the cash register without any hesitation or deliberation. Similarly, the courageous man faces danger without flinching. He does not fold in the face of trouble. He refuses to be defeated by what comes his way. He continues to do good despite difficulty because fortitude is his second nature.

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2 Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, transl. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Benzinger Brothers, New York [1911] 1948, Work completed 1265–1273 [hereinafter: ST], II-II, q. 123, a. 12.

3 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 2.

4 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 2, ad. 1.

5 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 3, ad. 1.

6 ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 7, obj. 3.

In defining fortitude, its subordinate nature as a virtue becomes immediately evident. Again, fortitude is the virtue that directs the passions of the irascible appetite, fear, anger, and daring, in the face of a good that is difficult to achieve. Good alone causes the virtue not the difficulty. So, the brave man must first know what the good is. Also, difficulties are not to be surmounted in any way whatsoever but "according to reason."[7] It belongs to prudence to apply "right reason to action."[8] Prudence is the guide and director of fortitude no less than the other moral virtues. This is too blunt a description, however. Pieper plumbs the philosophical profundity of the matter.

> In truth, fortitude becomes fortitude only through being "informed" by prudence. The double meaning of "inform" is here very apt. "Inform" in the current usage means primarily "instruct"; secondly, as a technical term of scholasticism, taken directly from the Latin *informare*, it means "to give inner form to."[9]

Without prudence, there is no special virtue of fortitude.

For Aquinas, the good presupposes the true. Prudence, lodged in reality, informs by grasping the truth of real things. Only by seeing things rightly, including knowing the relative importance of different goods for human existence, is virtuous action possible. Prudence decides "in what manner and by what means man shall obtain the mean of reason in his deeds."[10]

Fortitude is also dependent on the cardinal virtue of justice, or, said another way, prudence works through justice to inform fortitude. Fortitude is only fortitude when it is just. The bank robber who risks his life to steal the bank's money is not courageous. The actions are a mere simulacrum of genuine fortitude. Fortitude is firmness of the soul, a moral virtue, not the insensible blindness to danger of the hardened criminal. Aquinas makes the point that fortitude is only praiseworthy, only a virtue, if justice is present, if what is sought is truly good. "Hence Ambrose says (De Offic. i) that 'fortitude without justice is an

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7 ST, II-II, q. 126, a. 2, ad. 1.

8 ST, II-II, q. 47, a. 4.

9 J. Pieper, *The four cardinal virtues: Prudence, justice, fortitude, temperance*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame 1966, p. 123.

10 ST, II-II, q. 47, a. 7.

occasion of injustice; since the stronger a man is, the more ready he is to oppress the weaker.'"[11]

In review, prudence cognitively confers the good of reason. Justice is charged with bringing about the actual realization of this good. Fortitude clears the path to this realization by removing or working through any obstacles that arise.

1. Fortitude's acts

Fortitude has two basic acts: endurance and attack. To attack a danger is to seek to eliminate it or remove it. This is the fortitude of the soldier charging enemy lines. To endure is to "stand immovable in the midst of dangers."[12] Of these two, attack and endurance, endurance is the principal act of fortitude. This may seem wrong since we are quite familiar with the bravery involved in attacks, but, as he always does, Aquinas clears up the matter with a lucid explanation.

> Endurance is more difficult than aggression for three reasons. First, because endurance seemingly implies that one is being attacked by a stronger person, whereas aggression denotes that one is attacking as though one were the stronger party; and it is more difficult to contend with a stronger than with a weaker. Secondly, because he that endures already feels the presence of danger, whereas the aggressor looks upon danger as something to come; and it is more difficult to be unmoved by the present than by the future. Thirdly, because endurance implies length of time, whereas aggression is consistent with sudden movements; and it is more difficult to remain unmoved for a long time, than to be moved suddenly to do something arduous.[13]

Attack is, of course, not ruled out. The brave man will eliminate evil when it is reasonable to do so. But there are times when evil must be born with equanimity. There is simply no possibility other than endurance. The soul must cleave "most resolutely (*fortissime*) to good"[14] to get through.

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[11] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 12, ad. 3.
[12] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 6.
[13] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 6, ad. 1.
[14] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 6, ad. 2.

The supreme instance of fortitude is martyrdom. Martyrdom is the "due endurance of death,"[15] that is, suffering "death for Christ's sake"[16] or for "any human good so far as it is referred to God."[17] Fortitude par excellence is making the ultimate sacrifice of one's life for the personal God who becomes man in Jesus Christ. Readiness to die for one's faith must mark a Christian's life. "Man must be ready to let himself be killed rather than to deny Christ or sin grievously."[18]

It must be noted that laying down one's life for God or for the moral good is praiseworthy but not suffering or injury itself. It is not the suffering that makes the martyr but what he dies *for*. It is wrong to extoll suffering for its own sake without considering the cause involved. Neither is martyrdom to be sought out. Life is a precious gift from God. One's primary intention can never be to extinguish it. Martyrdom is to be accepted, if called to it, and endured with God's help. It is not that life has no value, just that it isn't the greatest good.

Martyrdom is extremely difficult to accept precisely because of the great love we have for our present life. "Of all the goods of the present life man loves life itself the most and hates death more than anything especially when it is accompanied by the pain of bodily torment."[19] Satan uses this fact to achieve his diabolical purposes. In answering God, he says, "all that people have they will give to save their lives."[20]

Truth is the proper object of the reasoning mind. Martyrs witness to the truth that our time on earth is a time of exile. Human beings are created at once material and spiritual. They are in possession of immortal souls that live on after physical death. This life is not all there is. There is life on the other side of the grave as well. Right reason tells the Christian believer that he must endure bodily evils, even death, rather than lose his soul.[21]

True prudence accurately grasps the relative importance of different goods in life. The brave person does not set aside genuine goods, even the good of one's life, easily or esteem them lightly. But he is willing to sacrifice these goods to preserve the inmost core of his being and ensure his eternal destiny with God.

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15 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 3.
16 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 4.
17 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 5, ad. 3.
18 Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Quodlibetales*, 4, 20.
19 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 3.
20 Job 2:4.
21 Mk 8:35–37.

> It belongs to martyrdom that a man bear witness to the faith in showing by deed that he despises all things present in order to obtain invisible goods to come.[22]

Martyrdom is the perfect of human acts, the sign of the greatest charity. "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."[23] Martyrdom, through its demonstration of love for God and for objective moral truth, inters the idea that right and wrong are just opinions. Remaining faithful to God's holy law to the point of death strikes a blow at the nihilism that threatens to swamp our civilization.

The examples of those dying in patient endurance so that good might be realized are many. Aquinas mentions the "holy martyrs who through zeal for the faith or brotherly love gave themselves up to martyrdom of their own accord"[24] before referring to "the martyrdom of Blessed John the Baptist, who suffered death, not for refusing to deny the faith, but for reproving adultery."[25] Countless saints and Christian martyrs have provided this perfectly clear witness throughout the years.

In remaining "obedient unto death,"[26] the Christian martyr follows the example of his Lord, Jesus Christ. Pieper observes that Christ's "earthly life was entirely permeated and formed by His readiness for sacrificial death, to which He went 'like a lamb to the slaughter.'"[27] Yes, dying for one's faith must be agonizing. In doing so, the faithful follower of Jesus Christ is only imitating his Lord and Savior.

Furthermore, Jesus Christ was up front with his disciples about the reality they would face, a reality that those living a Christian existence still face today. That reality would be one of persecutions. The servants would not be above their master.[28] By his life, Jesus Christ testifies against evil works[29], exposing these deeds to the light.[30] The wound of original sin causes men to meet this testimony with deadly force. Aquinas says that this opposition is to be expected.

22 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 4.
23 Jn 15:13.
24 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 3, ad. 1.
25 ST, II-II, q. 124, a. 5.
26 Phil. 2:8.
27 J. Pieper, *The four cardinal virtues*, p. 132.
28 Jn 15:18–19.
29 Jn 7:7.
30 Jn 3:20.

> Though dangers of death are of rare occurrence, yet the occasions of those dangers occur frequently, since on account of justice which he pursues, and also on account of other good deeds, man encounters mortal adversaries.[31]

Jesus goes even further with his followers in his extraordinary declaration to them that they are to consider themselves blessed if they are persecuted.[32] The same message is repeated elsewhere in Holy Writ.[33]

But how is this even possible? Is it not our experience that the pain of the senses overwhelms any spiritual pleasures we may get from acting virtuously? Aquinas acknowledges this reality but says that the overflowing grace of God lifts the soul to spiritual joy.

> Now the sensible pain of the body makes one insensible to the spiritual delight of virtue, without copious assistance of God's grace, which has more strength to raise the soul to the Divine things in which it delights, than bodily pains have to afflict it.[34]

Fortitude's true nature is revealed in martyrdom. Less heroic demonstrations of the cardinal virtue find their comparison point with this perfect human act. Whoever can do the greater can do the lesser. Whoever can endure the most terrible of bodily evils can courageously overcome the numerous little deaths—challenges, obstacles—that must be met every day. In any event, the vices opposing the virtue of fortitude will have to be contended with.

2. Fortitude's opposing vices

Aquinas identified three enemies of fortitude: *fear, fearlessness,* and *daring*. These are the main passions of the irascible appetite that fortitude must moderate. A due order of human action requires that sensible desires be subject to the rule of reason.

[31] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 11, ad. 3.
[32] Mt 5:11–12.
[33] I Pet 4:13–14, 16.
[34] ST, II-II, q. 123, a. 3.

Fear arises from love. We fear that which is contrary to what we love. Therefore, the proper ordering of fear depends on the proper ordering of love. Reason dictates that this ordering is the goods of the soul over the goods of the body and the goods of the body over external things. Aquinas presents this hierarchy of goods from the side of what is feared. "The evils of the soul are more to be feared than evils of the body and the evils of the body more than external things."[35]

Highest Importance	Goods of the Soul
↑	Goods of the Body
Lowest Importance	External Things

Fortitude insists upon and maintains this natural order of goods. The courageous man loves what he should and fears what he should.

We should love our mortal life more than our possessions. What we have only makes sense to us, only has value to us, from the fact that we are alive. The covetous man loves money inordinately and thus fears its loss inordinately. Money has become his god. His worship of Mammon precludes his spiritual life. "No man can take up the profession of contemplation or spiritual warfare, if he still fears to be despoiled of earthly riches."[36]

Aquinas stated that "the shortening of temporal life is an evil and consequently an object of fear"[37] but the loss of our lives is not properly our greatest fear. There are goods higher than the goods of the body. There are things, virtue, wisdom, the Divine, that are worth facing danger for, even the danger of death.

Understanding fortitude's moderation of fear can aid by recalling that fortitude is informed by prudence. The virtuous person sees things as they are. He likes to live in reality. Fear is real, understandably so, but it is moderated for the sake of something higher. Fortitude's essential role is not to do away with fear but to keep it in check. In this way, both sins of commission and sins of omission are avoided. One is not forced into an evil action by fear and one is not kept from taking actions to realize the good by fear. Keeping the due order

[35] ST, II-II, q. 125, a. 4.
[36] ST, II-II, q. 125, a. 3, obj. 3.
[37] ST, II-II, q. 125, a. 4, ad. 2.

of goods keeps fear in its place. The brave man is not without fear, but he is not deterred from doing good because of it. He faces the fear he experiences directly. He considers the reasonable ground for it, and then he acts. Moreover, he does not fall prey to T. S. Eliot's last and greatest temptation, to do the right thing for the wrong reason.[38] He acts for the sake of the good.

Fear is sinful insofar as it runs counter to the order of reason. A person refuses to endure what the right reason tells him he should endure rather than lose the moral good he should pursue. Timidity keeps him back in the face of a danger that reason bids him to face. His excessive fear causes him to flee in cowardice.

Love of God is the foundation of all virtue because God is the *summum bonum*. The reverse of loving God is separation from God. This fear of what is ultimately dreadful is our greatest fear.

Fearlessness is the second vice opposing fortitude. Every moral virtue observes the rational mean—i.e., it is not corrupted by either excess or deficiency in the matter about which it is concerned. It belongs to fortitude to moderate the passion of fear according to reason. The timid man sins by excess. He fears what he ought not fear and as he ought not. The fearless man sins by deficiency. He does not fear what he should fear.

Aquinas returns to the relationship between fear and love and the hierarchy of goods he has presented to explain where the vice of fearlessness comes from. At first glance, it is difficult to see how it even arises.

Fear is born of love. Loving and serving God is the highest good and therefore the generation of our greatest fear. It is natural that we love our lives and fear what might imperil them. We ought to love temporal goods in due measure, that is, as things to be used instrumentally for the sake of our last end. Aquinas unravels the vice of fearlessness by first of all noting that "what is natural cannot be wholly lost."[39] One may love one's life and the temporal goods that support it less than one ought and consequently fear death and other temporal evils less than one ought, but one's love for one's own life never lapses entirely. Scripture is used to solidify the point that fearlessness does not arise from an entire lack of love. "No one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares

[38] T. S. Eliot's statement, "The last temptation is the greatest treason: To do the right deed for the wrong reason", is from his play *Murder in the cathedral* found in T. S. Eliot, *The complete poems and plays*, Faber and Faber, London 1969, p. 258.

[39] ST, II-II, q. 126, a. 1.

for it."[40] Aquinas then draws the conclusion that someone not fearing the loss of goods he loves must come about by that person thinking it is impossible for him to be afflicted by the evils contrary to those goods. Aquinas gives three reasons for this fearlessness.

i) Pride: The person overestimates his own excellence and cannot conceive of any danger that he would not be able to meet. Vainglory moves him, not fortitude.
ii) Lack of Love: The person cares so little about what might be lost that he will rush into danger. His actions are influenced by carelessness, not courage.
iii) Lack of Understanding: A dull or stupid person fears nothing because he is unaware of the dangers he faces. Ignorance not bravery activates him.

Daring is the third vice opposing fortitude. In referring to this passion, what is being implied is excessive daring. Daring is good when it is regulated by reason, but not when it escapes rational moderation by going to excess.

Prudence is once again critical in thinking about how to be bold and audacious, courageous, without being reckless. Prudence informs fortitude by providing a correct evaluation of what is being risked as well as what might be preserved or gained by the contemplated action. The daredevil indiscriminately courts danger risking his personhood arbitrarily and without an adequate appreciation of the infinite value of his life, of what true human greatness is.

> A man is said to love danger when he exposes himself to all kinds of dangers, which seems to be the mark of one who thinks *many* the same as *great*.[41]

The person with excessive daring puts himself in danger inordinately. The courageous person sees things rightly and acts according to reason. The soldier in battle who sees his fellow soldier fall wounded on the field of battle a short distance from his foxhole must moderate his fear of being killed in a rescue effort and summon the courage to act. But he must also moderate his daring. Excessive daring would lead to a fool hardly mission, for example, trying to run across the open territory to pick up the man and run back. Such an attempt would mean certain death from enemy bullets. Less daring but more prudent would be to camouflage oneself, crawl out to the wounded man, and drag him

[40] Eph 5:29.
[41] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 5, ad. 2.

back to safety inch by excruciating inch. To take such an action, an extreme degree of fortitude would have to be summoned.[42]

3. Fortitude's potential parts: annexed virtues

Fortitude is concerned with the danger of death. There are many other minor hardships in life. Aquinas annexes four virtues, *magnanimity, magnificence, patience, perseverance,* to the principal virtue of fortitude. These secondary virtues, called the potential parts of fortitude, strengthen men in the face of danger and evils less than the danger of death.

Magnanimity is derived from the Latin *magnus* "great" and *animus* "soul." The literal meaning of magnanimity then is greatness of the soul. Magnanimity is the "stretching forth of the mind to great things."[43] A man is said to be magnanimous because he is minded to do great things. Because great deeds usually bring great honors, magnanimity is concerned with great honors. "The proper matter of magnanimity is great honor, and that a magnanimous man tends to such things as are deserving of honor."[44]

Aquinas is careful to distinguish the Christian meaning of magnanimity from the secular one. As a Christian, as one belonging to God, everything that one is and everything that one has, are gifts from God. That is, our greatness comes from what God has endowed us with or made possible in our lives.

> There is in man something great which he possesses through the gift of God; and something defective which accrues to him through the weakness of nature. Accordingly magnanimity makes a man deem himself worthy of great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God.[45]

Christians need to be great souls longing to do great things for God. Public or societal honors will not be declined, but neither will they be sought. The Christian ultimately seeks honor only in the eyes of God. The accomplishment

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[42] This example is adapted from Walter Farrell and Martin J. Healy, *My way of life*, Confraternity of the Precious Blood, Brooklyn 1952.
[43] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 1.
[44] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 2.
[45] ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 3, ad. 4.

of something great is to be used to bring glory to God. [46] Christians are to be the "light of the world,"[47] not hiding their gifts but using them to do great things for God and for their fellow travellers.

Aquinas added several characteristics or dimensions to the portrait of the great souled person. The magnanimous person does not run about frantically trying to accomplish many things but is intent only on great things. He attends fully to completing these few things. He is able to speak calmly and learnedly about what he is doing because of the focus he has. He does not get drawn into needless quarrels about little things. The magnanimous man avoids anything contrary to "his excellence or greatness."[48] He deems himself worth great things in consideration of the gifts he holds from God.

The magnanimous man knows that he is not an island unto himself. He understands that "man is naturally a social animal."[49] He accepts that besides Divine assistance he needs human assistance and he prepares accordingly. He plans "to have at hand those who are able to be of service to him."[50] The great souled person is grateful for the help of others and tries to repay them with even greater help in return. He associates with others as he ought to, authentically and genuinely, and he shuns flattery and hypocrisy. He "cares more for truth than opinion."[51] The magnanimous man is "confident in himself."[52] This allows him to be modest. He does not feel the need to call attention to himself or to disclose everything he is trying to do. The magnanimous man does not deem human praise to be something great and so he cares little for it.

The magnanimous person sees that great things can be more easily accomplished by having the wealth to bring them about. He also understands, however, the resistance to reason that arises from the love of money.[53] Therefore, he despises "riches in such a way as to do nothing unbecoming in order to obtain them nor have too great a desire for them."[54] It is contrary to the excellence or greatness of the magnanimous man that for the sake of external goods "he

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46 Mt 5:16.
47 Mt 5:14.
48 ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 4, ad. 2.
49 ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 6, ad. 1.
50 ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 6, ad. 1.
51 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 2, ad. 1.
52 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 2, ad. 1.
53 1 Tim 6:10.
54 ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 1, ad. 3.

abandons and gives up justice or any virtue whatever."[55] The goods of fortune are esteemed as useful organs or instruments, conductive to magnanimity only if they are kept in their place as means and not idolized as an end themselves.

Aquinas goes on to cover the vices opposed to magnanimity. He lists three such vices, which deviate from the mean of virtue by excess, *presumption, ambition, vainglory,* and one that moves away from the mean by deficiency, *pusillanimity*.

The presumptuous person strives to do things that are beyond his power. Aquinas explains why presumption, indeed any vice, is a sin. Nature "is ordered by Divine Reason."[56] Human reasoning and action ought to imitate Divine Reason, that is, respect the natural order of things. Whatever is done "in opposition to the order established in general throughout natural things is vicious and sinful."[57] Natural things act commensurate with their power. A rabbit does not try to fly, for instance. Presumption violates the natural order by believing oneself able to reach what is above one's head.

Perfect virtue, union with God, is to be sought and is not above human capability because we are in possession of a natural power, the intellect, that makes such a union possible. Furthermore, the faithful can be confident in God's assistance being available to reach this state.

Aquinas goes on to say that a man is presumptuous "when he thinks himself great, and worthy of great things, by reason of something that does not make him so, for instance by reason of riches or goods of fortune."[58] Things like wearing costly clothes are deemed great only in the minds of fools. They do not make one magnanimous.

Magnanimity could be referred to as praiseworthy ambition. The magnanimous person strives to do great things in the right way, at the right time, for the right reasons, and so on. He duly receives great honors for this. But he is clear to whom this honor is principally due and why it is important to get. Our gifts are given to us by God.[59] God gives us these gifts so that we may build his Kingdom by serving others. We recognize that we can only excel because of something divine in us.[60] Therefore, the reverence shown to us in witness

55 ST, II-II, q. 129, a. 4, ad. 2.
56 ST, II-II, q. 130, a. 1.
57 ST, II-II, q. 130, a. 1.
58 ST, II-II, q. 130, a. 2, ad. 3.
59 1 Cor 4:7.
60 Jn 15:5.

of our excellence is chiefly owed to God. We are pleased to receive honor because the receipt of honor enables us to serve others even better.

Ambition, as the vice opposing the virtue of magnanimity, is the inordinate desire for honor and this happens in three ways. Aquinas lays them out:

> First, when a man desires recognition of an excellence which he has not; this is to desire more than his share of honor. Secondly, when a man desires honor for himself without referring it to God. Thirdly, when a man's appetite rests in honor itself without referring it to the profit of others.[61]

Inordinate desire for a position of stature also pertains to ambition.

Honor and praise give rise naturally to renown in the minds of others or glory. Glory is the effect of honor and praise. "Praise and honor stand in relation to glory as the causes from which it proceeds, so that glory is compared to them as their end."[62] Glory is something that we desire predominantly. We enjoy the appreciation and approval of others. The desire for glory itself does not denote a sin, and glory may even be desired for its usefulness.[63] But it is easy to forget that true glory comes from God. God commends our work. We ought to do virtuous deeds for the glory God promises, not human glory.[64]

The problem with human glory is that it is a frail thing that exists outside ourselves. Since our renown is in the minds of others, it can be withdrawn by those same others. Self-knowledge is requisite for perfection, but being known by others is not. Yet, our desire for glory easily becomes inordinate, and when it does, it is a sin, vainglory, and directly opposed to magnanimity. Aquinas gives three ways in which glory becomes vain or empty.

> First, on the part of the thing for which one seeks glory: as when a man seeks glory for that which is unworthy of glory, for instance when he seeks it for something frail and perishable: secondly, on the part of him from whom he seeks glo-

[61] ST, II-II, q. 131, a. 1.
[62] ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 4, ad. 2.
[63] Aquinas gives three things glory may be useful for. "In order that God may be glorified by man, or that men may become better by reason of the good they know to be in another man, or in order that man, knowing by the testimony of others' praise the good which is in him, may himself strive to persevere there in and to become better" (ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 1, ad. 3).
[64] 2 Cor 10:17–18.

> ry, for instance a man whose judgement is uncertain: thirdly, on the part of the man himself who seeks glory, for that he does not refer the desire of his own glory to a due end, such as God's honor, or the spiritual welfare of his neighbor.[65]

Vainglory is a mortal sin[66] and a capital vice.[67] As such, it is dangerous and harmful to the extreme. God knows our hearts, and he knows the empty pleasure we get from human praise. We should not be naïve about vainglory's destructive power. Aquinas quotes Augustine on what is at stake to the human personality with vainglory and what must be done to maintain that personality intact.

> Unless a man war against the love of human glory he does not perceive its baneful power, for though it be easy for anyone not to desire praise as long as one does not get it, it is difficult not to take pleasure in it, when it is given.[68]

A sin is mortal if it is contrary to charity. Our glory is vain and contrary to the love of God when we glory in something false that is opposed to the reverence we owe God. For example, when we falsely elevate ourselves to God-like stature.[69] Our glory is vain and contrary to the love of God when we glory in temporal goods over God.[70] Our glory is vain and contrary to the love of God when we love "human glory more than the glory that comes from God."[71]

We sin mortally when we elevate glory to the last end or greatest good of our lives. Faith is thereby denied, and everything becomes permitted, even actions against God. Wishing that all might be saved, Jesus confronts his listeners on their lack of love for God.

> How can you believe when you accept glory from one another and do not seek the glory that comes from the one who alone is God.[72]

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65 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 1.
66 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 3.
67 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 4.
68 ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 3, obj. 3.
69 Ezek 28:2.
70 Jer 9:23–24.
71 Jn 12:43.
72 Jn 5:44.

Vainglory appropriates for oneself the glory which is proper to God. "I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other."[73] "To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever."[74]

For Aquinas, a vice is designated as capital (Latin: *caput*, head) because it "easily gives rise to others as being their final cause."[75] Thus, capital vices serve as the head or source of other vices. Capital vices do this; they serve as "fonts"[76] of vice, and by the end they focus on. Certain offspring vices, or daughters, arise to assist in attaining the end-like good the capital vice pursues. Aquinas uses a military metaphor to drive home the idea. "Capital sins are commanders, and the sins arising from capital sins are the army."[77]

The end of vainglory is the manifestation of one's own excellence. Aquinas reckons the seven daughters of vainglory, those vices directed to the end of the capital vice, to be *boasting, love of novelties, hypocrisy, obstinacy, discord, contention,* and *disobedience.* Aquinas explains how these daughters act as the army of the commander, vainglory.

> [To the end of manifesting one's excellence] a man may tend in two ways. In one way directly, either by words, and this is *boasting* or by deeds, and then if they are true and call for astonishment, it is *love of novelties* which men are wont to wonder at most: but if they be false, it is *hypocrisy*. In another way a man strives to make known his excellence by showing that he is not inferior to another, and this in four ways. First, as regards the intellect, and thus we have *obstinacy* by which a man is too much attached to his own opinion, being unwilling to believe one that is better. Secondly, as regards the will, and then we have *discord*, whereby a man is unwilling to give up his own will and agree with others. Thirdly, as regards speech, we have *contention*, whereby a man quarrels noisily with another. Fourthly, as regards deeds, and this is *disobedience*, whereby a man refuses to carry out the command of his superiors.[78]

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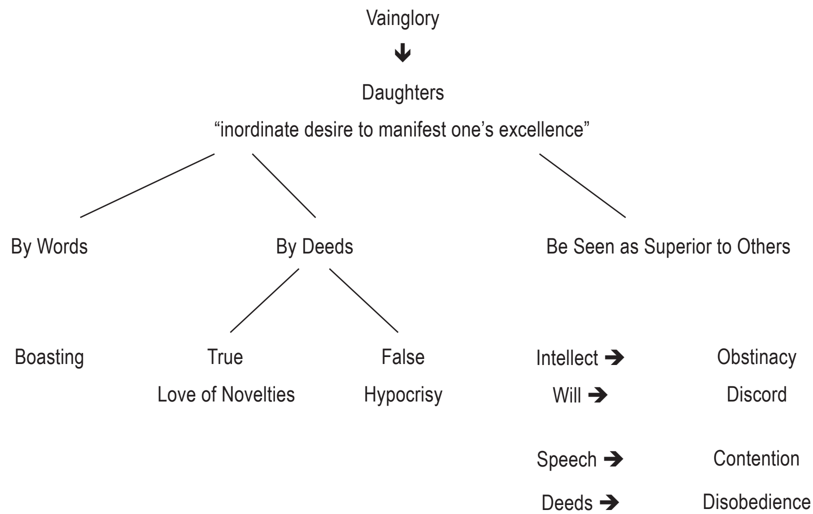
[73] Is 42:8.
[74] 1 Tim 1:17.
[75] ST, II-II, q. 35, a. 4.
[76] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On evil*, trans. R. Regan, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2003, q. 8, a. 1 (originally prepared early 1270's).
[77] Saint Thomas Aquinas, *On evil*, q. 8, a. 1.
[78] ST, II-II, q. 132, a. 5.



In saying the Lord’s prayer, the Christian petitions God with the words, “hallowed be thy name.”[79] In other words, “let all glory be yours Lord.” But we know how easy it is for us to fall short of this desire. If we are honest, we acknowledge that only too often we want the glory to be ours. The daughters of vainglory Aquinas also convict us. With pinpoint accuracy, they disclose our vainglorious actions. It is as if Aquinas is peering right into our hearts, which is, of course, what the Church did for 12 centuries up to Aquinas’ magisterial synthesis.

Do we not call attention to what we have done, perhaps exaggerating our success, to gain the praise of others (boasting)? Do we not like to stand out and seek ways for this to happen, for example, by behaving eccentrically or dressing unusually (love of novelties)? Do we not pretend to be something we are not (hypocrisy)? Do we not hold onto a position that ought to be abandoned because acknowledging the position of others would show us to be wrong (obstinacy)? Do we not insist on calling all the shots, having our own way in everything, and making it difficult for others to work with us (discord)? Do we not feel the need to always interject our opinion, always argue a matter, any matter, down to the last conversational drop (contention)? Do we not refuse to acknowledge the

[79] Mt 6:9.

legitimate orders of those over us lest it look like someone other than ourselves is in charge (disobedience)?

Presumption makes us exceed what is proportionate to our power by striving to do more than we can. Pusillanimity makes us fall short of what is proportionate to our power by refusing to do what we can do. Both are vices opposed to magnanimity, presumption by excess, and pusillanimity by deficiency. Indeed, pusillanimity translates from the Latin *pusillus* "very small" and *animus* "soul" as "littleness of soul" in direct contrast to magnanimity's "greatness of soul."

God does not want us to presumptuously get out over the tips of our skis since these results in our crashing. But God does not want us to sit in the chalet out of fear or out of a lack of appreciation for our gifts, never attempting a run. God is critical of those who bury their talents and do not use them to build his kingdom.[80]

God's criticism of the pusillanimous man is harsh because he is set up to crash just as surely as the presumptuous man, albeit in a different way. There are consequences from shrinking from the greatness proper to us. First, we are unable to help others as we ought. We sin by omission because we never have developed our abilities. Second, we lose sight of our true dignity as children of God and our mission, which is to advance in the perfection of the Christian life toward holiness.[81] Pusillanimity can be pushed back by remembering that God has promised to be with us always[82] and that his grace is sufficient[83] for whatever he asks us to do. The heroes of the bible receive the most challenging assignments (e.g. Moses), but they are inevitably told to "be not afraid."[84]

The next potential part of fortitude is the virtue of magnificence. Once again, it is helpful to trace the etymology of the word. The Latin roots of magnificence are *magna* "great" and *facere* "to make." Aquinas takes the meaning of magnificence directly from the literal translation of these roots, namely, "to make great things."[85] The question is no longer about *being* a great soul, as it was with magnanimity. It is now a matter of extending oneself to *do* great things. Aquinas

80 Mt 25:14–30.
81 Mt 5:48.
82 Mt 28:30.
83 2 Cor 12:9
84 Jn 14:27
85 ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 1, obj. 4.

offers a beautiful treatise on what this entails, on what it means to have the moral quality of magnificence.

Aquinas begins his coverage of magnificence by noting the spiritual and social nature of the human person. Magnificence can never principally be about building lavish works for ourselves because our lives are for God and we must live in community with others.

> It belongs to magnificence to do something great. But that which regards a man's person is little in comparison with that which regards Divine things, or even the affairs of the community at large.[86]

What we do for ourselves is still important, of course. We must provide for our own good. Aquinas says that when we do this, for instance, when we build an adequate dwelling for ourselves, we ought to accomplish it magnificently. Properly speaking, however, such undertakings are not something great. We must get out beyond our own selves.

Magnificence is a special virtue, defined as a distinctive virtue, because it produces works that are great in "quantity, value, or dignity."[87] Magnificence is not about making just anything. What is being made must be something worth making in the first place. The construction of the gas chambers in World War II was not the work of magnificent men. In our own time, building a studio to make pornographic films is not a dignified or valuable work. Prudence and justice must inform the annexed virtue of magnificence just as they do the principal virtue of fortitude.

Aquinas refers to our teleological nature to clarify what constitutes a great work. Human beings act purposefully. We undertake works with an end in mind. The greatest end we can have for our works is the "honor of God."[88] Divine honor and beyond that, the common good of the community are the ends that fulfill the intention of magnificence to produce a great work. The magnificent man has in his mind the doing of great things. He thinks about completing them and gives them his inward attention. Aquinas presents the expanded definition of magnificence given by Tully (*De Inv. Rhet.* ii) to convey this understanding.

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86 ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 1, ad. 3.
87 ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 2.
88 ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 2, ad. 3.

> Magnificence is the discussing and administering of great and lofty undertakings, with a certain broad and noble purpose of mind.[89]

The inclusion of the word administering in the definition acknowledges the reality that bringing a great work to fruition requires considered planning and careful execution. Magnificence, a potential part of fortitude, employs attack or aggression, an act of fortitude. The first requirement of aggression is preparing the mind to face the undertaking with confidence. The second requirement is the carrying out of the work so that something great actually gets built.[90]

Fortitude strengthens us in the good of virtue in the face of danger. Magnificence does the same thing. Both are situated in the emotional part of the soul. Where the two virtues differ, and the reason why magnificence is a secondary virtue annexed to fortitude, is the nature of the danger faced. Fortitude faces the danger of death. The danger of magnificence faces, venturing what one has on something great, is real but not anywhere as great as the danger that threatens a person's very existence. It takes courage to risk failure in a great enterprise.

Magnificence has the task of making an expenditure proportionate to the great work contemplated. It is a challenge to know how much is needed, to know how to access these monies, and to know how to purpose them wisely. There is no getting around the fact that magnificence is about money and its proper use.

One is hindered from being magnificent by loving money too much. Money is a requisite instrument for the production of great works honoring God or making for a more becoming existence for the members of the community. Our hold on money must be released for it to be put to good use. Hoarding money as an end in itself cuts magnificence off at the knees.

The vice opposing magnificence is meanness. Meanness, as Aquinas uses it, does not have the meaning the word presently has, namely, vicious or unkind. Aquinas specifies that "a man is said to be mean (*parvificus*) because he intends to do something little (*parvum*)."[91] This can best be seen by returning to the virtue that meanness opposes. Magnificence seeks to make something great and does not shrink from making the appropriate expenditure to realize this end. Man's good is to be in accordance with reason. Magnificence upholds this good by keeping spending proportionate to the work. Meanness is a sin, something

[89] ST, II-II, q. 134, a. 2, ad. 2.
[90] ST, II-II, q. 128, a. 1.
[91] ST, II-II, q. 135, a. 1.

"reprehensible,"[92] because the actions of a mean man are not regulated according to reason. A mean man is loath to spend the money needed. He declines from the rule of reason by spending less than the work is worth. For instance, as a builder, he tries to complete a million dollar project, spending only half of that amount. As an employer, he seeks ways to avoid fully paying what he owes his employees in wages. Just as meanness falls short of the rule of reason, *consumptio* (waste) exceeds the rule. It exceeds its due proportion by spending too much.

Patience is also annexed to fortitude as a secondary virtue or quasi-potential part. Our consideration of patience today is usually limited to having to wait for something. We get stuck in traffic, and we simply must be patient until the jam can be cleared. In minor trials such as this, we can see how patience shares fortitude's principal act of endurance. Aquinas' understanding of patience is far more profound than the popular contemporary one, however. A detailed examination of his remarkable thoughts on this virtue yields important insights for our moral lives.

Fortitude endures the most difficult thing to endure, namely, the danger of death. It falls to patience to endure or bear all other manner of hardships or evils. As a moral virtue, patience safeguards the good of reason against the impulse of sorrow that arises from the suffering occasioned by obstacles.

> A man is said to be patient, not because he does not fly [in the face of danger], but because he behaves in a praiseworthy manner by suffering (*patiendo*) things which hurt him here and now, in such a way as to not be inordinately saddened by them.[93]

All virtues are directed to the good of the soul. Patience, while not ranked as the greatest of virtues,[94] moderates the sorrow that arises from hardship.

Aquinas accesses St. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians to make a critical distinction between dealing with grief leading to sorrow in a godly or worldly way. St. Paul addresses the community about the grief they have suffered at his hands.

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92 ST, II-II, q. 135, a. 1, ad. 2.
93 ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 4, ad. 2.
94 ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 2.

> Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance; for you felt a godly grief, so that you were not harmed in any way by us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death.[95]

Dealing with grief in a worldly way is ultimately inadequate because human life in the secular world view ends in death, the complete dissolution of the human person. Human beings are destined for eternal life with God, a salvation made possible by Christ's atonement. This true end of life is achieved by repentance. The virtue of patience deals with grief in a godly way by turning to the beatific vision.

For Aquinas, patience, even though he situates it within the cardinal virtue of fortitude, is an infused virtue. He says unequivocally that "it is clearly impossible to have patience without the help of grace."[96] Patience is a virtue caused by charity. "Love is patient."[97] Charity comes through grace. "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us."[98] Patience proceeds from supernatural love.

Aquinas adds further nuance to his discussion of patience by noting that sorrow arises in the concupiscible appetite, not the irascible appetite that houses fortitude, and also by noting that concupiscence is "dominant"[99] in fallen man. Patience is a virtue annexed to fortitude because they have the same matter and form. Patience is not a part of temperance because temperance is only about sorrows opposed to the pleasures of touch. Patience, on the other hand, "is chiefly about sorrows inflicted by other persons."[100] This is a very difficult reality to accept, particularly given our fallenness. Our greatest sorrows come from what other people do to us. People disrespect us, criticize us unfairly, act unjustly towards us, lie to us, betray us, and even harm us physically. We need the virtue of patience to bear the sorrow this causes serenely and even cheerfully. It belongs to patience "to suffer with an equal mind the evils inflicted by others."[101]

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[95] 2 Cor 7:9–10.
[96] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 3.
[97] I Cor 13:4.
[98] Rom 5:5.
[99] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 3, ad. 1.
[100] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 4, ad. 2.
[101] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 4, sed contra.

The patient person knows how to retain his equanimity however great the sorrow. This does not mean that he closes himself off to the use of the other act of fortitude, attack. It is not inconsistent with patience "that a man should, when necessary, rise up against the man who inflicts evils on him."[102]

Aquinas comprises longanimity and constancy under patience. Longanimity looks to a far off good. The delay in having the good we hope for causes sorrow. Therefore, patience is required. Constancy of effort in accomplishing a good work speaks to being patient as well.

The part that patience plays in forming a unified personality cannot be overstated. Holy Writ says that by patience we "possess our souls."[103] Patience does this by removing at the root "the passions that are evoked by hardships and disturb the soul."[104] Patience is the "radiant embodiment of ultimate integrity."[105] Patience gives us the inner strength to not lose our courage in the face of life's many trials.

The last of the potential parts of fortitude is perseverance. According to Tully (*De Inv. Rhet ii*) "perseverance is the fixed and continued persistence in a well-considered purpose."[106] By virtue, we live our lives as we ought to. Perseverance is absolutely needed because good things are difficult and take focussed effort over time to complete.

Perseverance is in the irascible appetite moderating the fear of weariness or failure on account of delay. From our experience we can recognize the truth present in the statement, "fatigue makes cowards of us all." We get tired and we want to quit. Perseverance tells us we must summon the strength to continue on.

Aquinas distinguishes two senses of perseverance by working forward from a twofold meaning of end. An end can mean the end of an action. An instance of perseverance here would be the magnificent man who persists firmly and confidently through all the difficulties that arise until his great work is completed. End can also mean the end of human life. The acts of the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity must endure throughout the entire Christian's life until the end of his life. Perseverance in this sense needs God's gratuitous help

[102] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 4, ad. 3.
[103] Lk 21:19.
[104] ST, II-II, q. 136, a. 2, ad. 2.
[105] J. Pieper, *The four cardinal virtues*, p. 129.
[106] ST, II-II, q. 137, a. 1, obj. 3.

of grace. Augustine says of this perseverance that it is "a gift of God, whereby we persevere unto the end, in Christ."[107]

Constancy pertains to perseverance. Both virtues have as their end the firm persistence in the good. Perseverance persists firmly against the difficulty that arises from the very continuance of the act. Constancy persists firmly against all other external impediments. Perseverance takes precedence over constancy as a part of fortitude because the difficulty arising from the continuance of action is more intrinsic to the act of virtue. Still, constancy arms us with persistence when external obstacles and hazards get in the way of our purpose to do good.

Perseverance observes the golden mean of virtue by persisting just as long as one should. The effeminate or soft man forsakes the good on account of difficulties which he cannot endure. He does not have enough perseverance. He quits too soon when victory could have been his. The pertinacious or obstinate man persists inordinately. He will not give up a resolution or a course of action even after it is shown to be wrong. He imprudently does not know when to quit.

4. The gift of fortitude / beatitude / precepts of the law

For the Christian, there is no such thing as a purely natural virtue. For sure, we strive to possess the firmness of mind to accomplish an arduous work or endure a grievous evil. This is connatural or proper to us as persons. Furthermore, the courage we have naturally is our own possession. We move ourselves interiorly to acts of virtue. For all this, however, our natural forces of endurance and aggression fail to overcome all dangers. We need perfection higher than what we can achieve by our own acts of virtue. We must be moved by God's grace.

The gifts of the Holy Spirit "dispose all the powers of the soul to be amenable to the Divine motion."[108] God in his superabundant goodness has given us the supernatural gift of fortitude, an interior prompting of the Holy Spirit that "pervades and crowns"[109] all natural fortitude.

Christian action is ultimately done in the hope of eternal life. One cannot reach the "land of the Blessed"[110] unless one is "moved and led thither by the

[107] ST, II-II, q. 137, a. 4, sed contra.
[108] ST, I-II, q. 68, a. 8.
[109] J. Pieper, *The four cardinal virtues*, p. 141.
[110] ST, I-II, q. 68, a. 2.

Holy Ghost."[111] Aquinas makes clear that the gift of fortitude, the gift of the Holy Spirit that surpasses human nature, overcomes all fear.

> The Holy Ghost works this [attaining the end of work or avoiding evils or dangers] in man, by bringing him to everlasting life, which is the end of all good deeds, and the release from all perils. A certain confidence of this is infused into the mind by the Holy Ghost, who expels any fear of the contrary.[112]

Aquinas follows Augustine's schema for linking up a corresponding beatitude to each gift of the Holy Spirit. Augustine associated the fourth beatitude, "blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice," with the spiritual gift of fortitude. The congruity between this gift and this beatitude is that both are about doing difficult things. The essence of fortitude is battling for the good, including the good of justice. Aquinas notes the insatiability of the desire expressed in the words hungering and thirsting for justice.

In his final question on this cardinal virtue[113], Aquinas considers the precepts of fortitude. First, Aquinas reviews the purpose of the precepts of the law. "The end of Divine Law is that man might adhere to God."[114] The Divine Law instructs us how we ought to live. Indeed, it does so perfectly. "The Divine Law instructs man perfectly about such things as are necessary for right living."[115] Precepts of fortitude are provided in the law to direct the mind to God. We have to be taught how to fight, as it were. Aquinas points out that the fight is now spiritual. The fate of our souls is at stake, and we face a formidable and malicious enemy, the devil, that we can only defeat by submitting to God.[116]

> Discipline yourselves, keep alert. Like a roaring lion your adversary the devil prowls around, looking for someone to devour. Resist him, steadfast in your faith[117]

[111] ST, I-II, q. 68, a. 2.
[112] ST, II-II, q. 139, a. 1.
[113] ST, II-II, q. 140.
[114] ST, II-II, q. 140, a. 1.
[115] ST, II-II, q. 140, a. 2.
[116] Jas 4:7.
[117] I Pet 5:8–9.

FORTITUDE

Definition:
"Strengthen man in the good of virtue, especially against dangers, and chiefly against dangers of death"

Opposing Vices (Sins Against Fortitude)

Fear (Cowardice)

Fearlessness

[Excessive] Daring

Principal Acts

Endurance (Martyrdom)
Aggression

Potential Parts

Magnanimity Rational Mean Excess: **Presumption**

Ambition

Vainglory

Boastfulness
Love of Novelties
Hypocrisy
Obstinacy
Discord
Contention
Disobedience

Deficiency: **Pusillanimity**

Magnificence

Meanness
Opposing vice: consumptio (waste)

Patience

Perseverance Rational Mean Excess: **Pertinacity**
(Headstrong: self-opinionated)

Deficiency: **Effeminancy**

Gifts of the Holy Spirit

"Spirit of Might" – Is. 11:2

Fourth Beatitude

"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they will be filled." – Mt. 5:6

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Church in the service of marriage and family

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Abstract

Family, built on the foundation of monogamous marriage between a man and a woman, is a natural institution. It is present in even the oldest communities and cultures. However, the contemporary family, which is going through a deep crisis, is the subject of questions and controversies. Opinions that it is an outdated institution and should be replaced by other "modern" forms of cohabitation are expressed more frequently. Hence, the family needs specific actions and forms of assistance that will help it overcome growing problems and interpret its identity anew.

The Church, aware that marriage and family are one of the greatest gifts in the world, constantly undertakes such actions and carries her mission in favor of them on various levels. The article discusses the main ones, which include the need to preach the good news about marriage and family and defend these institutions, undertake specific pastoral actions, and help marriage and family in interpreting their identity.

All these activities require profound discernment on the part of the Church of the current situation of contemporary marriages and families, so that she may be able to fruitfully accompany them in the realization of her vocation.

Keywords

marriage, family, conjugal love, family ministry, discernment, accompaniment

History and anthropology teach us that the family based on the foundation of monogamous marriage between a man and a woman is a natural institution, which is present even in the oldest communities and cultures. That is why people have understood it throughout the ages as the source and basis of the existence of man himself and all communities. Hence, it is public reality and the subject of special laws and social regulations.

For the Church, too, the family is a special place where, by virtue of the sacrament of marriage, the reality of love that embraces all its members comes true. John Paul II reminds us of this when he says: "Among these many paths, the family is the first and the most important. It is a path common to all, yet one which is particular, unique, and unrepeatable, just as every individual is unrepeatable."[1] Pope Francis also emphasizes that "The welfare of the family is decisive for the future of the world and that of the Church." Therefore, "Countless studies have been made of marriage and the family, their current problems and challenges."[2] A human being needs a family not only to be born but to be able to grow in humanity. Therefore, it is logical to believe that the family, as a community of people, must be stable and strong. First, it should be strong in loving, which unites it. Then, it should be strong in hope, which a human being and society need for existence. Finally, it should be strong in faithing, which becomes the source of the strength needed to conduct its tasks.

However, the contemporary family, which is going through a deep crisis, is the subject of questions and controversies. Opinions that it is an outdated institution and should be replaced by other, more "modern" forms of co-habitation are expressed more frequently. This is even more surprising and dangerous because these views are not just fleeting trends popular in certain circles or manifestations of a passing fashion but also the subject of serious studies of scientific disciplines and discussions and legal regulations in many countries of Western culture as well as in the international forum.[3] Hence, the modern family needs specific actions and forms of assistance which will help it overcome the growing problems and interpret its identity anew.

1 John Paul II, *Letter to families*, 02.02.1994, 2, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_02021994_families.pdf (29.01.2015).

2 Francis, Post-synodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris lætitia*, 19.03.2016, 31, papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20160319_amoris-laetitia_en.pdf (29.01.2025).

3 Cf. M. Schooyans, *La face cachée de l'ONU*, Le Serment, Paris 2000, pp. 187–205.

The Church is constantly taking such actions. As John Paul says: "The Church, aware that marriage and family are among the most precious goods of humanity, wishes to bring her teaching and offer help to those who, knowing the value of marriage and family, strive to remain faithful to them; to those who, in uncertainty and anxiety, seek the truth; and to those who unjustly encounter obstacles in realizing their own vision of the family. By supporting the former, enlightening the latter and supporting those for whom difficulties arise, the Church wishes to serve every person concerned about the fate of marriage and family."[4] Pope Benedykt XVI confirms that "The family is the privileged setting where every person learns to give and receive love. That is why the Church constantly wishes to demonstrate her pastoral concern for this reality, so basic for the human person. […] This is the truth that the Church tirelessly proclaims to the world."[5] Pope Francis also confirms this when he writes that the Church is directly expected to make "a more responsible and generous effort to present the reasons and motivations for choosing marriage and the family, and in this way to help men and women better respond to the grace that God offers them."[6] Thus, in fulfilling her mission towards marriage and the family, the Church carries it out on various levels. The most important ones of these are: the proclamation of the "good news" about marriage and the family, the defense of these institutions against actions that harm them, the creation of pastoral structures, and inspiring families to constantly interpret and deepen their identity. All of this requires profound discernment on the part of the Church of the current situation of contemporary couples and families, so that she may be able to fruitfully accompany them in the fulfillment of their vocation.

4 John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 22.11.1981, 1, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (01.02.2025).

5 Benedict XVI, *Vigil of prayer*. Address of the Holy Father on Occasion of the Fifth World Meeting of Families in Valencia, 8.07.2006, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060708_incontro-festivo.html (01.02.2025).

6 Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 35.

Good news about marriage and family

The Second Vatican Council teaches us that the family is the "intimate partnership of married life and love."[7] This fundamental message becomes the content of the post-conciliar teaching of the Magisterium of the Church. A human being, created as man and woman, is called to build a communion of persons (*communio personarum*) based on authentic love, in which they become a gift for each other. In this relationship, in which they both find themselves in their sexual differentiation, they not only overcome their original loneliness but also strive for unity, which is depicted in Revelation: "a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh" (Gen 2:24; cf. Mt 19:5). For, as John Paul II teaches, "Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself; his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it."[8] This special experience, and indeed the touch of love, takes place in marriage, when a man and a woman in their spousal union become a gift for each other. Their mutual self-giving, that is, the readiness to give oneself completely to one's spouse and the ability to accept without limit the gift of the other, is the measure of conjugal love, which in this sense becomes "concern and care for the other."[9]

Love understood in this way requires a decision of free and conscious will, which is the basis of the relationship between people. Only a person can love, and the acts of love are only those acts which a person realizes based on reason and will, knowing and recognizing the values contained in the personal condition. Therefore, an act of love is a choice that demands exclusivity and finality because its subject is a person. It cannot be a matter of chance, ill-considered behavior or just an emerging feeling because they can be changeable and often fleeting. As Erich Fromm notes, "To love somebody is not just a strong feeling,

7 Second Vatican Council, Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes*, 7.12.1965, 48, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (01.02.2025).

8 John Paul II, Encyclical letter *Redemptor hominis*, 4.03.1979, 10, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_04031979_redemptor-hominis.html (01.02.2025).

9 Benedict XVI, Encyclical letter *Deus caritas est*, 25.12.2005, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html (01.02.2025).

it is a decision, it is a judgment, it is a promise. If love were only a feeling, there would be no basis for the promise to love each other forever. A feeling comes, and it may go. How can I judge that it will stay forever, when my act does not involve judgment and decision?"[10] Love for the spouse encompasses all the good that he or she represents. The person of the spouse, in his or her body and spiritual fullness, is itself a good and not an object of reference or use, especially in the bodily sphere. Hence, Pope Paul VI teaches us that "Whoever really loves his partner loves not only for what he receives, but loves that partner for the partner's sake, content to be able to enrich the other with the gift of himself."[11] Such an attitude demands full commitment and, at the same time, entails responsibility for the spouse. This is the logic of the gift, as John Paul II often emphasizes.[12]

Experiencing love in this way, spouses constantly face the prospect of love's new meaning and discover new possibilities of its realization. The essence of love includes dynamism, which is the source of its continuous development. Because, as Karol Wojtyła emphasizes, "Love […] in a sense never 'is' but is always only 'becoming,' and what it becomes depends on the contribution of both persons and the depth of their commitment."[13] It is a space of permanent learning about life for and with another person. Simultaneously, it helps spouses see their own limitations and weaknesses. It is a process that takes place throughout their lives. That is why Pope Benedict XVI writes that "Love embraces the whole of existence in each of its dimensions, including the dimension of time. […] love looks to the eternal. Love is indeed "ecstasy," not in the sense of a moment of intoxication but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards its liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God."[14] Pope Francis also emphasizes that conjugal love is by its nature definitive and that a union based on it is more than a social formality or a certain tradition.[15] Conjugal life means continuous learning and discovering love. This process takes place throughout the life and depends on the commitment of both spouses. Jean Guitton aptly illustrates this

[10] E. Fromm, *The art of loving*, https://ia801309.us.archive.org/12/items/TheArtOfLoving/43799393-The-Art-of-Loving-Erich-Fromm_text.pdf (01.02.2025).

[11] Paul VI, Encyclical letter *Humanae vitae*, 25.07.1968, 9, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html (01.02.2025).

[12] John Paul II, *Letter to families*, 11.

[13] K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, TN KUL, Lublin 2001, s. 118.

[14] Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 6.

[15] Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 124.

truth when he says: "For it is a profound and invincible error to think, as lovers do, that marriage is the solution to love. Marriage poses a problem: a whole life is scarcely long enough to resolve it. […] Marriage is a seed. Marriage is the cause of a love that continues to develop throughout the lifetime of the couple, in a punctuated way, interspersed with crises, slow, vulnerable, admirable."[16] The Church, fulfilling its mission for the family, constantly points out that conjugal love is a path of continuous development and growth, in which the pivotal moment is receiving the sacrament of marriage, through which "conjugal love is purified and made holy."[17] And earlier, the Second Vatican Council teaches us that the sacrament strengthens and, as it were, consecrates Christian spouses to their duties and dignity of their state.[18] Today, when the understanding of the sacrament of marriage is often reduced to an external and not always spiritually understood ceremony in church, this teaching takes on a special meaning. We may conclude that the crisis of the contemporary family also has its source in the loss of the sense of sacredness of the sacrament of marriage. On the other hand, the sacrament of marriage is a constant dynamic presence of God in the daily life of the family. This is a potent sign of grace because it not only indicates and expresses it in a visible way, like a sign, but also creates it and allows man to be part of it.[19] Therefore, Pope Francis emphasizes that "The sacrament of marriage is not a social convention, an empty ritual or merely the outward sign of a commitment. The sacrament is a gift given for the sanctification and salvation of the spouses, since their mutual belonging is a real representation, through the sacramental sign, of the same relationship between Christ and the Church."[20] Thus, the sacramentality of marriage is not exhausted at the time of its contraction but extends throughout entire conjugal and family life. Therefore, in relation to this sacrament, we speak of a "subsisting sacrament," of the sacramental state in which Christian spouses live.[21]

Preaching the good news of the family based on the sacramental marriage of a man and a woman, the Church teaches that it is the "sanctuary of life." The

[16] J. Guitton, *Kobieta, miłość, rodzina*, PAX, Warszawa 1994, pp. 91–92.
[17] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 56.
[18] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 48.
[19] Cf. John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them: A theology of the body*, trans. M. Waldstein, Pauline Books & Media, Boston 2006.
[20] Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 72.
[21] Cf. J. Machinek, *Małżeństwo – dar, który zobowiązuje*, in: Jan Paweł II, *Mężczyzną i niewiastą stworzył ich. Sakrament. O Jana Pawła II teologii ciała*, TN KUL, Lublin 1999, p. 248.

vocation of the family is to be the source and guardian of life. The family "has a decisive responsibility. This responsibility flows from its very nature as a community of life and love, founded upon marriage, and from its mission to "guard, reveal and communicate love." Here it is a matter of God's own love, of which parents are co-workers and as it were interpreters when they transmit life and raise it according to his fatherly plan. This is the love that becomes selflessness, receptiveness, and gift."[22] This responsibility of the family is all the greater today because of increasing attacks on life in the mother's womb and in the terminal period. Actions of some anti-life groups as well as the decisions of parliament that seek to legalize the right to abortion and euthanasia are evidence of this. Therefore, the family must fulfill its role throughout the life of its members, from conception to natural death. Because it "is truly "the sanctuary of life: the place in which life—the gift of God—can be properly welcomed and protected against the many attacks to which it is exposed and can develop in accordance with what constitutes authentic human growth." Consequently, the role of the family in building a culture of life is decisive and irreplaceable."[23] Pope Francis speaks of "life, which is an end in itself and which can never be considered the "property" of another human being. The family protects human life in all its stages, including its last."[24] No society or state can replace the family in fulfilling this task.

Being life's guardian, the family is the environment for the proper formation of a person's personality. Parents' vocation is to shape and raise a new human being by giving life to it, to be Parents and Educators of a human being. "Fatherhood and motherhood" is "the gift of humanity."[25] Therefore, it is their right and, at the same time, their duty resulting from the fact that they are parents. As John Paul II teaches, "The right and duty of parents to give education is essential, since it is connected with the transmission of human life; it is original and primary with regard to the educational role of others, on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children; and it is

22 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 (03.02.2025).
23 John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae*, 92.
24 Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 83.
25 John Paul II, *Letter to families*, 16.

irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being entirely delegated to others or usurped by others."[26]

The gift of humanity means introducing man onto the path of true freedom. A human being seeks freedom and strives for it in many ways. It is the essence of their existence. It is also the source of their responsibility for the attitudes and actions of everyday life and for other people. However, contemporary culture emphasizes freedom understood as total autonomy of people, as if they were their only creators, independent of others, and free from responsibility. Therefore, Pope Benedict XVI says, "The Church does not cease to remind us that true human freedom derives from our having been created in God's image and likeness. Christian education is consequently an education in freedom and for freedom. "We do not do good as slaves, who are not free to act otherwise, but we do it because we are personally responsible for the world; because we love truth and goodness, because we love God himself and therefore his creatures as well."[27] In the family, one learns what it means to be free when one undertakes everyday tasks and feels responsible for their realization. One learns to be free when one does not give up one's responsibilities despite difficulties or counter models that contemporary culture often presents.

After all, shaping humanity is also educating oneself for social life. Every person belongs to a specific community and is therefore also responsible for its shape and development. Hence, "the family constitutes one of the most important terms of reference for shaping the social and ethical order of human work." It is "simultaneously a community made possible by work and the first school of work, within the home, for every person."[28] By educating people towards social responsibility, the family strengthens the assets of the community in which it lives and can fully fulfil its vocation. Therefore, the family is "the place of origin and the most effective means for humanizing and personalizing society"[29] Pope Benedict XVI will add that the family is "an intermediate

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[26] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 36.

[27] Benedict XVI, Homily during Apostolic Journey to Valencia (Spain) on Occasion of the Fifth World Meeting of Families, *City of arts and sciences*, Vatican 9.07.2006, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20060709_valencia.html (04.02.2025).

[28] John Paul II, Encyclical *Laborem exercens*, 14.09.1981, 10, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091981_laborem-exercens.html (04.02.2025).

[29] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 43.

institution between individuals and society, and nothing can completely take its place."[30] Pope Francis, on the other hand emphasizes that "Every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father; both are necessary for a child's integral and harmonious development."[31] Therefore, the family needs society to be able to properly carry out its tasks, but society cannot exist without a healthy family because it guarantees its future and development.

Preaching the truth about marriage and family, the Church respects their distinctive and unique character. Every family is unique, just as every person is unique and unrepeatable. That is why the Church does not act in relation to the family *in abstracto* but to every family on the globe, regardless of the latitude in which it lives or what its cultural heritage is. Every family constitutes the basic "cell" of society and the foundation of the existence of every community.[32] Therefore, the Church addresses her message to all families around the world.

The Church—defender of marriage and family

The Church not only preaches the truth about marriage and family to the entire world but also defends the dignity and unique value they both represent for all societies, religions, and cultures. Her attention goes out to every family regardless of faith, denomination, nationality or living situation. Each home is a community of love and a school of enriched humanity for the Church because the family creates an irreplaceable environment conducive to properly experiencing the tensions between autonomy and community, unity, and diversity. Therefore, the voice of the Church calling for respect for the value and dignity of marriage and family has always been clear and decisive, especially in the second half of the 20th century, when the family became the subject of increased attacks.

The Church has expressed its concern for marriage and family very forcefully in the teaching of the Second Vatican Council. In the Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes*, it states: "Public authority should regard it as a sacred duty to recognize, protect and promote their [marriage and families, translator's note] authentic nature, to shield public morality and to favor the prosperity of home

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30 Benedict XVI, Homily during Apostolic Journey to Valencia (Spain) on occasion of the Fifth World Meeting of Families.

31 Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 172.

32 John Paul II, *Letters to families*, 4.

life. The right of parents to beget and educate their children in the bosom of the family must be safeguarded. Children who unhappily lack the blessing of a family should be protected by prudent legislation and various undertakings and assisted by the help they need."[33] We find an echo of the voice of the Second Vatican Council in the *Charter of the Rights of the Family*, published in 1983, which in its introduction very clearly states that for the good of society it reaffirms the universal awareness of the fundamental rights of the family and offers to all those who consider responsibility for the common good a model and a point of reference for the development of legislation and family policy and a guide for programs of activities. It submits this document with full trust to international governmental organizations which, because of their competence and because of the activities undertaken to defend and promote human rights, cannot fail to notice or consent to violations of the fundamental rights of the family.[34] Referring to the message of the *Charter of Rights of the Family* Pope Francis emphasizes that "Families and homes go together. This shows how important it is to insist on the rights of the family and not only those of individuals. The family is a good which society cannot do without, and it ought to be protected."[35]

Similarly, Pope Paul VI repeatedly defended the dignity of the family and demanded respect for its rights from civil authorities. He did so even during one of the most challenging times for the family when the so-called "sexual revolution" proclaimed universal moral freedom and undermined the value of marriage and the family. In the Encyclical *Humanae vitae, the* pope made an appeal to public authorities: "And now We wish to speak to rulers of nations. To you most of all is committed the responsibility of safeguarding the common good. You can contribute so much to the preservation of morals. We beg of you, never allow the morals of your peoples to be undermined. The family is the primary unit in the state; do not tolerate any legislation which would introduce into the family those practices which are opposed to the natural law of God. […] If only all governments which were able would do what some are already doing so nobly and bestir themselves to renew their efforts and their undertakings! There must

[33] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 52.

[34] Cf. Stolica Apostolska, *Karta Praw Rodziny, Wprowadzenie*, in: *Posoborowe dokumenty Kościoła Katolickiego o małżeństwie i rodzinie*, ed. K. Lubowicki, vol. 1, Wydawnictwo M, Kraków 1999, pp. 239–250.

[35] Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 44.

be no relaxation in the programs of mutual aid between all the branches of the great human family."[36]

John Paul II, often called the "Pope of the family," was particularly vocal about the rights of the family. Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz described him as a great "priest of the family" at the turn of the second and third millennium of Christianity."[37] John Paul II was aware of the growing threats, which not only undermine the dignity of marriage and family but also the meaning of their existence, presenting them as outdated institutions. Therefore, in the exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, he appeals to public authorities to do "everything possible to ensure that families have all those aids—economic, social, educational, political and cultural assistance—that they need in order to face all their responsibilities in a human way."[38] Opposing the anti-family actions of public authorities, he emphasized that "the Church openly and strongly defends the rights of the family against the intolerable usurpations of society and the State."[39]

John Paul II intensified his appeals for respect for the rights of the family during the International Year of the Family proclaimed by the UN (1994). In a letter to heads of states from all over the world, referring to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, he clearly emphasized that "The family is part of the heritage of humanity! It is "the natural and fundamental groups unit of society." For that reason, "The International Year of the Family should therefore be a special occasion for society and the State to grant the family the protection that the Universal Declaration recognizes it should have. Anything less would be a betrayal of the noblest ideals of the United Nations."[40] In his *Letter to families*, Pope John Paul II emphasizes that the family is "a firmly grounded social reality. It is also, in a way entirely its own, a *sovereign society*," and recalls that the fundamental duty of the state is to support its development without violating its autonomy. Therefore, "No human society can run the risk of permissiveness in fundamental issues regarding the nature of marriage and the family!

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36 Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*, 23.

37 Cf. S. Dziwisz, *Jan Paweł II – Papież rodziny, Papież życia.* Konferencja wygłoszona w Walencji – Światowe Spotkanie Rodzin, 7.07.2006, "L'Osservatore Romano" (wyd. pol.) (2006) no. 9–10 (286), p. 20.

38 John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 45.

39 John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 46.

40 John Paul II, Letter to the heads of states around the world, Vatican 19.03.1994, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/letters/1994/documents/hf_jp-ii_let_19031994_population-develop.html (5.02.2025).

Such moral permissiveness cannot fail to damage the authentic requirements of peace and communion among people. It is thus quite understandable why the Church vigorously defends the identity of the family and encourages responsible individuals and institutions, especially political leaders, and international organizations, not to yield to the temptation of a superficial and false modernity."[41]

Pope Benedict XVI talks similarly about the rights of the family. He reminds us of the need to strengthen the values of marriage and family so that they do not become devalued at a time of the growing crisis of these basic institutions. Their destruction will undermine the foundations of the entire human community. As he emphasizes in the message for the World Day of Peace: "The social community, if it is to live in peace, is also called to draw inspiration from the values on which the family community is based. This is as true for local communities as it is for national communities; it is also true for the international community itself, for the human family which dwells in that common house which is the earth."[42]

This topic is also discussed by Pope Francis, who calls contemporary culture a "culture of the ephemeral," pointing out that "The State has the responsibility to pass laws and create work to ensure the future of young people and help them realize their plan of forming a family."[43]

The above passages clearly indicate that the Church considers service to the family to be its fundamental mission. She defends it from ever bigger problems but is not shy of firmly standing her ground addressing international organizations or civil authorities, reminding us that every family is a constitutive and irreplaceable element of every community. The Church does not limit her activity only to Catholic families but extends her care to every human family regardless of faith, denomination, nationality or living situation. For her, every home remains a school of life and a richer humanity because it alone creates an irreplaceable environment, particularly conducive to properly experiencing the tensions between autonomy and community, unity, and diversity. Therefore, in the above mentioned letter to heads of states before the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, John Paul II emphasizes that: "Without infringing on the autonomy of a reality which they can neither

41 John Paul II, *Letter to families*, 17.

42 Benedict XVI, Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, Vatican 01.01.2008, 6, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_ben-xvi_mes_20071208_xli-world-day-peace.html (6.02.2025).

43 Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 39, 43.

produce nor replace, civil authorities have a duty, in effect, to strive to promote the harmonious growth of the family, not only from the point of view of its social vitality but also from that of its moral and spiritual health." Because the family is a universal institution and, as a natural and fundamental element of society "is part of the heritage of humanity!"[44] It is a universal institution, even though the modern world is trying to do without the family, questioning the validity of marriage as a union between a man and a woman and the need for a family environment for raising children.

Forming and developing pastoral care for the family

The Church's commitment to the family manifests itself in the development of various pastoral forms and structures that can help the family fulfil its mission. The Second Vatican Council emphasizes this when it teaches that it is necessary to "nurture the vocation of spouses by a variety of pastoral means […] so that families which are truly illustrious can be formed."[45] John Paul II in *Familiaris consortio* says that "Every effort should be made to strengthen and develop pastoral care for the family, which should be treated as a real matter of priority, in the certainty that future evangelization depends largely on the domestic Church."[46] In *Novo millennio ineunte* he will emphasize that "At a time in history like the present, special attention must also be given to the pastoral care of the family, particularly when this fundamental institution is experiencing a radical and widespread crisis."[47] Pope Francis also stressed that "Pastoral care for families needs to make it clear that the Gospel of the family responds to the deepest expectations of the human person: a response to each one's dignity and fulfilment in reciprocity, communion and fruitfulness. This consists not merely in presenting a set of rules, but in proposing values that are clearly needed today, even in the most secularized of countries."[48] These appeals are addressed pri-

[44] John Paul II, *Letter to the heads of states around the world*.
[45] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 52.
[46] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 65.
[47] John Paul II, Apostolic letter at the close of the great jubilee of the year 2000, *Novo millenio ineunte*, 6.01.2001, 47, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/pl/apost_letters/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_20010106_novo-millennio-ineunte.html (08.02.2015).
[48] Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 201.

marily to priests and local church communities, in which families can directly discover and experience their vocation and mission.

The activity of the Church encompasses many areas of the life of the married couple and family. The basic ones, however, include pastoral activity (the practical aspect) and scientific reflection. The first consists in accompanying the married couple and family in everyday moments of the day, that is, in being progressively with them throughout their lives. The second consists in determining in a scientific way the tasks of the Church towards marriage and family, establishing the principles of their correct performance and developing ways and means of this activity.[49] Both of these areas are complementary and require constant deepening.

The practical sphere of pastoral care for the family includes all kinds of initiatives, from those undertaken by the forum of the Universal Church to the smallest units of local churches. Popes and individual dicasteries of the Roman Curia issue documents emphasizing the fundamental importance of pastoral care for the family. These include, among others, John Paul II's exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, especially part IV, the encyclical *Evangelium vitae* and the *Letter to families*, Pope Francis' Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris laetitia* on love in the family, issued at the conclusion of the 2nd World Meeting for Families in Rio de Janeiro, and the documents of the Congregation for Catholic Education (for Seminaries and Educational Institutions) *Directives on the formation of seminarians concerning problems related to marriage and the family*, and the Pontifical Council for the Family *Vademecum for confessors concerning some aspects of the morality of conjugal life*. These and other documents and homilies of popes define the general framework for all pastoral activities on behalf of the family, which should find their concrete application in the conditions of local communities and specific families.

The World Meetings for Families, initiated by John Paul II in 1994, are also among the general church initiatives. Before each meeting, there is a theological and pastoral congress, the aim of which is to study the current challenges that plague the contemporary family. These meetings are not only an opportunity to exchange pastoral experiences from various regions of the world but also a source of specific initiatives applied later in activities for families.

[49] Cf. R. Bieleń, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce*, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2001, pp. 63–64.

However, these are local communities at the national level, especially at the diocesan and parish levels, that engage in the most significant and concrete pastoral actions in relation to marriage and family. As John Paul II said, care for the family led the Church in recent years to create new structures for its good. So, not only documents but also structures and concrete actions.[50] Here, individual families meet with existing problems; problems that await solutions.

In Poland, the structures of family ministry consist of the Polish Episcopal Commission, diocesan Family Ministry Departments, and parishes, which are the basic organizational units of family ministry.[51] The most important pastoral activities include educational work undertaken in schools regarding children and youth, marriage preparation for engaged couples[52], and working with families, especially those experiencing difficulties or problems. A very important role here is played by specialist counselling centers for engaged couples and spouses, where professionally trained people and specialists from various fields related to family life help to solve any difficulties and problems that may arise.[53] Defending life from conception to natural death also occupies an important place on the list of activities of family ministry. They include single mother homes, diocesan Adoption Centers established in each diocese, the Prayer Crusade for unborn children, and the Spiritual Adoption movement.[54]

The didactic and scientific platform, on the other hand, undertakes systematic scientific research on marriage and family and educates priests and lay employees to work in the sector of pastoral care for the family.[55] It does this by using research results and achievements in sciences like genetics, psychology, pedagogy or sociology, without which the development of family studies would

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[50] Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Czym jesteś, rodzino chrześcijańska?*, in: Jan Paweł II, *Rodzino, co mówisz o sobie? Dokumenty i przemówienia papieskie w Roku Rodziny*, ed. A. Świerczek, Wydawnictwo Czuwajmy, Kraków 1995, p. 233.

[51] Cf. R. Bieleń, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce*, pp. 76–88.

[52] R. Bieleń, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce*, pp. 240–263.

[53] R. Bieleń, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce*, pp. 263–278.

[54] R. Bieleń, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce*, pp. 228–239.

[55] R. Bieleń, *Duszpasterstwo rodzin we współczesnej Polsce*, pp. 77–81; cf. *Nauki o rodzinie. Tradycje i perspektywy edukacyjne*, eds. G. Koszałka, M. Stopikowska, Wydawnictwo Ateneum-Szkoły Wyższej, Gdańsk 2007; *Nauki o rodzinie w służbie rodziny*, ed. J. Stala, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Papieskiego Jana Pawła II, Kraków 2014; *Duszpasterstwo rodzin. Refleksja naukowa i działalność pastoralna*, eds. R. Kamiński, G. Pyźlak, J. Goleń, Bonus Liber Lublin 2013; *Towarzyszyć małżeństwu i rodzinie. Inspiracje adhortacji apostolskiej "Amoris Laetitia" dla duszpasterstwa rodzin*, ed. J. Goleń, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2017.

be impossible. And they are essential for understanding and undertaking ways to solve issues related to the implementation of marital and family tasks and solving arising problems.

All these pastoral activities and initiatives are among the most important tasks of the Church, whose pastoral action, as John Paul II emphasizes, "must be progressive, also in the sense that it must follow the family, accompanying it step by step in the different stages of its formation and development."[56] Both on the practical and didactic and scientific platforms, the family should be at the center, as the subject for whom all actions are taken. Otherwise, it will become an object used to achieve goals or justify the means of achieving them. Hence, the subsidiary principle applies to all actions towards marriage and the family, which emphasizes the primacy of the family. The family must fulfill its obligations and tasks on its own but awaits help and support.

Family, what do you say about yourself?

It is a disturbing phenomenon that today's family does not try hard enough to deepen and strengthen the bonds that should unite its members or fulfill its educational obligations towards its children. Explanations which try to justify the situation, like: "such are the times" or "we don't have time" have become a permanent part of everyday language and, imperceptibly but very consistently, contributed to deepening the crisis of the modern family. Therefore, there is a need for the family to awaken to free itself from the growing apathy, constant search for external reasons for difficulties, and expectation that someone will provide a solution. Hence, as one of the forms of action for the family, the Church reminds us that the family should become what it is in its essence. Therefore, the Second Vatican Council teaches that for the family to be able "to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children."[57] The mutual dedication of spouses and their commitment to transforming their relationship into a community of love is a fundamental condition for its duration and development. External

[56] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 65.
[57] Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 52.

factors can either promote or hinder the development of the family. However, their influence depends on the attitude of the family itself.

Considering this issue, John Paul II asks the family a very fundamental question: "Family, what do you say of yourself?"[58] Who are you for yourself, for society and for the Church? The task of the family is therefore to continually learn about its identity, to discover its subjectivity, which results from the theology of marriage and the family. For God included in the plan of creation his plan for the family, so that it would be a community of love and life.

Man and woman are given to each other by the Creator as their proper help and personal complement. Their mutual self-giving, that is, their readiness to give themselves completely as a person to their spouse and their ability to accept the gift of the other person completely, is the measure of conjugal love. Deepening the awareness of such a commitment puts spouses in the perspective of a constant new perception and realization of their conjugal and family life. It also becomes a source of constant "freshness" of their communion, which is the most effective antidote to the often-mounting difficulties of everyday life. Moreover, for others, it is a strengthening testimony and confirmation that the family can be strong and beautiful. Pope John Paul II reminds us of this when he appeals to new families, urging them to bear witness to the greatness of the vocation to marriage and parenthood to all families in the world today, in every place on earth, among nations, peoples and cultures. Only families can bear witness to other families. The pope urged them to become a living sign of the love of God and the Church for every new family.[59] This is probably one of the most important ways of strengthening and renewing the contemporary family, which should be performed by strong families that are aware of their dignity and indisputable value. Then, various external influences or pressures become less harmful in the development of the family. Therefore, as John Paul II emphasizes "it is necessary to ensure that through an ever more complete Gospel formation Christian families show convincingly that it is possible to live marriage fully in keeping with God's plan and with the true good of the human person—of the spouses, and of the children who are more fragile."[60] And Pope Francis emphasizes that Christian marriages and families, "by the grace of the

[58] Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Czym jesteś, rodzino chrześcijańska?*, p. 231.
[59] Jan Paweł II, *Ewangelizacja rodziny przez rodzinę rodzinę*, p. 159.
[60] John Paul II, *Novo millenio ineunte*, 47.

sacrament of matrimony" should be a source of joy-filled witness for other couples and families.[61]

In this context, communities and associations of families play a significant role. They are of great importance for the Church[62] because within their framework, families, through joint efforts and above all through a greater possibility of action, also in the social and legal sense, can more effectively counteract the many threats that affect this fundamental social community. Above all, however, they help individual families find their identity, values, and dignity, especially in situations of problems or danger. Families are not alone and do not have to fight for a dignified existence alone. These communities are also an expression of the great dynamism of families, convinced that the lives of their members and the future of society depend on them. For, as M. Schooyans remarks, if the family is good for its members, it is even a greater good for the community.[63]

The actions of the Church included in the above presentation indicate her great commitment to marriage and family. They are also an expression of the Church's deep conviction that "the well-being of society and her own good are intimately tied to the good of the family." Hence the need for its constant development and strengthening, so that it can truly be "the first and most important" path for a human being. This is especially important today, when in the times of profound and rapid social and cultural changes, there are families that "have become uncertain and bewildered over their role or even doubtful and almost unaware of the ultimate meaning and truth of conjugal and family life. Finally, there are others who are hindered by various situations of injustice in the realization of their fundamental rights."[64]

Pope Francis also emphasizes that we must take every effort to best discern the situation of contemporary marriages and families and to accompany them at every stage of their lives, from education to conjugal and family life. Only then will the Church fulfill her mission in relation to marriage and family. Because,

61 Cf. Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 200.
62 Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 72; Benedict XVI, *Deus caritas est*, 18; Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 202.
63 Cf. M. Schooyans, *The hidden face of the United Nations*, transl. by Rev. J. H. Miller, C.S.C., S.T.D, https://lust-for-life.org/Lust-For-Life/_Textual/MichaelSchooyans_TheHiddenFaceOfTheUnitedNations_2001_190pp/MichaelSchooyans_TheHiddenFaceOfTheUnitedNations_2001_190pp.pdf (08.02.2025).
64 Cf. John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio*, 1–3.

as he emphasizes, "The Church wishes, with humility and compassion, to reach out to families and to help each family to discover the best way to overcome any obstacles it encounters. It is not enough to show generic concern for the family in pastoral planning. Enabling families to assume their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for an effort at evangelization and catechesis inside the family."[65]

The contemporary family needs to find the source of its identity and strength, to be the joy and hope (*Gaudium et spes*) of a human being and society. In this search, the Church is the one that tirelessly shows the direction and offers support in the journey against the current. Finding the source gives a chance to regain the "reviving freshness" that brings rebirth to people, family, and society.[66]

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65 Francis, *Amoris lætitia*, 200.

66 Cf. Jan Paweł II, *Tryptyk rzymski*, Wydawnictwo św. Stanislawa BM, Kraków 2003, p. 11.

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Theology of the body and the role of diversity of sexes in the Catholic notion of diversity

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Abstract

The rapidly Expanding Diversity, Equity (DEI), and Inclusion initiatives present a unique challenge to moral theology today. Not only do the three concepts appear loosely defined by the broader culture, but they are also largely missing from the Christian intellectual tradition. The way forward requires a more precise understanding of each of the concepts in their proper theological context. Appropriately, this work is currently underway. As an example, it was recently argued that the Catholic notion of diversity can be constructed on the basis of the Thomistic Creation-centered approach to reality. A more careful analysis, however, reveals that such an account must be expanded to give more adequate attention to the most fundamental diversity existing at the level of human persons: the diversity of sexes. Using John Paul II's "Theology of the body" as a reference, it will be shown that the culmination of human participation in the beauty of the Creator lies in conjugal union, made possible by the diversity of the sexual constitution.

Keywords

diversity, DEI, Thomas Aquinas, John Paul II, moral theology

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1. Introduction

As diversity, equity, and inclusion committees proliferate around the world, affecting policies and practices in a wide variety of societal structures, Catholic thinkers are just beginning to formulate their understanding of the three concepts. This delayed engagement could be explained by a variety of factors and circumstances, of which one seems rather evident: Values such as diversity, equity, or inclusion are nothing new for Catholics—in the sense that they have always been implied by the teaching of Jesus as expressed through the Gospels. Thus, all three values—if we can call them such—form part of the more familiar concepts, such as communion, justice, or simply charity. It should not surprise then that when the language of diversity, equity, and inclusion began to gain traction and effectively penetrate every level of daily living, many Catholics, including Catholic theologians, were caught off-guard.

Thankfully, the shift is taking place, and a more critical reflection is on the way.

An excellent example of this emerging engagement with DEI issues is the recent publication of Justin Anderson on the question of diversity, which he believes is not as foreign to the Catholic tradition as many would like to assume.[1] Anderson argues that "unearthing the deeper roots of a notion such as diversity" requires careful analysis of theological sources, such as, in his case, the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas can render the concept more fruitful and more easily adaptable at the institutional level.[2] Since I share this opinion and consider it overall a worthwhile project, I would like to propose in this brief work not so much a critique of Anderson's position but rather a necessary expansion by which a more complete understanding of diversity can be achieved.

This expansion seems necessary, as any Catholic notion of diversity cannot fail to recognize the diversity that exists *at the level of persons*, and among these, the most fundamental diversity: the diversity of sexes. It is striking that as Anderson carefully crafts his "Creator-centered account" of diversity, he seems to overlook this important aspect of our humanity. The oversight is easily forgivable, as it is impossible to articulate an exhaustive account of the Catholic notion of diversity in a single article. From the standpoint of contemporary culture, however, failure to mention the diversity of sexes might represent a significant

1 J. Anderson, *Diversity: A Catholic understanding*, "Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture" 25 (2022) no. 3, pp. 27–60.
2 J. Anderson, *Diversity*, p. 28.

omission in a Catholic way of thinking about the concept. In fact, it seems that the multiplicity of genders and one's right to determine one's own sexual identity constitute one of the very loci of today's debates surrounding the DEI initiatives.[3]

Therefore, in this article, I intend to amend this gap by showing how human persons reflect the beauty of the Creator by entering the community of persons made possible by and experienced through the diversity of their sexual constitution. While it would make sense to draw from the same sources used by Anderson, I will intentionally defer from consulting St. Thomas Aquinas and turn to the work of one of his most devoted students, Pope St. John Paul II. The reason for this preference is motivated by the fact that the latter offers a more robust account of human experience at the level of one's consciousness, which is important to the proper articulation of the meaning of the diversity of sexes.[4] And since the Polish Pope never abandoned the realist outlook of St. Thomas Aquinas, he seems to be a perfect fit for the present purposes.[5]

Finally, and before proceeding, it is necessary to note that my main objective is not to offer any extensive account of sexual differences. This work is currently under way and can be easily located.[6] In fact, I will intentionally refrain from using the language of sexual difference to distinguish it from the "diversity of sexes" to highlight not so much the peculiarity of each sex as how being sexually different facilitates the unique mode of reflecting God's beauty in the world.

2. The diversity of sexes in the thought of John Paul II

John Paul II was well-acquainted with the term diversity. He frequently uses the word in many of his writings and speeches, most notably in his pastoral

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3 Not to exclude other important issues, such as racism or other forms of unjust discrimination.

4 According to Mary Shivanadan, the greatest contribution of Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II is that he "posits reflexive consciousness at the core of the human person, based on St. Thomas' philosophy of potency and act" (M. Shivanandan, *Crossing the threshold of love: A new vision of marriage in the light of John Paul II's anthropology*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington (DC) 1999, p. 147).

5 Cf. T. Petri, *Aquinas and the theology of the body: The Thomistic foundations of John Paul II's anthropology*, Catholic University of America Press, Washington (DC) 2016, p. 272.

6 See, for example, J. Grabowski, *Unraveling Gender: The battle over sexual difference*, TAN Books, Gastonia (NC) 2022; T. Fortin, *On the nature of human sexual difference: A symposium*, Springer, Cham (Switzerland) 2024.

addresses and homilies. In fact, the references, though scattered, are numerous enough to merit their own analysis, especially in light of the virtue of solidarity, which tends to accompany the term quite regularly.[7] For the purposes of this article, however, I will focus on the particular notion of diversity—the diversity of sexes, that is, the reality of being male or female.

For the Polish Pope, masculinity and femininity are more than accidental features; they constitute a *fundamental* dimension of being a person. Other aspects are significant too, such as race or language, but none seem to carry as much weight as the diversity of sexes. This is because, when we think about it, every experience, every thought, every gesture, or every deed is *deeply embedded* in the overall structure of the person who *cannot be anything but sexed* from the moment of conception. When one thinks or feels, one does not think or feel like a generic person, but concretely and specifically as a woman or as a man, or better yet, as a particular individual:

> Precisely the function of sex [that is, being male or female], which in some way is "constitutive for the person" (not only "an attribute of the person"), shows how deeply man, with all his spiritual solitude, with the uniqueness and unrepeatability proper to the person, is constituted by the body as "he" or "she."[8]

Therefore, the diversity of sexes, though firmly rooted in biological structure, is at the same time not reducible to it. Bodiliness and sexuality are not identical precisely because "the fact that man is a 'body' belongs *more deeply to the structure of the personal subject* than the fact that in his somatic constitution he is also male or female."[9] Our daily experience confirms this. When parents wait for the baby to be born, the first thing they want to know is the sex of the baby. This is not purely accidental, and it represents more than the desire to know about

[7] See, for example, the Pope's address to the United Nations in New York from Thursday, October 5, 1995, or his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace from 1989. John Paul II, *Adress to the United Nations*, New York 05.10.1995, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/speeches/1995/october/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_05101995_address-to-uno.html (01.02.2025); John Paul II, *Message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace*, 01.01.1989, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/messages/peace/documents/hf_jp-ii_mes_19881208_xxii-world-day-for-peace.html (01.02.2025).

[8] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them: A theology of the body*, trans. M. Waldstein, Pauline Books and Media Boston 2006, 10:1.

[9] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 8:1. Emphasis mine.

a certain biological feature, similar to weight or skin color. They instinctively ask for the baby's sex because, whether explicitly or not, they realize it is essential for the baby's identity as a person, which in turn is reflected by the subsequent choice of an appropriate name.

Of course, being constituted as a male or a female in the depth of one's personhood does not mean that men and women represent two different species, two different kinds of beings. While the two sexes are not *merely* attributes, do they constitute the *essence* of our common humanity. Instead, masculinity and femininity should be seen more as:

> …two reciprocally completing ways of "being a body" and at the same time of being human—as two complementary dimensions of self-knowledge and self-determination and, at the same time, two complementary ways of being conscious of the meaning of the body.[10]

I shall return to the concept of complementarity in a moment. For now, it is important to emphasize that the diversity of sexes represents an *ontological* category. In the simplest of terms, masculinity and femininity are two distinct ways of *being* human. The observation is significant in that it serves as our first point of contact with the "Creator-centered account" of diversity as presented by Anderson. If our mode of being as persons is necessarily sexual, then the diversity of sexes must somehow share in this wider diversity of beings. If the diversity of beings serves the primary purpose of reflecting God's goodness, then in some fashion, the diversity of sexes must also participate in this process. To explain how it happens, it is necessary to return for a moment to Anderson's article.

In Thomistic cosmology, the diversity of the created world is directly willed by the Creator himself, which means that it is not a product of mere chance. It is not even the result of sin, as argued by Origen.[11] Rather, "the diversity of things," explains Anderson, "is tied to the very perfection of the universe."[12] God desired for beings to be different *from the beginning*, which shows that the multiplicity of created forms is fundamentally good. Why would God intend

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10 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 10:1.

11 J. Anderson, *Diversity*, 31. See also Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York 1948, Benzinger, I, q. 47, a. 2.

12 J. Anderson, *Diversity*, p. 31.

diversity in the first place? The short answer is that His goodness might be made manifest in the world. As Anderson explains,

> …God brought things into being in order that his goodness might be communicated to creatures and be represented to them […] However, due to God's infinity and simplicity, his goodness could not be adequately represented by any single creature alone […] and so, at the root of the cause of diversity of things lies an acknowledgement of both God's ultimate, ineffable goodness, and the finitude of every creature.[13]

What is important to note here is that various creatures reflect this goodness of the Creator in various ways, or better yet, in ways corresponding to their natures. For all beings, participation in the process of divine *communicatio* rests on the sheer fact of their existence. For animate creatures, such as plants or animals, it means, additionally, the preservation of the species. Still, for human beings, it's both *and more*. Since, unlike the rest of creation, human beings are rational, they reflect God's beauty in a unique way: by discovering the truth and pursuing what is good. In doing so, they reflect the image of God within themselves while also actualizing and perfecting their own nature.[14]

John Paul II would undoubtedly agree with Aquinas on all these points, though he would probably want to add that the diversity of sexes permeates all three levels of this communication *qua* persons. The first level—that of existence in the world—is easy to prove and does not require much explanation. It is clear that even in cases of physiological deformity, each person coming into existence is biologically male or female.[15] This is confirmed not only by the pres-

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[13] J. Anderson, *Diversity*, p. 33.

[14] Though, of course, the fullness of perfection is achievable only in the state of beatitude. Cf. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, I, q. 65, a. 2.

[15] "Every human being is by nature a sexual being and belongs from birth to one of the two sexes. This fact is not contradicted by the phenomenon of so-called hermaphroditism—any more than any other sickness or deformity militates against the fact that there is such a thing as human nature and that every human being, even the deformed or sick human being, has the same nature and is human being precisely because of it." (K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, San Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1993, p. 47).

ence of specific reproductive organs but also by the differences existing in the genetic structure of every zygote.[16]

At the second level, concerned with the preservation of species, human beings reflect God's beauty by fulfilling his command to "be fruitful and multiply."[17] Of course, the main difference between human beings and animals is that procreation is a rational and free act; however, it is not something completely undetermined. In fact, it is appropriate to speak of a certain *natural complementarity*, which,

> …is not referring merely to acting, but also to being. Womanhood and manhood are complementary not only from the physical and psychological points of view, but also from the ontological. It is only through the duality of the "masculine" and the "feminine" that the "human" finds full realization.[18]

Earlier in his career, writing as Karol Wojtyla, John Paul II would show how this complementarity confirms and expresses the "natural predilection for, a tendency to seek, the other sex," which is dynamic and characteristic of all persons.[19]

Finally, the diversity of sexes also influences the third level of uniquely human ways of communicating divine goodness in the world. Though it is evident that the rational exercise of the will extends to all human acts—and not only those who have a sexual good as their object, like learning about astronomy or building a ship—the *sexual union of a man and a woman in marriage represents a privileged way of manifesting God's glory in the world.* This point is of tremendous importance to the proper articulation of the Catholic concept of diversity. Here, in the conjugal union expressed in a conjugal act made possible by sexually differentiated bodies, human beings place their rationality and freedom at the service of love, which has the potential to reflect the very love—the essence—of

[16] Though it is true that the process of sexual development is subject to subsequent modifications. Cf. P. A. Aatsha, T. Arbor; K. Krishan, *Embryology, sexual development*, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK557601/ (7.10.2023).

[17] Gen 1:28.

[18] John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, 22.11.1981, 7, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html (01.02.2025).

[19] Wojtyła is not afraid to say that a sexual urge oriented at the person of the same sex represents a deviation frustrating the "natural direction of the sexual urge" (K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, pp. 48–49).

the Creator Himself. Since this point is at the heart of the present argument, I shall now proceed to explain it in more depth.

2.1. The diversity of sexes and *communio personarum*

Just as the diversity of things in the universe was never a result of chance or sin but was positively willed by the Creator, the same positive intentionality must be affirmed for the diversity of sexes. Despite some mistaken interpretations of the Genesis story, Eve was not an afterthought; rather, "from the beginning and *directly,* man was created in the image of God inasmuch as he is male and female."[20] The biblical rib was never intended to convey a sense of male superiority; it was and continues to be the symbol of the common humanity in which both the male and the female participate fully.[21] The question thus emerges: why did God intend *this* diversity in such a direct manner? The answer is because the diversity of sexes is intimately linked with the deeper reality of the community of persons. As John Paul II explains,

> …the unity that is realized through the body indicates from the beginning not only the "body," but also the "incarnate" communion of persons—communio *personarum*—and requires this communion from the beginning. Masculinity and femininity express *the twofold aspect of man's somatic constitution* ("this time she is flesh from my flesh and bone from my bones") and *indicate*, in addition, through the same words of Genesis 2:23, *the new consciousness of the meaning of one's body.* This meaning, one can say, consists in *reciprocal enrichment.*[22]

The body then communicates, or more simply, manifests the person. When the original man leapt from joy upon seeing the first woman, his excitement could not be explained by the presence of biological differences alone. The femininity of the woman was truly "something unique and unrepeatable"[23] for

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[20] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 9:2. Emphasis mine.

[21] "In the theology of the Yahwist author, the torpor into which God lets the man fall underlines *exclusives of God's action* in the creation of the woman. The man had no conscious part in it. God makes use of his 'rib' only to emphasize the common nature of man and woman" (John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 8:2, footnote 13).

[22] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 9:5.

[23] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 9:1.

the man, as it allowed him to experience for the first time the company of another "I," another *person* outside of himself. Masculinity and femininity always point to the presence of the personal subject.[24] In fact, John Paul II insists that "if we dealt with sex without the person, this would destroy the whole adequacy of the anthropology that we find in Genesis."[25] The body is therefore a *witness* to the person; "it expresses the person in his or her ontological and essential concreteness," ordained from the beginning for communion.[26]

The importance of the diversity of sexes is therefore directly tied to the ability of human beings to enter the community of persons—the community, which was "willed for them in particular by the Creator."[27] The last part is significant. For God did not intend for the diversity of sexes to merely exist or serve only the propagation of the species, as discussed earlier, but so that, made in His own image and likeness, human beings might love one another and, in doing so, reflect the very love that unites the Divine Persons of the Trinity. Accordingly, every person, from the beginning, carries within himself what John Paul II describes as "the inner dimension of the gift."[28] The dimension that has sacramental meaning—which enables human beings to make visible through their sexually differentiated bodies what remains invisible—is the mystery of divine life:

> In man, created in the image of God, the very sacramentality of creation—the sacramentality of the world—was thus in some way revealed. In fact, through his bodiliness, his masculinity, and femininity, man becomes a visible sign of the economy of Truth and Love, which has its source in God himself and was revealed already in the mystery of creation.[29]

Moreover, we could argue, following John Paul II's reflections, that it is precisely in the communion of persons that human beings reflect most fully the image of God in themselves. As he writes in his *Theology of the body*,

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24 Even though after the Original Sin, human beings are subject to concupiscence and have lost the purity of the "interior gaze," by which the body communicated the full value of the person in a direct and intuitive way. See the Holy Father's discussion on shame in: John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 27:4–28:6.
25 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 14:2.
26 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 12:4.
27 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 12:4.
28 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 19:5.
29 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 19:5.

> Man becomes an image of God not so much in the moment of solitude as in the moment of communion. He is, in fact, "from the beginning" not only an image in which the solitude of one Person, who rules the world, mirrors itself, but also and essentially the image of an inscrutable divine communion of Persons.[30]

If for Thomas, the human person reflects God's glory primarily through an act of knowing, for John Paul II, the emphasis rests on belonging to the other "I": on the reciprocal giving and receiving of persons. The reason for one's existence, the "beatifying" dimension of one's life, is more than possession of the truth; it is the possession of another person by means of self-donation in accordance with the deep ontological longing inscribed in every human being who "cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."[31] Here, the Pope's words should not be read in contradiction to the more established view proposed by Thomas. The Holy Father does not seek to degrade the significance of human rationality or strip its corresponding powers from their usual association with *Imago Dei*. Instead, as others have observed, he simply "supplements the tradition by incorporating a biblical anthropology that he has drawn from a reading of the Genesis narrative."[32] After all, it is only on the basis of being rational that a person can become a gift for another. Still, it is in this becoming that the beauty of humanity shines most brightly with the splendor of God's own life.[33]

2.2. Conjugal love: The imaging of God's essence

Up to this point, I established that the diversity of sexes was directly willed by God from the beginning and that masculinity and femininity are more than

30 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 9:3. Some scholars believe this emphasis is unique to the thought of John Paul II. Cf. M. Shivanandan, *Crossing the threshold of love*, pp. 72–80.

31 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 24, as quoted by the Holy Father in: John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 14:2 and 15:5.

32 T. Petri, *Aquinas and the theology of the body*, p. 168. For a more extensive discussion on this point, see M. Waldstein, *The glory of the Logos in the flesh: Saint John Paul's theology of the body*, Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, Ave Maria (FL) 2021, pp. 595–67.

33 One is reminded of the other two experiences of the original man reflective of his rational nature: self-possession and self-determination, without which it is impossible to become a gift for the other. Cf. John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 15:1–2.

biological categories, which permeate all levels of human existence as persons. I then situated the diversity of sexes in the context of the larger diversity of things using Anderson's analysis and showed how masculinity and femininity play a pivotal role in reflecting God's beauty by enabling human beings to form an authentic community of persons. What remains to be shown is how this *community of persons finds its deepest expression in conjugal love*, as expressed by conjugal act made possible through the diversity of sexes. If we understand this point, we will understand why I insist that any Catholic account of diversity, which seeks to speak to the diversity among persons, cannot ignore the diversity of sexes.

While all persons are made for interpersonal communion, or, as John Paul II writes, "living in a reciprocal 'for', in a relationship of reciprocal gift,"[34] the conjugal love of marriage represents a unique mode of realizing *communio personarum* in the world. Not only does "this partnership of man and woman constitute the first form of communion between persons,"[35] but it is also its deepest expression:

> [Spousal] love makes the other "I" in a certain sense one's own "I." Through love, the wife's "I" becomes, so to speak, the husband's "I." […] Love not only unites the two subjects, but it allows them to penetrate each other so mutually, thereby belonging spiritually to each other, that the author of Ephesians can affirm, "The one who loves his wife loves himself" (Eph 5:28). The "I" becomes, in a certain sense, "you," and the "you" becomes "I."[36]

"A man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one flesh"[37] precisely because of the depth of the personal union characteristic of spousal love. Nowhere else does a person give *so much* to the other "I" than in matrimony:

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[34] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 14:2. See also Second Vatican Council, Pastoral constitution on the Church in the modern world *Gaudium et spes*, 7.12.1965, 12, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html (04.02.2025).

[35] K. Wojtyła, *Sources of renewal: The implementation of the Second Vatican Council*, trans. P. S. Falla, Harper & Row, San Francisco 1980, pp. 114–115.

[36] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 17:4.

[37] Gen 2:24.

> The only "place" in which this self-giving *in its whole truth* is made possible is marriage, the covenant of conjugal love freely and consciously chosen, whereby man and woman accept the intimate community of life and love willed by God Himself, which only in this light manifests its true meaning.[38]

The words "in its whole truth" are emphasized because the mystery of conjugal love does not admit any compromises; it is not a partial commitment or a contractual agreement subject to change. If it is to be authentic, or better yet, reflective of God's original intention, a man and a woman must commit themselves totally to each other until death. In fact, "if the person [in marriage] were to withhold something or reserve the possibility of deciding otherwise in the future, by this very fact he or she would not be giving totally."[39] The totality of self-donation corresponds to the totality of the person, who is not only a personal soul but also, at the same time, a sexually defined body. Consequently, if spousal love is truly about giving oneself *completely* to the other person, then it must also involve the person's body. In fact, what is distinctive to the disinterested gift of self in marriage is precisely the sexual dimension: "it is through the body that the communion of persons in marriage is brought about."[40]

Since male and female bodies carry within themselves the potential for procreation, the sexual union in marriage is naturally ordained toward children: "the conjugal act means not only love but also potential fruitfulness."[41] The two realities are deeply interwoven: "the one is realized together with the other and, in a certain way, the one through the other."[42] Denying this is not only to violate the natural end of sexual appetite but also, and more importantly, to negate the fullness of the meaning of *communio personarum* intended by marriage:

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[38] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio,* 11. Emphasis mine.

[39] John Paul II, *Familiaris consortio,* 11.

[40] Distinguishing it, for example, from the personal love that exists between a mother and a child. Cf. M. Shivanandan, *Crossing the threshold of love*, p. 82.

[41] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 123:3. Of course, the totality of self-gift does not demand that each conjugal act result necessarily in conception, but only that it remain open to it. In fact, seeking only procreation can be considered a form of utilitarianism. Cf. K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, 233.

[42] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 124:6. See also Paul VI, Encyclical letter on the regulation of birth *Humanae vitae*, 25.07.1968, 12, https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_p-vi_enc_25071968_humanae-vitae.html (01.02.2025).

> One can say that in the case of an artificial separation of these two meanings in the conjugal act, a real bodily union is brought about, but it does not correspond to the inner truth and dignity of personal communion, *communio personarum*. This communion demands, in fact, that the "language of the body" be expressed reciprocally in the integral truth of its meaning. If this truth is lacking, one can speak neither of the truth of the reciprocal gift of self nor of the reciprocal acceptance of oneself by the person.[43]

In other words, a marital relationship is not just the union of minds or hearts; it is the union of *whole persons* who, in their bodily constitutions, are objectively affected by the possibility of procreation. To become a total gift of self to the other in marriage requires, therefore, that nothing is withheld and that nothing is intentionally claimed for oneself, whether psychologically or biologically. Otherwise, "marital intercourse cannot be said to be a realization of the personal order."[44] Only when the two sincerely seek to become "one" in flesh, with everything that it entails, can spousal love become what it is meant to be: a profound personal union rooted in freedom.

There is no denying that such love is difficult to achieve, which is why John Paul II frequently speaks of spousal love in terms of a task.[45] Nevertheless, if strengthened by the grace of God, spouses who remain faithful to their marriage vows and embrace the life of total self-donation form an *exceptional sign* of God's love in the world.[46] By placing their hearts and bodies at the service of personal love, they express "the whole depth of the mystery of creation and

[43] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 124:7.
[44] K. Wojtyła, *Love and responsibility*, p. 228.
[45] See, for example, John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 19:2 and 117b:3.
[46] By emphasizing the uniqueness of marriage, I do not wish to ignore or disparage other vocations. As argued before, all persons are called to *communio personarum,* and all are able to manifest God's beauty in the world by becoming a gift of self. Commenting on the gift of celibacy, for example, John Paul II argues that "continence for the kingdom of heaven, the choice of virginity or celibacy for one's whole life, has become in the experience of the disciples and followers of Christ an act of *particular response to the love* of the Divine Bridegroom, and therefore *acquired the meaning of an act of spousal love*, that is, of a spousal gift of self with the end of answering in a particular way the Redeemer's spousal love" (John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 80:1). Hence, at the beginning of this article, I intentionally said that marriage represents *a privileged* way—not the *only* way of manifesting God's glory in the world.

of redemption."[47] Not only do they communicate their own love to the world, but they also reflect the very love of God, made manifest in the love with which Christ loved the Church:

> The analogy of the love of spouses (or spousal love) seems *to emphasize* above all *the aspect of* God's *gift of himself* to man who is chosen "from ages" in Christ (literally, his gift of self to "Israel," to the "Church"); a gift that is in its essential character, or as gift, total (or rather "radical") and irrevocable […] which is precisely what the analogy of spousal love indicates: it is in some sense "all" that God "could" give of himself to man, considering the limited faculties of man as a creature.[48]

Because of this resemblance to Christ's sacrificial love for the Church, spousal love possesses a unique dignity. By their mutual love, by their generous fruitfulness, by their solidarity and faithfulness, and by the loving way in which all members of the family assist one another, "the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church […] manifests to all men Christ's living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church."[49] In the words of John Paul II, marriage lived well is "an efficacious expression of the saving power of God, who realizes his eternal plan […] in the heart of every man, male and female."[50]

If so, spousal love should be treated with *reverence*. If conjugal love indeed reflects the love with which God loved the world—the kind of love that did not hold back the Father from sending His own Son to die on the cross—then reverence is precisely the attitude needed by every married couple. It is a gift that sustains and develops *a singular sensibility* for all that in marriage vocation and shared life carries within itself "the sign of the mystery of creation and redemption."[51] In other words, reverence guarantees that the prophetic symbolism inscribed in the covenantal relationship of marriage does not dim or fade away with time. It is the gift by which spouses resist the temptation of seeing their love as less than what it really is; it is what nurtures their commitment, the

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47 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 105:4.
48 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 95:4.
49 Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et spes*, 48.
50 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 101:1.
51 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 131:4.

sense of awe and veneration for the sacred in their relationship, and keeps them from falling into sin, which threatens their own dignity as persons and the even greater dignity of their union as spouses.

All of it—to return to our overarching argument—can be realized "*only* through a deep understanding of the personal dignity of both the *feminine* and the *masculine* "I,"[52] which means that everything I have said so far—the awesome capacity of spouses to communicate the radicalness and totality of God's love to the world—is *wholly dependent on how one understands* the diversity of sexes. Since the sexualized body is at the root of the personal communion of spouses, proper attention and education must be given to masculinity and femininity in their ontological and ethical dimensions. One's sexuality thus becomes one's responsibility: one must strive to rediscover its true meaning or, as John Paul II says, "re-read the language of the body in truth."[53]

3. Casting the doubt: the challenge of concupiscence

Why does the Polish Pope insist on reclaiming the original meaning of the body? After the first sin, human beings lost their ability to intuitively relate to each other in the fullness of dignity corresponding to them as persons. The beatifying experience of mutual self-donation is now impaired and threatened by lust and the desire to use rather than to love. Moreover, that which in the beginning used to be completely at the service of building and strengthening *communio personarum* suddenly became an obstacle to it: "the diversity, or the difference between the male and female sexes, was abruptly sensed and understood as an element of the mutual opposition of persons."[54] Masculinity and femininity, though retaining their ontological directionality in terms of a sexual urge, lost their power to reliably direct one to the interior value of another person. Due to concupiscence, the personal "I" is no longer seen in the totality of the gift and becomes an object of manipulation and selfish gratification. Love was detached

52 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 132:4. Emphasis mine.

53 On the need to rediscover the correct meaning of the body in conjugal love, see John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 105–107.

54 John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 29:2.

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from the person, and the human heart had been "cast into a state of continual suspicion."[55]

While it remains beyond the scope of this article to offer an exhaustive analysis of concupiscence, it might be helpful to note that concupiscence does not represent some mysterious force lurking in the shadows of one's being, but more precisely a certain "lack" or "limitation" of God's vision implanted in the mind of the original man at the moment of the first temptation: "*you shall not die at all*. Rather, God knows that when you eat of it, your eyes will be opened, and you will become like God, knowing good and evil."[56] According to John Paul II,

> …this motivation clearly implies casting doubt on the Gift and on Love, from which creation takes its origin as gift. […] By casting doubt in his heart on the deepest meaning of the gift, that is, on love as the specific motive of creation and of the original covenant, man turns his back on God-Love, on the "father." He detaches his heart and cuts it off, as it were, from that which "comes from the Father:" in this way, what is left in him is what "comes from the world."[57]

The doubting and hesitation experienced by the first man eventually materialize in his decision to taste the forbidden fruit, and as a consequence, he loses "the original certainty of the 'image of God' expressed in his body."[58] In other words, man loses his sight. He is no longer able to perceive with clarity that he was made to be an icon of divinity in the world, that he was made for *communio personarum*. He is lost in himself. That is why he first hides in the bushes and then rebels against God throughout history. Instead of becoming a total gift of self to the other, he prefers to *hide* from the other or use the other for his own pleasure. Even his own body now presents a dilemma; "man experiences shame," argues John Paul II, which "reveals *a specific difficulty in sensing the human essentiality of one's own body*, a difficulty man had not experienced in the state of original innocence."[59]

[55] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 46:4.
[56] Gen 3:5. Emphasis mine.
[57] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 26:4.
[58] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 27:5.
[59] John Paul II, *Man and woman he created them*, 28:2.

4. Conclusion: in the pursuit of the authentic diversity of sexes

Unfortunately, these words do not refer to some distant theological reality but mirror closely what is happening in our society today. Whether we are in favor of the DEI movement or not, the fact remains that more and more people are confused about the issues related to human sexuality. The diversity of sexes is but one of many examples of the difficult challenges confronting our generation. This article has shown, however, that for Catholics, the problem is not diversity itself but the correct *discernment* of what constitutes an authentic diversity.

The *authentic* diversity of sexes is deeply embedded in the wider diversity of things. Sharing the same purpose of communicating divine goodness to the world, it serves as the foundation of the uniquely human way of reflecting God's beauty. Precisely because of its fundamental character, it is the first and most important diversity in the world of persons. Since humans are embodied spirits, their sexuality permeates every part of their being. Not only that, their masculinity and femininity are more than a matter of differentiated modes of thinking or existing, as their bodies are truly *complementary*, which means that their unique sexual composition as male and female is characterized by a certain intrinsic directionality meant for mature love between persons. Diversity of sexes, therefore, is something beautiful, something necessary, as it is the vehicle by which "the two become one flesh" and, in doing so, become a total gift to each other. This union, if lived in the domain of reverence, represents the pinnacle of human *imaging of God*. While every person individually manifests the divine likeness through knowing the truth and pursuing what is good, it is by coming together and loving each other with the kind of disinterested and radical love with which Christ loved the Church that human beings communicate the love and goodness of the Creator in the most efficacious and beautiful way.

The contemporary problem seems to be precisely this: that there are so few who accept this vision; who believe that the way of total self-donation is desirable and possible; that men and women of today can raise above their instincts, doubts, and pride and rediscover the true meaning of their sexuality; and that through their diversity of sexes, they might form the union that has the capacity to manifest to the world that which all too often remains hidden—the infinite love of the benevolent Creator.

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The structure of Polish education, based on Jedrzejewicz's reforms: its indisputable benefits and critical voices

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Abstract

In autumn 1931, work on an educational reform had commenced, which ended in March of the following year with the passing of the Act on the Education System of 11 March 1932. The reform in question addressed the organisational system of education, methodological and curricular issues (including the content of textbooks and teaching resources), the role of schools in the development of children (implemented by teachers), as well as various aspects of school administration (including guidelines, courses offered, and teacher training institutions). This paper presents an overview of the measures undertaken as part of the reform of the education system and the structure of schools.

Keywords

interwar period, Jędrzejewicz reform, school system

1. Introduction

Important changes in the education system took place in the territories that were later to become incorporated into the Second Polish Republic (especially in the areas under Russian control) as early as during World War I. The Temporary Committee of the Provisional Council of State of the Kingdom of Poland played a special role in this.[1] However, the proper transformation process of the Polish educational system did not begin until the country regained its independence. This was initiated by Jędrzej Moraczewski's government and sworn in by Józef Piłsudski on 17 November 1918.[2] On 12 August 1931, Janusz Jędrzejewicz assumed the position of Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment.

The Act on the Education System of 11 March 1932 regulated matters concerning the organisation and functioning of kindergartens, common schools and secondary schools. It also addressed basic issues concerning higher education. As F. Śliwiński observed, some of the goals ascribed to the education system were the upbringing and development of resourceful citizens of the Republic of Poland, conscious of their rights and obligations towards the state, which required the provision of appropriate religious, moral, mental and physical education to prepare students as best as possible for later life, as well as enabling the most talented individuals from all walks of life to attain the highest level of academic and vocational education. That role was found in the entire system of education, at every single stage: from kindergarten to higher education institutions.[3]

Pursuant to the Act on the Education System of 11 March 1932, schools were divided into state schools (maintained by the state), public schools (maintained by the state jointly with local governments or self-governing business organisations) and private schools (owned by associations, institutions or private individuals). State schools could be established and maintained by the Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment, but also, for example, by the Ministry of Transport (railway schools), the Ministry of the Interior (vocational and occupational health and safety schools) and the Ministry of Military Affairs

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1 M. Pęcherski, M. Świątek, *Organizacja oświaty w Polsce w latach 1917–1969. Podstawowe akty prawne*, PWN, Warszawa 1972, pp. 23–24.

2 F. W. Araszkiewicz, *Szkoła średnia ogólnokształcąca w Polsce w latach 1930–1932*, Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich Wydawnictwo PAN, Wrocław–Warszawa 1972, pp. 13–16; S. I. Możdżeń, *Historia wychowania 1918–1945*, Wydawnictwo Stachurski, Kielce 2000, p. 71.

3 F. Śliwiński, *Zasady nowego ustroju szkolnictwa polskiego*, Książnica Atlas, Lwów–Warszawa, b.r., pp. 4–7.

(military schools). Public schools included common schools, rural community schools of agriculture and supplementary vocational schools. These were maintained from state funds and the funds of local governments of rural and urban municipalities. Private schools, in turn, were divided int: local government schools (district and municipal schools, maintained exclusively from local government funds), community schools (maintained by various types of educational associations and social institutions) and strictly private schools (privately owned by individuals). Depending on the age of the students and the scope of education provided, schools were classified into lower schools (common schools, supplementary vocational schools, lower vocational schools), middle schools (lower secondary and secondary schools, vocational lower secondary schools), and higher education institutions (universities, technical universities, academies). In addition, these institutions were also divided into male, female and co-educational schools.[4]

2. Education system

2.1. Pre-school institutions in the education system

The Act defined kindergartens as educational institutions for children from the age of 3 until the starting age of compulsory education. They provided childcare for children whose working parents were unable to take care of them full time, but also provided an opportunity for children to interact with their peers. Kindergartens also provided physical and mental education under appropriate conditions, including breathing exercises, music and movement classes, sensory training, handicrafts, drawing, as well as exercises involving telling stories, observing and describing objects and phenomena. One of the tasks of pre-school institutions was also to instil moral principles as well as nurture religious, social and humanitarian consciousness and sensitivity. Children attending these institutions were divided into two groups, not based on their age but on their development. Some of the highlighted aspects of the education process were to take into account the children's interests and level of ability, as well as to gradually increase the complexity of the tasks.[5]

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[4] F. Śliwiński, *Zasady nowego ustroju szkolnictwa polskiego*, pp. 7–8.
[5] Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 r. o ustroju szkolnictwa, Dz. U. 1932 r. Nr 38, poz. 389.

2.2. First, second and third level common schools

The basic organisational institution in the new education system was the seven-year common school. The seven-year compulsory education system was adopted, starting from the beginning of the school year in which the child turns seven years old. The Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment had the right to extend the duration of compulsory education to eight years or shorten it to six years in individual areas or municipalities for organisational reasons. In the case of physically or mentally retarded children or due to restricted access to a common school, compulsory education could also be postponed. Children who had not yet been enrolled in compulsory education and who had reached the age of six could be admitted to public common schools, provided that they had acquired an adequate physical and mental development level (confirmed by a physician specialising in the field), and provided that there were places available at a given school. On the other hand, children with abnormal development could be exempted from compulsory education if there was no special school in the area. Compulsory education could be pursued at a public common school, another type of school (e.g. a private school) or at home, albeit there were certain conditions imposed on the latter by the Ministry of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment. Common schools offered three stages of education: the first included elementary general education, the second built on and expanded the knowledge acquired during the first, while the third stage was additionally intended to foster the development of young students in social, moral and economic terms. In terms of organisation, common schools were divided into three levels: 1st level schools implemented the basic curriculum along with the most important curricular components of the second and third levels; 2nd level schools implemented the curricular components of the first and second levels along with the most important components of the third level; while 3rd level schools implemented all three curricular components in their full scope. In the case of the latter, the basic curricular components of the first level were taught in the first four years of education, the components of the second level in the fifth and sixth years of education, while those of the third level in the seventh, or in the case of eight-year schools in the seventh and eighth years of education.[6]

Third-level common schools had seven grades (each consisting of a one--year course). The case was different for the 1st and 2nd level schools. First-level

[6] Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 r. o ustroju szkolnictwa, Dz. U. 1932 r. Nr 38, poz. 389.

common schools had four grades, with the first and second grades implemented as a one-year course, the third grade as a two-year course, and the fourth grade as a three-year course. 2nd level common schools, in turn, had six grades, with grades one to five implemented as one-year courses and grade six as a two-year course.[7] The curriculum of the common school of each level included the following subjects: religion, Polish language, history, geography, natural sciences, arithmetic and geometry, drawing, practical workshops, singing and physical education. The possibility of introducing other compulsory or optional subjects was regulated by separate provisions. The teaching methods used included lectures by teachers, working with textbooks, teaching aids and other equipment, as well as self-study.[8]

Pursuant to the act, young people who completed their compulsory education and did not attend any further education institutions were subject to compulsory supplementary education until the age of 18 in order to develop their social and civic competences and to broaden their general education in the area of the occupation of their choice. Such supplementary education was to be provided by supplementary vocational or general schools or as part of general supplementary education courses. Exemption from this obligation could only be granted if no suitable school or course were available. Supplementary schools, non-school educational institutions and courses were also provided for young people over the age of 18 and adults who wanted to broaden their knowledge.[9]

The head of a public common school and the teaching staff were obliged to take care of students living on the outskirts of the town, commuting to school, living in boarding houses and dormitories. They were also responsible for providing students in the final grade with vocational counselling.[10]

2.3. Middle schools

Under the new education system, the purpose of the general secondary school was to prepare young people to achieve full cultural development and participate

[7] F. Śliwiński, *Zasady nowego ustroju szkolnictwa polskiego*, pp. 11–12.

[8] Statut publicznych szkół powszechnych siedmioletnich. Załącznik do rozporządzenia Ministra WRiOP z dnia 21 listopada 1933 r., Dz. Urz. MWRiOP 1933 r. Nr 14, poz. 194.

[9] Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 r.o ustroju szkolnictwa, Dz. U. 1932 r. Nr 38, poz. 389.

[10] Statut publicznych szkół powszechnych siedmioletnich. Załącznik do rozporządzenia Ministra WRiOP z dnia 21 listopada 1933 r., Dz. Urz. MWRiOP 1933 r. Nr 14, poz. 194.

in social life, as well as continue their education at higher-level institutions. The general secondary school was a six-year school divided into a four-year lower secondary school and a two-year secondary school. In addition to schools combining those two levels, there were also separate lower secondary and secondary schools. The teaching programme of the former was based on the curriculum of the 2nd level common school and provided foundations for the curriculum of the latter.[11]

Admission to the four-year lower secondary school was open to students aged between 12 and 16 years who completed an education programme corresponding to that of the 2nd level common school or six grades of the 3rd level common school. Admission to the preliminary examination for the first grade of the lower secondary school (which included subjects such as Polish language, geography, arithmetic and geometry) required the submission of a diploma of successful completion of one of the two educational stages. Otherwise, the candidates were required to take a full entrance examination in all subjects covered by the curriculum of the 2nd level common school, with the exception of drawing, physical education, practical workshops and singing. In turn, students who had graduated from a 1st-level public common school had to cover the material taught in the fifth and sixth grades of the 3rd-level common school or, alternatively, had to complete these grades before being admitted to a lower secondary school. The head of the institution was the principal, who was responsible for organisational, educational and didactic matters. The Board of Teachers was a permanent body consisting of the principal, teaching staff, school doctor and sometimes a psychologist. The number of teachers employed at a lower secondary school could not be less than the number of its departments.

In terms of the curriculum, the lower secondary school was a general education institution (before the reform, these types of schools were divided into those focusing on mathematics, natural sciences, humanities, and classics), which included Latin classes. In addition to general education, the curriculum also took into account practical aspects related to daily life. Lower secondary schools were divided into male, female or co-educational institutions. Their curriculum provided for a more detailed and extensive education of Polish culture compared with the programme of common schools, including its links to practical life and the economy, as well as a systematic introduction to pan-human culture.

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11 Statut publicznych szkół powszechnych siedmioletnich. Załącznik do rozporządzenia Ministra WRiOP z dnia 21 listopada 1933 r., Dz. Urz. MWRiOP 1933 r. Nr 14, poz. 194.

It comprises compulsory subjects (religion, Polish language, Latin, one of modern foreign languages, history, geography, natural sciences, physics, chemistry, practical workshops, physical education) and optional subjects (second modern foreign language, drawing, singing).

Students were promoted to subsequent grades based on their scores in the compulsory subjects achieved during the year. A satisfactory score was required for promotion, but in exceptional cases, the student could be promoted to the second or third grade despite failing in one subject. Scores in optional subjects were not taken into account. A fourth grader who had achieved at least satisfactory annual scores in all compulsory subjects and behaviour received a certificate of completion of the lower secondary school, which allowed him or her to apply for admission to a general secondary school or a secondary level vocational school.

Teaching at the lower secondary school was based on school work and the student's self-study, which was intended to consolidate the knowledge acquired at school, as well as to explore other topics. The purpose of the textbook was to present organised material to help students learn and consolidate knowledge. What was stressed was the interdependence of education received at home and at school in the process of upbringing. Parents were expected to be familiar with the functioning and goals of the education provided by the school, as well as to actively cooperate and exchange information with the school about the student's learning and living conditions. The principal and the teachers were obliged to take special care of the living conditions of students living in boarding houses and dormitories, those who commuted to school, as well as those who were in difficult material conditions.[12]

Under the Act on the Education System, secondary schools were divided—based on the curriculum—into departments with appropriately selected groups of subjects. The curriculum of this type of school was based on that of the lower secondary school and provided the students with theoretical and academic preparation for continuing their education at higher level institutions.[13]

12 F. Śliwiński, *Zasady nowego ustroju szkolnictwa polskiego*, pp. 19–25.
13 Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 r. o ustroju szkolnictwa, Dz. U. 1932 r. Nr 38, poz. 389.

2.4. Vocational schools

The purpose of vocational education was to prepare young people for their future professional life. It involved theoretical and practical vocational training with elements of general, social and civic education. This type of education was provided by vocational schools as well as vocational courses. Vocational schools were divided into supplementary, general and preparatory schools. The purpose of supplementary schools was to provide young people with the necessary theoretical knowledge and to expand on the practical training received at the place of employment. The 3-year study programme of this type of school was based on that of the first or second level common school. Considering the specific needs of a given occupation, the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment could shorten or extend it by one year.

In turn, general vocational schools were intended to provide theoretical and practical vocational preparation. They were divided into several levels: lower level (they were mainly of a practical nature, with their programme based on that of the first level common school and, depending on the profession, implemented over 2 or 3 years; it was open to candidates who in a given calendar year had turned 13 or 14 years old); lower secondary level (in addition to practical aspects, they focused on theoretical vocational preparation and included aspects of general education; their programme was based on that of the second or third level common school and, depending on the profession, was implemented over 2 or 4 years; the lower age limit for admission of candidates was 13 years); secondary level (in addition to practical aspects, they focused on more detailed theoretical vocational preparation and included aspects of general education; the programme of these schools was based on the curriculum of the lower secondary school and, depending on the profession, was implemented over 2 or 3 years; the lower age limit for admission of candidates was 16 years). Graduates of the various levels of vocational schools were able to supplement their knowledge by participating in various courses. In addition to the types of vocational schools mentioned above, master and supervisor schools were also provided. These were intended for skilled craftsmen and industrial or technical workers and allowed students to expand their professional knowledge. In order to be admitted, the candidate had to pass an apprenticeship examination or receive preparation deemed sufficient by the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment and have completed a 3-year apprenticeship programme. The last type, preparatory vocational schools, were intended for graduates of all education levels. These institutions provided one-year courses, teaching the basic aspects necessary for a given profession.[14]

The organisation of vocational education under the new system differed from the previous one in that graduating from a lower secondary level vocational school gave the student the same rights as graduating from a general lower secondary school. In turn, graduation from a secondary-level vocational school enabled the graduate to apply for admission to higher education institutions, which had not been possible under the previous system. This was to contribute to the quality and popularity of these schools. Different types of vocational schools were to be provided under the Act on the Education System. For organisational reasons, several vocational schools could be combined into a single educational institution under the same name, with an indication of its individual components.[15]

2.5. Private schools

The situation of private schools was different compared with that of public schools. Private schools and courses, as well as other private academic and educational institutions, were subject to the supervision of the state school authorities. A private school could be established by any Polish citizen provided that: he/she submitted to the competent school authority the statutes of the school indicating its internal regulations, the language of instruction, the curriculum, the name and the relationship of the school owner to the school manager and teachers; he/she provided adequate premises, equipment and school aids; he/she demonstrated that he/she had sufficient funds for maintaining the school; he/she submitted an appropriate document from the state authorities confirming his/her impeccable conduct in terms of moral principles and the law. The superintendent of the relevant school district then decided on whether the conditions for establishing a school were met. A private school could be closed if it was found to have been closed without justification for three months, if its academic or educational level was considered insufficient, or if the regulations or provisions of the school's statutes were not observed. Another reason for closure could also be the implementation of education undermining the state. A private school could not function without a principal or deputy principal

[14] Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 r. o ustroju szkolnictwa, Dz. U. 1932 r. Nr 38, poz. 389.
[15] F. Śliwiński, *Zasady nowego ustroju szkolnictwa polskiego*, pp. 30–35.

approved by the school authorities on the recommendation of the school owner. The principal and teaching staff had to possess the required professional qualifications. The school authorities could suspend the principal (or teacher) or demand his or her removal if they considered that he or she was exerting a harmful influence on students, was not complying with the regulations in force or was grossly neglecting his or her duties.[16]

2.6. Higher education institutions

Under the Act on the Education System, higher education institutions were divided into academic and non-academic institutions. Graduates of general secondary schools, secondary schools for kindergarten and primary school teachers, as well as secondary level vocational schools were allowed to apply for admission at higher education institutions as ordinary students, if they had a diploma qualifying them for continuing their studies at such institutions or had obtained such a diploma by passing a relevant examination. In addition, admission was open to anyone who did not meet these conditions but obtained a permit from the Minister of Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment, based on a duly justified application accepted by the Faculty Council. The Act provided for the organisation of a state defence, citizenship studies and physical fitness college for students of higher education institutions. It was to be established under the supervision of such institutions or separately under the terms indicated by the Minister of the Religious Beliefs and Public Enlightenment. The Act of 11 March on the Education System indicated that the organisation of education provided for therein would be implemented (with regard to common schools, general secondary schools, vocational schools, secondary schools for teachers and teachers' colleges), at the latest within six years of the entry into force of the Act.[17] The system of higher education institutions was regulated by a separate Act on Academic Institutions.[18]

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16 F. Śliwiński, *Zasady nowego ustroju szkolnictwa polskiego*, pp. 37–38.
17 Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 r. o ustroju szkolnictwa, Dz. U. 1932 r. Nr 38, poz. 389.
18 Ustawa z dnia 15 maja 1933 r. o szkołach akademickich, Dz. U 1933 r. Nr 29, poz. 247.

3. Assessment of the structure of the Polish education system

The Act on the Education System entered into force on 1 July 1932.[19] Starting from the school year 1932/33, the lower grades of state lower secondary schools, as well as state teachers colleges, were gradually abolished. Nevertheless, the economic crisis and the baby boom, as well as shortages of teachers, hindered the implementation of the objectives of this law. In terms of the achievements of the education system in the interwar period, it could be said that education was nationalised, a single basic type of common school was established for the entire country, and the network of common schools, general and vocational secondary schools, as well as higher education institutions was expanded. The teacher training system was also improved and possibilities of pursuing further professional education and training were provided.[20]

However, the new structure of the education system was criticised by the opposition. The right wing accused those in power of destroying the traditional secondary school, which was the basis of cultural heritage, while the left wing claimed that secondary schools had turned into elitist institutions due to the process of selection at lower levels of education. Some saw the changes made to the education system as too radical, while others considered them not radical enough. Some pointed out that the reform was unfavourable to peasants, while others claimed it was disadvantageous to the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia classes.[21]

Notably, the reform was noticed by European and American educational circles.[22] It aroused the interest of the International Committee for Intellectual Cooperation in Geneva, an organ of the League of Nations. Ministers of education from other countries visited Poland to learn more about the state of Polish education. Foreign periodicals, including the New York weekly "School and Society" and the German monthly "Deutsche Volkserziehung," published reviews on this topic. The opinions on the Polish reforms in the area of education were

19 Rozporządzenie Ministra WRiOP z dnia 30 maja 1932 r., Dz. U. RP 1932 r., nr 51, poz. 48.
20 E. Magiera, *Wychowanie państwowe w szkolnictwie powszechnym Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Szczecin 2003, pp. 41–42.
21 J. Sadowska, *Ku szkole na miarę Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu w Białymstoku, Białystok 2001, pp. 287–288.
22 L. Grochowski, *Studia z dziejów polskiej szkoły i polskiej pedagogiki lat międzywojennych*, Wydawnictwo Żak, Warszawa 1996.

clearly positive, highlighting the aspiration to unify the education system and modernise the methods of pedagogical work.[23]

Jędrzejewicz's reforms remained in force only for a short period (seven years). Despite numerous critical voices, it must be acknowledged that the reform was based on well-thought-out, coherent and modern pedagogical and organisational concepts, adapted to the complex socio-political and economic conditions.

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Ustawa z dnia 11 marca 1932 r. o ustroju szkolnictwa, Dz. U. 1932 r. Nr 38, poz. 389.

Ustawa z dnia 15 maja 1933r. o szkołach akademickich, Dz. U. 1933 r. Nr 29, poz. 247.

[23] J. Sadowska, *Ku szkole na miarę Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, p. 287.

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Educational work with children and students with developmental disabilities in special educational institutions

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Abstract

Contemporary inclusive efforts are aimed at the positive use of the development capacities of each member of society, on an individual and social level, precisely on the basis of their unique specificity and contribution. In the spirit of achieving an adequate and maximally individualized approach to upbringing and education and the socialization of each individual, special educational institutions for children and students with more complex developmental difficulties are inevitable, in addition to regular ones. An inclusive approach to upbringing and education is emphasized in such special institutions, and the quality of its operationalization can be brought into relation with the existing programmatic, organizational and personnel assumptions of work, as well as models and methods of cooperation of special educational institutions with external stakeholders on the local and broader social levels. With the aforementioned as the goal, qualitative empirical research was conducted through the method of semi-structured interviews with employees of two special educational institutions for children and students with developmental disabilities. In doing so, a non-probabilistic purposive sample was used, selecting participants with the required characteristics (N=16). In conducting the interviews, educators and teachers, as well as educational rehabilitators, who directly and daily work with children and students with developmental disabilities, and members of professional teams of special educational institutions (speech therapists, pedagogues and psychologists) where the research was conducted were involved. Therefore, the research sample included all relevant employees of special educational institutions at the level of Zadar County, with the aim of collecting data on the programmatic, organizational and personnel assumptions for the implementation of inclusion within the institutions and ways of achieving cooperation with relevant external stakeholders in an effort to adequately include children and students with developmental disabilities into their social environment. Ultimately, we can conclude that all the parameters of the implementation of quality educational inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities monitored by the research are present at a satisfactory level with a clear tendency for their permanent development.

Keywords

cooperation, difficulties in development, educational work, inclusion, social inclusion, special educational institutions

1. Introduction

In recent years, at the international level, inclusion has emerged as a global movement that aims to eradicate existing prejudices and prevent the creation of new prejudices against people with special needs. This is an attempt to abolish their segregation from the wider social community, often based on discrimination resulting from lack of information and misunderstanding. Therefore, inclusion is realized through the development of social and individual tolerance and positive feelings and opinions, which implies the inclusion of people with special needs in social activities and processes, especially those with developmental disabilities. At the same time, it is necessary to have an environment ready to adapt to the needs of all members of society. The aforementioned is the basic premise of creating the possibility of their equal participation in everyday life within the community, and the provision of professional support along the way is an indispensable part of well-implemented inclusive efforts.

Such an approach to upbringing and education gives each child a sense of belonging and partnership, with community members accepting the fact that individual children have different needs that need to be met, compared to other children.[1] We can say that inclusion is considered a conceptual requirement of modern upbringing and education for all, which emphasizes the right of every child to education in accordance with their own capabilities.[2] Whenever possible, inclusion takes place within regular educational institutions, whereby children with special needs are included in regular educational groups or classes. Unfortunately, this is not always achievable due to the complexity of individual diagnoses and needs, which nevertheless makes special educational institutions necessary precisely for the humane reason of meeting individual needs with the support of experts profiled to work with such groups of children, youth and adults.

Moving away from the context of regular education, inclusion implies the improvement of the living conditions of people with intellectual and other developmental disabilities and strives to enable people with developmental disabilities to live in the community in order to become accepted, valued, respected,

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1 Lj. Igrić i sur., *Osnove edukacijskog uključivanja: škola po mjeri svakog djeteta je moguća*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb 2015.

2 M. Karamatić Brčić, *Svrha i cilj inkluzivnog obrazovanja*, "Acta Iadertina" 8 (2011), pp. 39–47, https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/280119 (13.07.2023).

included and to be in a position to use the same life opportunities as others.[3] When it is estimated that inclusion in the regular part of the educational system is not the most favorable option for an individual, attending a kindergarten or school as a special educational institution is a better option. In such cases, the advantage of separating children is manifested in pedagogical, health, social and other activities with children who have the same or similar developmental difficulties, whereby the educational program is maximally adapted to them. Thus, inclusive efforts can be successfully implemented not only in regular institutions but also in special institutions with cooperation with the narrower and wider social community, as we will see in the research results presented in the rest of the paper.

2. The benefit of inclusion in the context of upbringing and education

The two basic anthropological and axiological assumptions on which the model of optimal inclusion is based are human dignity and the relationship between people. Dignity refers to respect for a person's independence and individual autonomy, as well as the principle of dependence and reliance on others, which includes adequate inclusive ethics. Inclusive principles include respect for the human subject and his condition, respect for the diversity of the human community, responsibility for the inclusion of marginalized persons, and prosocial behavior and social justice.[4] The importance of inclusion for the entire society can be clearly seen through the appreciation and acceptance of diversity within the social community, because each individual has his own specificity that should be accepted in society. At the level of preschool upbringing and education, the following principles are emphasized, which ensure respect for all the child's interests, possibilities and needs: flexibility of the educational process in kindergarten,

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3 E. Švraka, *Inkluzija, osnovno mjerilo kvaliteta života obitelji djece s intelektualnim i razvojnim onesposobljenjima*, Fakultet zdravstvenih studija Univerziteta u Sarajevu, Sarajevo 2011, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266445449_INKLUZIJA_OSNOVNO_MJERILO_KVALITETA_ZIVOTA_OBITELJI_DJECE_S_INTELEKTUALNIM_I_RAZVOJNIM_ONESPOSOBLJENJIMA (13.07.2023).

4 *Inkluzija, različitost i jednakost u radu s mladima. Načela i pristupi. Ride project*, eds. S. Bullock, M. Brestovanský, P. Lenčo, online edition 2015, https://rideproject.eu/media/ride-the-principles-approaches-hr.pdf (13.07.2023).

partnership of kindergartens with parents and the wider community, ensuring continuity in upbringing and education, openness to continuous learning and willingness to develop practices and values that improve the intellectual, social, moral, spiritual and motor development of children. The values of knowledge, identity, humanism and tolerance, responsibility, autonomy and creativity are particularly emphasized (Decision on the Adoption of the National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education[5]).

Each of the mentioned dimensions of social inclusion in the context of the educational process can be considered educational inclusion in the narrower sense,[6] we consider educational inclusion to be an unavoidable, perhaps fundamental, aspect of wider social inclusion.

2.1. Classification of difficulties in regular and special educational institutions

The term children with special educational needs means children with developmental difficulties and gifted children. Focusing on the segment of children with developmental disabilities, according to the Ordinance on elementary and secondary education of students with developmental disabilities in the Republic of Croatia,[7] a student with developmental disabilities is "a student whose abilities in interaction with factors from the environment limit his full, effective and equal participation in the educational process with other students, resulting from physical, mental, intellectual, sensory impairments and dysfunctions, as well as a combination of several types of impairments and disorders" (Article 2 of the Regulations).

According to the orientation list of types and degrees of developmental disabilities, the types of developmental disabilities are: visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech-voice communication disorders and specific learning disabilities, physical disability, mental retardation, behavioral disorders due to organic factors or a progressive psychopathological condition, autism and the existence of several types and degrees of difficulties in psychophysical

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5 Decision on the Adoption of the National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education, Narodne novine 95, Zagreb, 2015, https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2015_01_5_95.html

6 D. Bouillet, *Izazovi integrativnog odgoja i obrazovanja*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb 2010.

7 Rulebook on elementary and secondary education of students with developmental disabilities, Narodne novine 510, Zagreb, 2015, https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2015_03_24_510.html

development (Regulations on elementary education and education of students with developmental disabilities,[8] Appendix 1). Students with major developmental disabilities include students at the level of mild mental retardation with significant developmental disabilities, students at the level of moderate and severe mental retardation, students with visual impairments and significant developmental disabilities, students with hearing impairments and significant developmental disabilities, students with physical disabilities and developmental disabilities, students with organic behavioral disorders and developmental disabilities, and autistic students with influential developmental difficulties (Art. 12 of the Ordinance). At the same time, influential difficulties refer to difficulties that significantly reduce the child's ability to master the educational program of a regular primary school.

As we can see, depending on the type and degree of difficulties and the absence/existence of influential difficulties, it is necessary to adjust the educational process in accordance with the child's abilities to enable him, with adequate access to appropriate didactic materials and methods of upbringing and education, for continuous development according to his capabilities. Sometimes this type of inclusion can be achieved through regular educational institutions, and sometimes it is necessary to include children in special educational institutions.

2.2. Competences of educators, teachers and professional associates and the use of an individualized approach in work as a prerequisite for success

The complexity of the concept of competence is manifested through different definitions that try to explain the mentioned concept. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development[9] defines competence as a complex construct of different abilities from 4 basic areas: cognitive competence, the use of theories and concepts and informal knowledge developed through practice; functional competence, the ability to perform work within a specific area; personal competence, the ability to choose and model adequate behavior depending on the

[8] Rulebook on elementary education and education of students with developmental disabilities, Narodne novine 697, Zagreb, 1991, https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/1991_05_23_697.html

[9] OECD, *Education and Training Policy: Qualifications Systems. Bridges to lifelong learning*, OECD, Paris 2007.

situation in which a person finds himself; and ethical competence, the ability to act morally adequately based on developed personal and professional skills.

The complex construct of competences is based on productive general and specific knowledge with which a person successfully operates and applies them outside the educational context in everyday and professional life. In addition to the necessary knowledge and abilities related to the performance of a specific job, developed competencies also include adequately modeled values and moral behavior of the individual in a narrower and broader social and material context.[10] The term competence encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivation and personal characteristics that enable an individual to act actively and effectively in a given situation.[11] In view of the above, competences also refer to the ability to act consciously, appropriately and responsibly, and influence overall changes in the social environment, which includes adequate and effective methods acquired through upbringing and education, i.e. lifelong learning.[12]

Within the educational discourse, there are three types of general (generic) competences: instrumental competences that include cognitive, methodological, technical and linguistic abilities, interpersonal competences that include individual abilities such as social skills, i.e. the ability to establish social interaction and cooperation, and systemic competences that refer to the combination of understanding, sensitivity and knowledge, and imply the prior acquisition of the first two listed competencies (Tuning project[13]). It is relevant to create a positive atmosphere within the educational institution, which can only be done by a competent educator, teacher or professional associate who develops a sense of security, respect and support for the child as an individual, which leads to success in meeting the needs of each specific child.

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[10] J. Vrkić Dimić, *Kompetencije učenika i nastavnika za 21. stoljeće*, "Acta Iadertina" 10 (2013) no. 1, pp. 49–60, https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/280163 (15.07.2023).

[11] N. Hrvatić, E. Piršl, *Kurikulum pedagoške izobrazbe učitelja*, in: *Kurikulum: teorije, metodologija, sadržaj, struktura*, ed. V. Previšić, Zavod za pedagogiju Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu i Školska knjiga, Zagreb 2007, pp. 385–412.

[12] E. Piršl, *(Re)definicija pojma kompetencije i interkulturalne kompetencije*, in: *Interkulturalno obrazovanje i europske vrijednosti*, ed. N. Hrvatić, Odsjek za pedagogiju Filozofskog fakulteta u Zagrebu & Visoka škola za menadžment u turizmu i informatici u Virovitici, Zagreb & Virovitica 2014, pp. 47–67.

[13] Tuning project, Introduction to the Harmonization of Educational Structures in Europe project, 2006. Available at: https://dokumen.tips/documents/uskalidivanje-obrazovnih-struktura-u-europi.html?page=1

The processes of upbringing and education are challenging tasks that require a lot of effort, understanding and guidance, and the competences of educators and teachers necessarily overlap, that is, they are connected. Every competent educator and teacher, that is, a reflective practitioner, has at its center the child with his specific needs and possibilities. Therefore, as relevant participants in the educational process with their knowledge, skills and attitudes, they focus on the whole child, emphasizing the student as an individual. Necessary competencies of educators for working with children with developmental disabilities are as follows: understanding of the child's social and emotional development, understanding of individual differences in the learning process, knowledge of techniques for quality leadership of an educational group, communication skills, knowledge of the specifics of certain developmental disabilities and difficulties in children's social integration, knowledge of the didactic-methodical approach and planning of the adapted curriculum, as well as adequate means and aids, including information technology, as well as the readiness of educators for teamwork and cooperation, etc.[14] The educator's ability to ensure routine, structure and predictability, to adjust his voice and speech with a look, touch or hug, to assess the optimal time for activities in educational work with children with disabilities, and to cooperate with parents and other experts is extremely important. The approach to the child should be friendly and radiate openness, honesty, and enthusiasm, encouraging motivation and self-esteem in a child with developmental disabilities. The socialization and development of social competences in such children is extremely important, which contributes to their confident inclusion in the community. Optimism and affinity for educational work with children with developmental disabilities, along with lifelong learning and permanent professional development, enable the creation of trust between the educator, the child and his family, which has a positive effect on meeting the child's needs.

Turning to the necessary competencies of teachers, according to the National Framework Curriculum for preschool education and general compulsory and secondary education,[15] the competencies of teachers for working with children with developmental disabilities are: knowledge of the basic knowledge and skills

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[14] D. Bouillet, *Izazovi integrativnog odgoja i obrazovanja*, Školska knjiga, Zagreb 2010.

[15] National framework curriculum for preschool education and general compulsory and secondary education, Ministry of Science, Education and Sports, Zagreb, 2011. Available at: http://mzos.hr/datoteke/Nacionalni_okvirni_kurikulum.pdf

required for working with children with developmental disabilities, knowledge of different teaching strategies and creativity, empathy, motivation, positive attitude, permanent professional development and practicing teamwork. Similar to a teacher in a preschool institution, a teacher should create a positive school atmosphere that will enable respect, appreciation and safety of children with developmental disabilities with the application of adequate work methods. The importance of social competence means emotional support for the child in the process of inclusion and successful response to social demands in accordance with specific possibilities.

The contribution of professional associates is based on professional competencies built through initial education and subsequent professional development, which, together with informal influences, lead to the professional development of professional associates during their entire working life. The competences of the educational rehabilitator are reflected in providing support to teachers in planning and evaluating the individualized curriculum of students with intellectual disabilities, learning difficulties, autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, motor disorders, visual impairment, and multiple disabilities, as well as conducting an expert assessment of the level and quality of student functioning. with developmental disabilities with the preparation of opinions and expert findings (Guidelines for working with students with disabilities[16]). A speech therapist, who is competent to assess difficulties using clinical measuring instruments, provides support to children in the domain of communication disorders, language and speech disorders, voice disorders, disorders of written language and mathematical abilities, specific learning difficulties and hearing impairment. A competent pedagogue is the most widely profiled expert who assesses the educational needs of children with various types and forms of disabilities by analyzing pedagogical documentation with the aim of finding adequate methodical and didactic solutions and monitors the professional development of educators and teachers related to working with children with developmental disabilities. The psychologist's competencies are reflected in the use of psychodiagnostic tools and techniques to assess the psychomotor, cognitive, and socioemotional development and adaptive behavior of students. He is also trained to provide support to children, students, educators, teachers, and

[16] Guidelines for working with students with disabilities, Ministry of Science and Education, 2021. Available at: https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/Smjernice%20za%20rad%20s%20ucenicima%20s%20teskocama.pdf

parents using different strategies and techniques with the aim of encouraging the development of self-regulation of thinking, emotions, motivation and behavior of children and students. The competences of the social pedagogue are manifested in encouraging the positive development of students, helping in cases of risky behavior and implementing and evaluating the needs for implementing individual and group interventions with children and students.[17]

The competence profile of an ideal pedagogue, which can be applied to other professional associates, includes the following key competences: personal (sincerity, diligence, consistency, accessibility, communicative), developmental (rationality and innovation in organizing the educational process and use of technology), professional (understanding the principles of the organization of the educational process and quality planning of educational work), interpersonal (participation in conflict resolution and acting in accordance with interpersonal relations), and action (creating conditions and removing obstacles in educational work and coordinating the work of the entire professional staff of the institution).[18]

Thus, together with educators and teachers, competent professional associates enable children and students to develop harmoniously, considering the difficulties they have. In addition to professional competences, personal competences that include sensitivity, love for children, optimism, etc. stand out. These enable quality educational work and adequate support for children and students with developmental disabilities to develop their personality in accordance with their own capabilities.

Meeting the individual needs of each child is a challenge in the educational system; therefore, it is relevant to act correctly in finding optimal conditions for the adequate development of each child and student, which will help them in their social inclusion in the everyday life of the community. The aim of the observation is to get to know the child with developmental disabilities as best as possible through the recognition of his potential, abilities, and limitations to enable the child's optimal development and inclusion in the community

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17 Guidelines for working with students with disabilities, Ministry of Science and Education, 2021. Available at: https://mzo.gov.hr/UserDocsImages/dokumenti/Obrazovanje/Smjernice%20za%20rad%20s%20ucenicima%20s%20teskocama.pdf

18 J. Ledić, Staničić, M. Turk, *Kompetencije školskih pedagoga*, Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci, Rijeka 2013, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/267471019_Kompetencije_skolskih_pedagoga (13.07.2023).

through an individualized approach modeled through an individualized educational program.[19]

According to Bouillet,[20] various elements are used to achieve the desired quality in educational work with children and students with developmental disabilities, namely, the selection of educational content and the achievement and verification of learning results, the use of visual didactic tools (photos, drawings, symbols, visual presentations, etc.) and auditory didactic tools (conversations, audio books, picture books, software that converts text into words, etc.), the use of kinesthetic didactic methods (touching objects, pictures, objects, models, frequent movements, etc.) and different forms of expression (art, drama, music), with competent educational workers as primary creators and bearers of the educational process.

3. Research methodology

Inclusion is not always possible within regular educational groups or classes, given the severity and complexity of developmental difficulties that individual children and students have. Therefore, it is necessary to include them in the process of inclusion within special educational institutions. All children have the right to education and integral development, so children with developmental disabilities should not be neglected, but their specific needs must be met within their individual capabilities and the personality of each child should be respected by respecting diversity.

3.1. The aim of the research

The goal of the research is to identify and analyze the programmatic, organizational and personnel assumptions of inclusion in special educational institutions, as well as their cooperation with key external stakeholders, in order to examine the adequacy of the inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities in upbringing, education and the social environment. i.e. community life.

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19 S. Zrilić, *Uloga pedagoga u integriranom odgoju i obrazovanju*, “Magistra Iadertina” 7 (2012) no. 1, pp. 89–100, https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/147094 (16.07.2023).

20 D. Bouillet, *Inkluzivno obrazovanje, odabrane teme*, Učiteljski fakultet, Zagreb 2019.

3.2. Research tasks

Based on the aforementioned goal, using the semi-structured interview method conducted with educators, educational rehabilitators-educators, teachers and professional associates in special educational institutions, 4 research tasks were set:

(1) identify program assumptions for the inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities,
(2) identify the organizational assumptions for the inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities,
(3) analyze the personnel assumptions for the inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities,
(4) analyze the models and ways of cooperation of special educational institutions with external stakeholders with the aim of implementing the inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities.

3.3. Research method and instrument

Regarding the goal and tasks of the research, a qualitative method of interviewing was used in data collection using a semi-structured interview instrument created exclusively for the purposes of this research. Conducting a semi-structured interview was chosen as the best and most appropriate methodological scientific approach to collecting relevant information, as it allows a detailed and in-depth insight into the research topic. It is a targeted conversation in which the examiner, in addition to obtaining basic information related to the research tasks, encourages respondents to express their opinions and feelings about a certain topic while maintaining flexibility in the conversation, achieving completeness of data with the possibility of clarifying questions and asking sub-questions.

The semi-structured interview included the following 4 thematic categories: program assumptions of inclusion, organizational assumptions of inclusion, personnel assumptions of inclusion and cooperation with external stakeholders in the inclusion process. According to the mentioned categories, there were specially grouped questions for programmatic and organizational assumptions of inclusion for educators, educational rehabilitators-educators and teachers on the one hand, and for professional associates (pedagogue, psychologist, speech therapist) on the other hand, considering the specifics of their jobs. For the categories of personnel assumptions of inclusion and cooperation with external stakeholders in the inclusion process, the questions were the same for all respondents.

3.4. Participants and research location

In the research, a non-probabilistic purposive sample was used by selecting participants with the required characteristics. Part of the population of employees of two special educational institutions was targeted, taking into account the spectrum of different jobs of experts engaged in working with children with developmental disabilities. The sample consisted of 3 teachers, 3 educational rehabilitators-educators, a psychologist and a speech therapist at the Latica Kindergarten and 6 teachers, pedagogues and speech therapists at the Voštarnica Elementary School. There were a total of 16 interviewees, that is, 8 interlocutors from each special educational institution: 6 educators and 2 members of the kindergarten/school professional team.

Latica Kindergarten and Voštarnica Elementary School in Zadar are the only special educational institutions that provide specialized professional help and support to children with developmental disabilities in Zadar County, in the Republic of Croatia. Latica Kindergarten[21] implements special educational and rehabilitation programs in accordance with the needs, type and degree of difficulty of the child, with the application of appropriate methods for children of early and preschool age with developmental difficulties, and encourages inclusion and participates in its realization. The mission is to carry out daily activities while ensuring the conditions for a quality life of a child with developmental disabilities in the environment of their community. The vision is to ensure the conditions for encouraging communication, social, emotional, intellectual and physical development, i.e. providing professional support to children with developmental disabilities and their families for inclusion in the regular environment, new forms of learning and appropriate forms of schooling, and the Inclusive educational- rehabilitation support program. Voštarnica Elementary School[22] provides primary school education for students with severe developmental disabilities, where the educational work is based on special curricula and programs, adapted to the individual needs and abilities of students, who strive to acquire permanent and applicable knowledge and competencies

[21] *Latica*, https://www.dv-latica.hr/o-nama.html
[22] *Voštarnica Elementary School*, http://www.os-vostarnica-zd.skole.hr

necessary for life. By carrying out this qualitative research in the mentioned special educational institutions, the adequacy of the involvement of children and students with developmental difficulties in educational processes and the life of the social community at the level of Zadar County, within the Republic of Croatia, is detected.

3.5. Method of research implementation

The research was conducted in May 2022 live with the respondents. The average duration of the interview was 35 minutes. With the prior oral consent and consent of the respondents, an audio recording was used during the semi-structured interview with guaranteed anonymity of each respondent in compliance with all ethical principles and rules for the purpose of data protection in accordance with the ethical standards of qualitative research. This made it possible to process the obtained data through 3 basic steps of qualitative analysis: categorization-reduction-arrangement.

4. Results and discussion

The research revealed different assumptions, forms of implementation, as well as the opinions of respondents about the inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities in special educational institutions. The interlocutors generally emphasized a positive attitude towards inclusion, referring to the acceptance of diversity, empathy, tolerance of society and equality in all areas of society (extracurricular activities, free time, etc.). They pointed out that inclusion implies the inclusion of children with disabilities in the social community from preschool age, which is relevant for strengthening social competences and lifelong learning, meeting individual needs and enabling the optimal development of children's potential. At the same time, children and people of "typical" development learn about diversity by developing awareness towards "different" people and respecting human individuality. Thus, the inclusion model stimulates the development of the entire community by giving each of its members an important role and by being respected. This emphasizes that diversity between individuals, which manifests itself in the variety of individual strengths, abilities and needs, is socially natural and desirable. Satisfaction with one's life and acceptance by the people we are surrounded by are key elements necessary for quality of life.[23]

In the continuation of the paper, the results of the research are presented, structured according to the research tasks and coordinated with the thematic categories according to which the interview was conducted.

Table 1. Program assumptions of inclusion

LATICA KINDERGARTEN	VOŠTARNICA PRIMARY SCHOOL
educational-rehabilitation program in the group (special programs), IERP (Inclusive educational-rehabilitation support program),[24] program of regular educational groups	special programs: program for students with mild intellectual disability, moderate and severe intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder (with individualized procedures in the classroom and for acquiring competences in activities of daily life and work with individualized procedures in the educational group)
9 educational-rehabilitation groups (special groups) of 3–5 children each and 3 regular educational groups of 16 children each, 57 children included in IERP	2 combined classes (6 and 3 students), 26 educational groups (13 with students who have moderate, severe and severe intellectual disabilities and 13 with students who have an autism spectrum disorder), 1 PSP (Extended professional procedure)[25]

In addition to the data shown in Table 1, the research showed the existence of a wide range of difficulties for children who attend the mentioned educational institutions, as well as a tendency for a significant increase in disorders from the autism spectrum. The respondents expressed their satisfaction and positive opinion about the *program assumptions of inclusion* within the special institutions where they are employed, emphasizing the adequacy of the program, the importance of group activities, the development of socialization, the education of students for auxiliary occupations, the acquisition of competences in the activities of everyday life. All interlocutors actively participate in the development of the Curriculum and Work Plan and Program of the Latica Kindergarten,

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23 J. Cvetko, M. Gudelj, L. Hrgovan, *Inkluzija*, "Diskrepancija" 1 (2000) no. 1, pp. 24–28, https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/32356 (18.07.2023).

24 Children attend regular kindergartens, but come to the Latica Kindergarten for separate therapies (rehabilitation treatments).

25 According to the State Pedagogical Standard of the Elementary School Education System (Available at: https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2008_06_63_2129.htm), extended professional procedure as a professional assistance program for students with special educational needs includes help in mastering educational content and rehabilitation programs, i.e. health procedures and treatments for children with developmental disabilities.

as well as the School Curriculum and the Outline and Implementation Curriculum for the educational group/class department based on the prescribed Curriculum and Programs at Voštarnica Elementary School. They participate in designing daily activities for each child as well as weekly, monthly and annual work plans and programs, and emphasize the relevance of an individualized approach to each child because with adaptation to the child's individual needs and capabilities, he will show his maximum (through a sense of achievement, satisfaction in work, encouraging self-confidence and motivation). However, they note that the Voštarnica Elementary School lacks a basic program for students with severe and multiple disabilities to adequately approach them inclusively in educational work. Thus, they have developed an awareness of the importance of adequate inclusive action towards all children and students, regardless of what and how complex the difficulty in development is. In this way, they show personal sensitivity and affinity towards educational work with students with difficulties, which, as we emphasized in the theoretical part, are some of the basic assumptions of quality work with this group of children and students.

According to the State Pedagogical Standard of Preschool Education,[26] work programs for children with disabilities are conducted with children aged six months until starting school, by including children in educational groups with a regular program, educational groups with a special program or in special institutes. According to the National Pedagogical Standard of the Primary School Education System,[27] special educational institutions work according to special curricula and are organized for compulsory primary schooling of children with disabilities and may have a smaller number of classes, i.e. they may organize combined class departments. Based on the data presented in Table 1 and those presented in the following analysis, we can conclude that the work of the Latica Kindergarten, as well as the Voštarnica Elementary School, complies with the legal standards related to the basic program organization of work prescribed at the national level.

Continuing on the program assumptions of inclusion, *organizational assumptions of inclusion* include specific roles and tasks of educational workers, material equipment of special educational institutions, didactic materials, methods, and forms of work. The contribution of the members of the institution's professional

26 State Pedagogical Standard of Preschool Education, Narodne novine 2128, Zagreb, 2008, https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2008_06_63_2128.html

27 State Pedagogical Standard of the Primary School Education System, Narodne novine 2129, Zagreb, 2008, https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2008_06_63_2129.htm

team is indispensable. Research has shown that the psychologist's role is manifested in observation when enrolling a child in kindergarten, monitoring the child's psychophysical development, helping educators and advising parents. The role of the speech therapist is reflected in the observation and follow-up of the child with difficulties, preparation and reporting to the educator about the child's speech-language and communication difficulties, finding adequate ways of the child's communication in the immediate and wider social community (due to incorrect pronunciation, difficult communication or lack of speech at all), providing professional support, counseling and participate in the creation of Individual educational programs. The pedagogue has the role of supporting teachers and students, individual work with students, systematic observation of work in educational groups, participation in planning and organization of activities, communication with parents, cooperation with other institutions. All professional associates emphasized the importance of conducting workshops with parents, which also act as support groups. They noted that the workshops were limited in one period due to the pandemic working conditions. Concrete examples of workshops are: How to read stories to children?, How to encourage the development of speech and graphomotor skills?, UNICEF's Let's grow together program, Workshop on emotions, and Conflicts in friendship. Speech therapy workshops are intended to familiarize parents with children's speech and language development, the use of games to encourage the development of pre-skills in reading and writing using a digital speech therapy exercise book. As the basic obstacles in educational work, the interviewees pointed out work with parents, in some cases. Namely, there are parents who have a hard time coping with the difficulty of their child and who give up very quickly, etc. The next difficulty is the lack of time to implement everything that is considered useful and not only necessary.

The interlocutors emphasized their general satisfaction with the material equipment of special educational institutions with the aim of meeting the child's needs. In addition to the above, they show a marked aspiration towards permanently better and higher quality material equipment through the effort to follow trends and modern standards of appropriate material equipment of specific institutions. In their work, for example, they use adapted assistive technology, an interactive wall, means for assisted communication, a sensory room (equipped with a diffuser with essential oils, different lamps, etc. with the aim of relaxing or achieving the necessary sensory stimulus), a kinesiotherapy hall, as well as an outdoor playground (equipped with various devices for various purposes, polygons, etc.). They also emphasized their satisfaction with the specific didactic tools and aids available and their quality. Specialized audiovisual and manipulative didactic tools and aids, specific applications on a computer, tablet or smart board, certain materials of the Montessori program, wooden inserts, puzzles, toys that simulate the operation of household appliances and devices (e.g. mixer and coffee machine, mini kitchen, etc.), picture books, sports props, musical props, sound communicators, social cards, sound balls, balls and balance aids and coordination of movements, with tactile discs, sleeping bags, different mirrors for monitoring facial motility, balls of different sizes, weights and structures, etc. Educators, educational rehabilitators-educators and teachers themselves make additional materials from cardboard, crepe paper, wood, corks, Velcro, make sensory bottles, shapes for *Lego* blocks, number blocks, tactile letters, letters on tiles, small books, communication thumbnails, etc.

Table 2. Methods of working with children with developmental disabilities

TEACCH	organization of space intended for structured learning; room divided into different zones, e.g. small oval tables for individual work and a larger table for group activities, game corner, quiet corner, etc.
Marte Meo	carrying out unstructured activities through free children's play with the intention of supporting children's initiatives and wishes
Floortime	intended for children with autism; acquiring new skills on the ground in order to communicate with the child at his level
ABA method	application of behavior analysis, intended for learning new skills (can be broken down into simpler steps, and can also be used in group work with adjustments); application in the case of crisis situations with expressed undesirable forms of behavior with the aim of suppressing them
PECS	communication through images; communication books; for "non-verbal" children

The results of the research showed that the methods of educational work are adapted to the individual needs of each child. Their selection is based on educational recommendations resulting from professional observation and set goals, depending on the type and degree of difficulties, but also on further assessment of the student's abilities, needs and interests of the specific child, his age, behavior, results of interviews with parents, etc. The basic methods used in working with children with developmental disabilities are shown in Table 2. Individual work is represented here, although, whenever possible, the child tries to be included in group work in order to additionally work on the development of his social skills. Given the fact that special institutions use different teaching strategies for children and students with developmental disabilities compared to those in regular classes, each child and student with developmental disabilities needs an individualized approach, so the selection of didactic methods and work tools is focused on helping specific children and students in successfully acquiring the necessary knowledge and abilities (Rađenović, Smiljanić, 2007). This means that the methods and means of work are continuously adjusted depending on the needs of the specific child. Consequently, didactic tools and aids must meet the tasks to fulfill the needs of children, and the criteria for procurement, determined by pedagogical standards at the preschool and elementary school levels, are: developmental appropriateness, durability, ease of use, technological modernity, adaptability to students with developmental disabilities, attractiveness etc. (State Pedagogical Standard of Preschool Education;[28] State Pedagogical Standard of Primary School System of Education[29]). The results of the presented research showed that the standards of quality work in this matter were satisfied, as well as the effort of their permanent modernization.

Regarding the *personnel assumptions of inclusion*, the research showed that the educational staff places great emphasis on the importance of lifelong learning, permanent and professional development, exchange of examples of good practice and the importance of work experience, professional reflection, group support, supervision, education, workshops, seminars, webinars and learning through direct work with children and students. We must bear in mind that each new generation of children brings with it novelties, as well as the need for new work methods, which requires permanent professional development of professional staff in accordance with changes in science, but also the wider social and material context. The interlocutors pointed out that conferences, county expert councils, congresses, expert symposia, etc. contribute to the improvement of their competences. and to attend at least two to a maximum of ten different forms of professional training per year. During the pandemic, trainings took place in an online environment (webinars) via the *Zoom* application and similar. In the Latica Kindergarten, part of the respondents expressed the disadvantage of holding workshops and educations in an online environment due to the pandemic working conditions, while in the Voštarnica Elementary School, all the respondents expressed satisfaction with the educations conducted online,

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28 State Pedagogical Standard of Preschool Education, Narodne novine 2128, Zagreb, 2008, https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2008_06_63_2128.html

29 Državni pedagoški standard osnovnoškolskog sustava odgoja i obrazovanja, *Narodne novine* 2129, Zagreb, 2008, https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2008_06_63_2129.htm

emphasizing their better accessibility precisely because of the online way of their implementation. The respondents emphasized the extreme importance of teamwork and cooperation between professional associates (pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists) and educators/educational rehabilitators-educators/teachers due to consistency in educational work, common motivation, coordinated work on set goals and sharing experiences of good practice. In addition to formal and non-formal learning, the significance and contribution of informal forms of learning, as well as the importance of teamwork and cooperation, were highlighted. At the same time, the professional role of the pedagogue who provides support, gives advice and proposes solutions for specific situations was highlighted. The interviewees emphasized that through mutual communication and exchange of information in cooperation with experts of various profiles (including, in addition to the previously mentioned professional associates, also physiotherapists, health managers, nurses, kinesitherapists, etc.), it is possible to solve specific problems they encounter in their work (health, emotional, behavioral problems) and at the same time be additional support for children and parents. In making decisions at joint meetings, an interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary approach is emphasized. Testimonies of the respondents testify to the understanding of the basic idea and significance of the mentioned approaches, intensive mutual cooperation, high-quality implementation of teamwork, as well as adequate permanent professional development of the employees of the special institutions where the research was conducted. In support of this, the respondents, based on their experiences and opinions, highlighted the main elements of quality communication listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Elements of quality communication

• openness	• ability to listen	• understanding
• confidence	• constructive criticism	• joint decision-making
• flexibility	• two-way communication (dialogue)	• recognition of competence
• accepting other people's opinion	• respect	• professional reflection
• non-verbal forms of communication	• consideration	• good interpersonal relations
• tolerance	• positive attitude	• communication skills
• psychological safety of expressing opinions	• teamwork	• putting the child and parents in focus

Voštarnica Elementary School has a Quality and School Culture Team that holds communication workshops and various forms of teambuilding. Considering the increase in the number of children with developmental disabilities, the results of the research showed the need to employ more specialists in the Voštarnica Elementary School, mainly speech therapists, kinesitherapists, psychologists, and teachers-educational rehabilitators. In their absence, some teachers are employed as non-professional substitutes. In Latica Kindergarten, a part of the respondents, including the pedagogue, share the opinion about the necessity of additional employment of educational rehabilitators, physiotherapists, nurses, speech therapists, and psychologists, given the lack of such a professional profile in the said institution. Permanent learning is a new educational task articulated through a system of lifelong learning and in various forms of social cooperation, for example, between students and teachers, children and educators, and with each other and professional associates.[30] The results of the conducted research showed that employees within the examined special educational institutions are not only aware of this but also often and willingly participate in various forms of specialized training permanently aimed at improving existing and building new general and specific competencies, therefore, aimed at permanent professional employee development.

Regarding the *cooperation of special educational institutions with key external stakeholders with the aim of implementing educational inclusion*, the interviewees emphasized the general importance of such forms of cooperation due to the sensitization, empathy and tolerance of the public for children and students with developmental disabilities. In inclusive interaction, members of the narrow and wider public also expand their experiences and potentials, acquire new knowledge and develop new practical skills in relation to children/students with developmental disabilities, their parents and employees of special educational institutions. The interviewees emphasized the importance of cooperation with regular kindergartens and primary and secondary schools, the positive contribution of visits to cultural institutions (museums, the Zadar Puppet Theater, libraries, etc.) and public and economic institutions of the city of Zadar (e.g., fire brigades, Čistoća Zadar, etc.).

Within the framework of the analysis of the models and methods of cooperation of special educational institutions with key external stakeholders with the

[30] V. Previšić, *Pedagogija: prema cjeloživotnom obrazovanju i društvu znanja*, "Pedagogijska istraživanja" 4 (2007) no. 2, pp. 179–186, https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/174880 (30.07.2023).

aim of implementing the inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities, the interviewees particularly emphasized the importance of cooperation with parents as the basis of quality work, presenting the types and forms of said cooperation (Table 4).

Table 4. Types and forms of cooperation between educational staff and parents

COOPERATION WITH PARENTS	
TYPES OF COOPERATION	**FORMS OF COOPERATION**
• professional support through partnership with parents • advisory and educational cooperation • informal cooperation	• direct communication (in and outside the institution) and technologically mediated communication (telephone conversations, communication via social networks, e.g. Viber, WhatsApp): daily communication due to the consistency of work on new knowledge, skills and common development goals for the child • cooperation in institutions (permanent or occasional, according to needs): individual interviews, educational workshops, parent meetings, interviews, professional lectures, etc. • cooperation outside institutions (occasional): e.g. joint half-day trips, participation in various events, etc.

The interviewees especially emphasized that their work becomes the most difficult and demanding when parents do not accept their child's difficulties, which prevents quality cooperation as well as the child's optimal progress. Fortunately, these situations are relatively rare in practice, and quality partnership is most often achieved in working with parents. The relations between parents and employees of an educational institution are determined through mutual interaction in the institution and outside it (including the family home) with the aim of achieving the well-being of the child in his development, with the division of responsibilities and the provision of professional support and assistance. The aforementioned relationships also imply cooperation with the child's narrower and wider social and material environment.

Any quality relationship that includes the triad: family—educational institution—local community, is characterized by mutual help, good interpersonal relations and quality communication, respect for ethical values etc.,[31] and the

[31] M. Ljubetić, *Od suradnje do partnerstva obitelji, odgojno obrazovne ustanove i zajednice*, Element d.o.o., Zagreb 2014.

local community encourages cooperation on regional, national and international projects.[32] The results of the research showed that children and students with developmental disabilities participate in various events (Zadar flower, Zadar reads, Masquerade, Valentine's Day, Days of Bread, exhibitions in the Zadar Science Library), art and drama activities, creative and dance workshops in the Duke's Palace. There are also joint cooking activities in collaboration with other schools, trips to the market, shops, pharmacies, ponyland, etc. Cooperation with Čistoća Zadar in the project of collecting corks for the procurement of medicines for people suffering from leukemia is being realized. Children with developmental disabilities participate in sports activities at the national level (e.g. sports games in Poreč), as well as in the international race World Run, which has been held continuously once a year in the city of Zadar since 2014. They are also engaged in various workshops, activities and exhibitions organized for the holidays, reading stories in the Zadar City Library together with children and employees of all other kindergartens in the city of Zadar. The pandemic period was no exception, as children with disabilities were involved in various joint activities organized online, such as reading fairy tales, virtual exhibitions, etc.

Table 5. Examples of cooperation between special educational institutions and the local community

COOPERATION WITH THE LOCAL COMMUNITY (AT THE CITY AND COUNTY LEVEL)
Examples of cooperation: • Kindergarten birthday celebration • participation in the Day of extracurricular activities in the center of the old town (Kalelarga) • decorating the Christmas tree in the Zadar City Administration • awarding of awards/medals from sporting events in Zadar County or in the City Theater (HNK—Croatian National Theatre) • arrangement of a sensory park suitable for children with developmental disabilities in the Vruljica city park (Inclusive Play project) • etc.

The interviewees emphasized the importance of cooperation with the City of Zadar and Zadar County, citing examples of specific activities (Table 5), but also emphasizing their indispensable financial contribution to the work, which

[32] L. Štefulj, B. Kušević, *Suradnja obitelji, škole i lokalne zajednice – pedagozi u double bindu*, "Školski vjesnik" 70 (2021) no. 1, pp. 399–413, https://doi.org/10.38003/sv.70.1.14, https://hrcak.srce.hr/file/382374 (28.07.2023).

is manifested through the provision of material support through the financing of certain educations, extracurricular activities, participation of employees in project activities, etc. In addition to the above, the research showed the involvement of special educational institutions in various projects at the national and higher levels. The Inclusive Play project is part of the Interreg—IPA CBC project, which is characterized by cross-border cooperation with the neighboring countries of the Republic of Montenegro and the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Latica Kindergarten participated in the mentioned project, which was also involved in the Water project. Voštarnica Elementary School participated in a number of projects, such as: the ASIQ project to improve the availability and accessibility of health and social services (assistive technology, sensors); the ATTEND project, which enabled the acquisition of communicators for children; the S factor project in cooperation with schools from the neighboring countries of Slovenia, Hungary and Austria, as well as countries from Scandinavia, where they received the award for the best inclusive video; the LiDraNo project (within the manifestations of literary, dramatic and journalistic creativity for primary and secondary school students, which are held throughout the Republic of Croatia at the city/municipal, county and state level); STEAM project; INKAZ in Zagreb (meeting of cultural and artistic groups with developmental disabilities). In addition to the mentioned projects, they also took part in sports events, the Student Cooperative and the cooking project at the national level. All of the above shows the extremely active engagement of children from the Latica Kindergarten and the students of the Voštarnica Elementary School from Zadar, as well as their employees, in various and numerous activities, primarily at the local city and county level, but also at the national, regional and even international levels., all with the aim of active and immediate inclusion of children and students with developmental disabilities, their parents and employees of special educational institutions in the life of the wider social community, i.e. creating a common inclusive environment.

5. Conclusions

The cooperation of professional associates with educators and teachers provides complete support for children with developmental disabilities. The cooperation of educators and teachers with pedagogues, social pedagogues, psychologists, speech therapists and educational rehabilitators enables the complete development of each child in the educational group, as well as students in the classroom. Inclusion in a broader sense is considered to be the relationship between an individual and society and vice versa, and this type of inclusion can be called social inclusion. There are three interdependent dimensions of social inclusion: spatial (disappearance of social and economic distance), relational (feeling of belonging and acceptance, desire to participate and perform useful social roles, which includes reciprocity in treatment and positive social interactions) and functional (increasing opportunities, abilities, competence). The results of the research showed the respondents' satisfaction with the program assumptions of the implementation of inclusion within special institutions whose employees, emphasizing their adequacy, personal engagement in the creation of specific curricula, and showing personal sensitivity and affinity towards educational work with the population of children and students with pronounced developmental difficulties. In addition to the above, the research showed that within special institutions, the legal standards prescribed at the national level, which touch on the program assumptions for the realization of inclusion, are respected. The basic elements of the organizational assumptions for the implementation of quality educational inclusion are the individual approach in specific methods and ways of working adapted to the needs of each individual child, based on the results of professionally conducted observations. The methods and means of work are continuously adjusted depending on the needs of the specific child, and the work is carried out in adequately equipped spaces adapted to the needs of children with different forms and types of developmental difficulties, with an emphasized tendency towards their permanent modernization. The respondents emphasize the importance of lifelong permanent professional development for quality work performance and participate in at least 2 to 10 different forms of professional development per year. Teamwork and cooperation between professional associates and educators, along with an emphasized inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary approach, are extremely important in the implementation of educational inclusion. The results of the research show a satisfactory level of satisfaction of the personnel assumptions for the implementation of inclusion, with the need for additional employment of experts of various profiles to work with children with developmental disabilities. Identified forms of cooperation of special educational institutions, their wards and employees, including parents of children and students with developmental disabilities, with external stakeholders with the aim of achieving quality educational inclusion through its diversity, temporal dynamics and crossing local levels up to the national level, including international ones, primarily show the respondents' developed awareness of the value and necessity of the mentioned forms of cooperation due to sensitization, empathy and the achievement of public tolerance, as well as the active involvement of special employees of educational constitutions in the life of the narrow and wider social community.

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Students' spiritual resources and their emotional, social and cognitive functioning

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Abstract

The concept of spirituality is understood in modern society in many different ways. Therefore, the study of its connection with other spheres of human functioning can be complicated. However, when a holistic understanding of spirituality is taken as the starting point, it is assumed that it has connections with other spheres of human life. The first part of the article is a short collection of definitions of spirituality and definitions of emotional, social and cognitive functioning. In the second part of the article, research on a group of 38 students of pedagogy was described. The results of the research showed the relationships between spiritual and emotional, social and cognitive functioning. The research was carried out using the diagnostic survey method with the use of questionnaires. They allowed us to see in a new way how complex the mutual relations between various spheres of human life are. They also made it possible to see that every person, regardless of their personality traits, has the possibility of spiritual development.

Keywords

spirituality, emotional functioning, social functioning, cognitive functioning, spiritual development

1. Introduction

In contemporary society, the concept of spirituality is understood in many different ways. Undoubtedly, its understanding affects the way in which a person's spiritual resources are defined. Generally, the definition that will be adopted in this article treats spirituality in a holistic way, i.e., as encompassing the entirety of a person's physical and psychological life. Only such understanding of spirituality allows us to assume that there are links between a person's life, spiritual resources, and functioning in the emotional, social and cognitive spheres. In the first part of this article, a range of definitions of spirituality and its resources as well as definitions of selected aspects of emotional, social and cognitive functioning will be briefly presented in the context of selected tools used in exploring these spheres. In the second part, the results of the study of the relationships between the students' sphere of spiritual resources and their emotional, social and cognitive functioning will be described.

2. Spirituality and its understanding

In psychology, spirituality is understood in different ways. Sometimes, it is defined as the area in human existence where the ordinary, the everyday and the material meet with values and the sacred.[1] Magdalena Kapała quotes Bill Jernigan's definition of spirituality in which it is treated as a construct that is centred around patterns of values, senses and relationships that make life valuable and death meaningful. According to Don Elkins, who is also mentioned by Kapała, spirituality is linked to a way of being that stems from a person's awareness of the transcendent dimension which is linked to values and references to the Absolute. Maria Straś-Romanowska defines spirituality as the acceptance of universal and timeless values that give meaning to human life and the implementation of these values in a person's life.[2] Glennon Doyle, Ian Mitroff, Michael Denton and Ivan Goldberg argue that spirituality is related to the search for existential meaning

1 M. Kapała, *Duchowość jako niedoceniany aspekt psyche. Propozycja nowego ujęcia duchowości w psychologii – kategoria wrażliwości duchowej*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska. Sectio J" 30 (2017) no. 1, pp. 7–37.

2 M. Straś-Romanowska, *Rozwój człowieka a rozwój osobowy*, "Studia Psychologica" 3 (2002), pp. 91–104.

and universal truths.[3] Marek Jarosz observes that the concept of spirituality, which has developed in modernity, is a construct that challenges the institutional dimension of religion.[4] He also describes two ways of understanding spirituality: either as superior or subordinate to religiosity. Both Marek Jarosz and Wojciech Zyzak advocate a holistic understanding of spirituality,[5] which is based on an integral anthropology in which a person is treated as a spiritual and corporeal unity.

Spirituality is perceived in a similar way by Wiesław Matys and Rafał Bartczuk, the authors of the *Scale of Bonds with God* [Skala Więzi z Bogiem].[6] They have used the conceptualisation of religiosity in terms of attachment theory created by John Bowlby as the theoretical basis of their scale and included the following bonding components in it:

1. The tendency to maintain close contact with the object of attachment.
2. Using the object of attachment as a safe haven in times of illness, danger, etc.
3. Treating the object of attachment as a secure base for trusting exploration of the environment.

Using this understanding of attachment in their scale, they identified two poles for understanding spirituality in the context of a person's relationship with God: trust and anxiety.

In his *Inventory of Emotions Towards God*, Stefan Huber recognises several dimensions related to religiosity, which he treats as a manifestation of a person's spiritual life.[7] These dimensions are: intellect, ideology, public practice, private practice, and experience. Studying emotions towards God—which can be both positive and negative emotions, such as anger, fear and guilt—is linked to analyses of how a person experiences God.

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3 M. Kapała, *Duchowość jako niedoceniany aspekt psyche*, pp. 7–37.

4 M. Jarosz, *Pojęcie duchowości w psychologii*, w: *Studia z psychologii w KUL*, vol. 16, eds. O. Gorbaniuk, B. Kostrubiec-Wojtachnio, Wydawnictwo KUL, Lublin 2010, pp. 9–22.

5 W. Zyzak, *Zdrowie człowieka w kontekście chrześcijańskiej duchowości holistycznej*, "Psychoonkologia" 22 (2018) no. 1, pp. 34–40.

6 W. Matys, R. P. Bartczuk, *Kwestionariusz Więzi z Bogiem*, in: M. Jarosz, *Psychologiczny pomiar religijności*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 2011, pp. 131–151.

7 B. Zarzycka, M. Jarosz, R. Bartczuk, *Polska adaptacja Skali Emocji względem Boga S. Hubera*, in: M. Jarosz, *Psychologiczny pomiar religijności*, pp. 264–291.

Dirk Hutsebaut attempts to approach spirituality more broadly in the context of a person's relationship with God.[8] He has developed the *Scale of Religious Relationships*, which contains the following subscales: dependence, autonomy, rebelliousness, identification, co-humanitarianism, an ethical norm, acceptance of beliefs, centrality of religion and a fear of uncertainty.

Such a holistic understanding of spirituality affects people's functioning, including in their emotional, social and cognitive spheres.

3. The emotional, social and cognitive spheres in a person's functioning

One of the ways in which the development of a person's emotional sphere can be described is to understand it in terms of emotional intelligence. Anna Matczak and Aleksandra Jaworowska define emotional intelligence as a set of abilities that allow a person to use emotions in solving problems, especially those that arise in social situations.[9] Emotional intelligence consists of a set of abilities that help to process emotional information. Daniel Goleman lists the following manifestations of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, which determines a person's knowledge of their sensations, preferences and abilities; self-regulation, which means controlling one's emotions; motivating oneself to act through the constructive use of emotions; empathy, i.e., the ability to recognise other people's mental states and needs; and social skills related to arousing emotions in others.[10] Peter Salovey and John Mayer identify four groups of abilities that make up emotional intelligence[11]: the ability to perceive and express emotions, the ability to use emotions to facilitate thinking, the ability to understand and analyse emotions and the ability to control and regulate emotions.

The emotional sphere can also be described by means of a variable that is related to the level of anxiety. Charles Spielberger describes two types of anxiety: trait anxiety, which is linked to a person's personality, and state anxiety,

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[8] J. Śliwak, R. Bartczuk, *Skala relacji religijnych – Przeżywane Relacje do Boga D. Hutsebauta*, in: M. Jarosz, *Psychologiczny pomiar religijności*, pp. 171–200.

[9] A. Matczak, A. Jaworowska, *Kwestionariusz inteligencji emocjonalnej*, Pracownia testów Psychologicznych PTP, Warszawa 2008.

[10] D. Goleman, *Inteligencja emocjonalna*, trans. A. Jankowski, Media Rodzina, Poznań 1997, p. 358.

[11] A. Matczak, A. Jaworowska, *Kwestionariusz inteligencji emocjonalnej*.

which is connected with specific situations that affect a person.[12] The former type is more useful in studying the emotional sphere.

The social sphere and its development are very strongly related to the emotional sphere and emotional intelligence. According to Anna Matczak, social competence is a set of complex skills that impact a person's effectiveness in coping with certain types of social situations.[13] People acquire such skills through social training. Anna Matczak distinguishes three groups of social competences: those that affect the effectiveness of a person's behaviours in intimate situations; in situations of social exposure; and in situations which require assertiveness.

The spheres of emotional and social functioning are also linked to cognitive functioning, which can be understood in many ways. Cognitive functions include perception, concentration, memory, imagination, thinking and problem solving,[14] thus cognitive functioning can be characterised by a wide variety of diverse concepts. As the questionnaire used in the study described in this article contains questions regarding thinking, attention and concentration, only these cognitive functions will be defined below. According to the authors of the *d2-R Test*, concentration is the ability to respond to simple stimuli, which is measured by the speed of reaction and the number of errors.[15]

Thinking and creativity are also associated with cognitive development. In the *KANH Questionnaire*, creativity is defined as nonconformist thinking, i.e., such thinking that does not yield to social pressure, and heuristic thinking, i.e., thinking that is open and oriented to various solutions.[16] The opposite of creative thinking is algorithmic thinking, i.e., thinking that recognises only one algorithm of action, and conformist thinking, which involves adjusting one's views, values, and attitudes to match the expectations of the group.

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12 K. Wrześniewski, T. J. Sosnowski, D. Fecenec, *Inwentarz stanu i cechy lęku STAI. Polska adaptacja STAI*, Pracownia testów Psychologicznych PTP, Warszawa 2011.

13 A. Matczak, *Kwestionariusz kompetencji społecznych*, Pracownia Testów Psychologicznych PTP, Warszawa 2012.

14 T. Maruszewski, *Psychologia poznania*, GWP, Gdańsk 2011, pp. 17–24.

15 R. Brickenkamp, L. Schmidt-Atzert, D. Liepmann, *Zrewidowana wersja testu do badania uwagi i koncentracji*, Pracownia Testów Psychologicznych PTP, Warszawa 2020.

16 S. Popek, *Kwestionariusz twórczego zachowania KANH*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2010.

4. Spirituality and the emotional, social and cognitive spheres in selected studies

At the beginning, it should be noted that due to an increasing diversity of views and opinions in contemporary society, it seems impossible to speak about healthy or unhealthy spirituality. As the authors of social studies demonstrate, what is treated as unhealthy in one culture is sometimes fully accepted in another.[17] What is strange for one person is sometimes a normal expression of spiritual life for another.[18] Sometimes religious involvement is related to psychological development, and sometimes it may support behaviours that are not linked with development.[19]

A study whose respondents were 43 women who worked in the US army revealed that in very stressful situations, spiritual involvement acts as a mediating variable, leads to the reduction of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder[20] and allows a person to successfully cope with stress.[21] Although mere participation in rites has no such effect, being a member of a religious community and participating in its rites helps to recover from trauma.[22]

A study of 132 Americans demonstrated that a sense of meaning in life is a stronger predictor of mental health than spirituality or religiosity.[23] A study of 22 US female students has confirmed a positive impact of spiritual involvement

17 C. Wesley, *Some reflections on spirituality, religion and mental health*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 3 (2000) issue 1, pp. 1–12.

18 M. Elliott, J. C. Reuter, *Making space: spirituality and mental health*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 5 (2002) issue 2, pp. 143–162.

19 M. Elliott, J. C. Reuter, *Religion, spirituality, and mental illness among working professionals: an in-depth interview study*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 24 (2021) issue 9, pp. 931–947.

20 N. M. Richardson, A. L. Lamson, E. M. Sesemann, M. Lacks, *Religion in the face of trauma: active duty women and spiritual health*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 25 (2022) issue 3, pp. 332–344.

21 L. Upenieks, *Resilience in the aftermath of childhood abuse? Changes in religiosity and adulthood psychological distress*, "Journal of Religion and Health" 60 (2021) issue 4, pp. 2677–2701.

22 C. M. Westerfeld, B. R. Doolittle, *Spirituality of the traumatized child: A Call for Increased Faith Community Participation in the Trauma Healing Process for Children*, "Journal of Religion and Health" 61 (2022) issue 1, pp. 203–213.

23 E. Yoon, L. Cabirou, A. Hoepf, M. Knoll, *Interrelations of religiousness/spirituality, meaning in life, and mental health*, "Counselling Psychology Quarterly" 34 (2021) issue 2, pp. 219–234.

on a person's positive well-being and perception of their health.[24] A study of 250 Iranian outpatients has indicated that such involvement positively correlates with an overall love of life, which improves a person's health prognosis.[25] Also, a study on a sample of 4,562 Canadians with neurological conditions has shown that spiritual involvement significantly increases both life satisfaction and quality of life.[26]

The impact of spiritual involvement on health has been confirmed not only in the areas linked to mental health and general well-being. For example, a study conducted in the United States (618 respondents) revealed that spiritual involvement is also positively correlated with minimising the effects of stress on inflammation.[27]

It is not only spiritual involvement alone that is important for a person's health; the image of God a person believes in also matters.[28] A study of 1,426 Americans demonstrated that a belief in a merciful God negatively correlates with such psychiatric symptoms as general anxiety, social anxiety, paranoia, obsession and compulsion. A belief in a merciful, benevolent God is also associated with greater hope and life satisfaction, which has been confirmed by a study conducted on a group of 2,010 Americans.[29]

Summarising the results of previous studies, it can be said that there is a two-way relationship between the spiritual involvement variable and the variable that is related to mental and physical health. A person's spiritual involvement affects their health, and at the same time the state of a person's mental and

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[24] L. W. Nelms, D. Hutchins, R. J. Pursley, *Spirituality and the health of college students*, "Journal of Religion and Health" 46 (2006) issue 2, pp. 249–265.

[25] M. Dadfar, J. F. Gunn, D. Lester, A. M. Abdel-Khalek, *Love of Life Model: role of psychological well-being, depression, somatic health, and spiritual health*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 24 (2021) issue 2, pp. 142–150.

[26] T. Chambers-Richards, B. Batholomew Chireh, C. D'Arcy, *Relationship between spirituality, religiosity, and general life satisfaction among Canadians living with neurological conditions in New Brunswick and Manitoba*, "Journal of Religion and Health" 61 (2022) issue 5, pp. 4119–4138.

[27] E. C. Shattuck, M. P. Muehlenbein, *Religiosity/spirituality and physiological markers of health*, "Journal of Religion and Health" 59 (2020) issue 2, pp. 1035–1054.

[28] N. R. Silton, K. J. Flannelly, K. Galek, C. G. Ellison, *Beliefs about God and mental health among American adults*, "Journal of Religion and Health" 53 (2014) issue 5, pp. 1285–1296.

[29] N. Krause, G. Ironson, *Religious involvement, God images, and life satisfaction*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 22 (2019) issue 1, pp. 41–55.

physical health affects the type and strength of their spiritual involvement.[30] However, this correlation is not obvious and straightforward. As Fraser Watts demonstrates, people with mental disorders often become more sensitive to the spiritual realm, and he even argues that depression can be "part of a person's spiritual journey".[31]

Finally, it is also worth mentioning Magdalena Kapała's study dedicated to spiritual sensitivity and her questionnaire that explores this sensitivity,[32] which contains seven scales related to its different understandings.

5. Students' spiritual resources and their emotional, social and cognitive functioning—methodology of the study

The respondents of the study described in the article consisted of a group of 38 pedagogy students, 20 of which were members of the same group at university, while the others were recruited individually. At the very beginning, the author asked the respondents for their permission to anonymously use the results of the study; however, not all 42 respondents agreed, hence only the results of 38 of them are considered. All the respondents were women who studied pedagogy. Their average age was 26, with the oldest respondent being 51 and the youngest being 20.

During the study, the spiritual, emotional, social and cognitive development of female students were diagnosed. The theoretical aim of the study was to identify the level of development in the selected spheres in this social group. The practical aim was to draw conclusions that could be helpful in the formation of young people today. The research problem was formulated in the following way: What are the relationships between the level of spiritual involvement and the level of emotional, social and cognitive development of female students? In order to answer the general research problem, the following specific problems were posed:

- What are the relationships between the level of spiritual involvement and the level of emotional intelligence of the respondents?

[30] C. C. Cook, *Spirituality, religion & mental health: exploring the boundaries*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 23 (2020) issue 5, pp. 363–374.

[31] F. Watts, *Theology and science of mental health and well-being*, "Zygon" 53 (2018) issue 2, pp. 336–355.

[32] M. Kapała, *Duchowość jako niedoceniany aspekt psyche*, pp. 7–37.

- What are the relationships between the level of spiritual involvement and the level of social competence of the respondents?
- What are the relationships between the level of spiritual involvement and the level of selected cognitive skills of the respondents?

The variables analysed in the study were as follows: in the emotional sphere: emotional intelligence, the ability to use emotions to support thinking and acting, the ability to recognise emotions, state anxiety, and trait anxiety; in the social sphere: intimate behaviours, social exposure, and assertiveness; and in the cognitive sphere: concentration, algorithmic thinking, heuristic thinking, nonconformist thinking, and conformist thinking. The variables associated with spiritual experience were as follows: trust, anxiety, dependence, autonomy, rebelliousness, guilt, identification, co-humanitarianism, ethical norms, acceptance of beliefs, centrality of religion, fear of uncertainty, positive and negative emotions, anger, guilt and the image of God. The variables were not divided into dependent and independent because in the literature, the relationship between them is described both ways: as the fact that mental health depends on spiritual involvement and also as the fact that spiritual involvement depends on mental health.

The method used in the study was a diagnostic survey, and the technique was a questionnaire. The tools used in the study included: Anna Matczak and Aleksandra Jaworowska's *Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire* [*Kwestionariusz inteligencji emocjonalnej*]; Anna Matczak's *Social Competence Questionnaire* [*Kwestionariusz kompetencji społecznych*]; Stanislaw Popek's *KANH Creative Behaviour Questionnaire* [*Kwestionariusz twórczego zachowania KANH*]; the *State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI)* in the Polish adaptation by Tytus Sosnowski, Kazimierz Wrześniewski, Aleksandra Jaworowska and Diana Fecenec; Jacek Śliwak and Rafał Bartczuk's *Scale of Religious Relationships* [*Skala relacji religijnych*]; *Inventory of Emotions Towards God* [*Skala emocji względem Boga*] in the Polish adaptation by Barbara Zarzycka, Rafał Bartczuk and Marek Jarosz; *The Bonds with God Questionnaire* [*Kwestionariusz Więzi z Bogiem*] by Rafał Bartczuk and Wiesław Matys; the revised version of the *d2-R Attention and Concentration Test* [*Zrewidowana wersja testu do badania uwagi i koncentracji d2-R*] by Rolf Brickenkamp, Lothar Schmidt-Atzert and Detlev Liepmann; and *the Image of God Questionnaire* [*Kwestionariusz Obrazu Boga*] developed in an experimental version by the author of this article.

6. Students' spiritual resources and their emotional, social and cognitive functioning—analysis of the results

This section of the article presents the results of the study dedicated to the relationships between the respondents' spiritual involvement and their levels of emotional, social and cognitive development. Due to the fact that only two variables related to social competence—assertiveness and intimate behaviours—have a normal distribution (verified by Shapiro-Wilk test), only non-parametric tests will be used in the analyses. Due to the large number of variables analysed and the inability to examine all correlations in detail, only statistically significant correlation values are included in the tables.

6.1. The respondents' spiritual involvement and the level of their emotional development

To analyse the relationships between the respondents' spiritual involvement and their level of emotional development, Spearman's Rho test was conducted. Table 1 presents its results.

Table 1. The relationships between the respondents' spiritual involvement and the level of their emotional development

Variable related to spiritual development	Variables with a statistically significant correlation ($p<0.05$) and correlation in Spearman's Rho				
	Ability to recognise emotions	Ability to use emotions to support thinking and acting	INTE Emotional intelligence	State anxiety	Trait anxiety
Trust	0.43		0.35		
Anxiety				0.59	0.47
Rebelliousness				0.33	0.50
Co-humanitarianism					–0.43
Ethical norms					–0.39
Positive (emotions towards God)	0.50	0.33	0.54		
Negative (emotions towards God)				0.67	0.64

Variable related to spiritual development	Variables with a statistically significant correlation ($p<0.05$) and correlation in Spearman's Rho				
	Ability to recognise emotions	**Ability to use emotions to support thinking and acting**	**INTE Emotional intelligence**	**State anxiety**	**Trait anxiety**
Guilt				0.67	0.63
Anxiety (Inventory of Emotions Towards God)				0.59	0.47
Images of God:					
God the delusion		0.54	0.40		
Cruel God	–0.33	–0.33			
Unpredictable God				0.37	
Weak God					0.41
God of the catechism					
Ideal God				0.51	
Gentle and sensitive God	–0.38			0.36	
God of theologians		0.47			
God the Rock				0.40	
Safe God				0.48	0.47

Source: own study

The results indicate that traits such as trust and positive emotions towards God positively correlate with emotional intelligence in general and with this intelligence understood as the ability to recognise emotions and the ability to use them. Anxiety, rebelliousness, negative emotions towards God and guilt positively correlate with trait anxiety and state anxiety. Co-humanitarianism and ethical norms correlate negatively. These results lead to the conclusion that emotional development corresponds with spiritual development understood as trust in God and ethical sensitivity.

The higher the emotional intelligence, the stronger the perception of God as God the delusion and God of theologians (positive correlation). The higher the level of trait anxiety and state anxiety, the stronger the perception of God as unpredictable God, weak God, ideal God, gentle and sensitive God, God the Rock and safe God.

The higher the emotional intelligence, the weaker the perception of God as a cruel God and gentle and sensitive God (negative correlation). It can be assumed that people who seek support and security in God are often those with higher levels of anxiety. It can also be noted that perceiving God as cruel correlates with emotional intelligence in a similar way as perceiving Him as gentle and sensitive—it seems that such God is perceived negatively.

In order to extend the results, hierarchical regression analysis was conducted; it analysed the prediction of emotional development under the influence of spiritual development based on trust, co-humanitarianism and ethical norms. Trust proved to be a significant predictor of emotional intelligence (beta=0.35, p=0.03). Moreover, trust (beta=0.56, p=0.01), co-humanitarianism (beta=-0.52, p=0.03) and ethical norms (beta=0.61, p=0.01) were good predictors for the ability to recognise emotions. An interesting conclusion drawn from these results is that high co-humanitarianism is a predictor of a low ability to recognise emotions.

6.2. The respondents' spiritual involvement and the level of their social development

The relationships between the respondents' spiritual involvement and their level of social development are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The relationships between the respondents' spiritual involvement and the level of their social development

Variable related to spiritual development	Variables with a statistically significant correlation ($p<0.05$) and correlation in Spearman's Rho		
	Intimate behaviours	**Social exposure**	**Assertiveness**
Trust		–0.37	
Dependence	–0.46	–0.34	
Autonomy	0.36		
Identification		–0.35	
Acceptance of beliefs	–0.45	–0.41	–0.42
Centrality of religion	–0.38	–0.32	–0.36
The images of God:			
Unpredictable God	–0.40		–0.45

Variable related to spiritual development	Variables with a statistically significant correlation (p<0.05) and correlation in Spearman's Rho		
	Intimate behaviours	**Social exposure**	**Assertiveness**
God of the catechism	–0.46	–0.52	
Ideal God	–0.63	–0.51	–0.62
God the teddy bear	–0.48	–0.69	
God the feudal lord	–0.42	–0.40	
God the healer	–0.43	–0.40	
God like Zawisza	–0.38	–0.39	–0.35
Gentle and sensitive God	–0.65	–0.66	–0.33
God of theologians	–0.41	–0.41	–0.37
God the Father		0.40	
God the Rock	–0.64	–0.64	–0.49
Safe God	–0.65	–0.65	–0.37

Source: own study

These results reveal that autonomy correlates positively with high levels of competence in the area of intimate behaviours, while dependence, the acceptance of beliefs and the centrality of religion correlate negatively. Trust, dependence, identification, the acceptance of beliefs and the centrality of religion negatively correlate with high levels of competence related to social exposure. The acceptance of beliefs and the centrality of religion are negatively correlated with high levels of assertiveness. Most of the relationships here are negative correlations. Thus, it can be said that people with higher levels of spirituality are often characterised by lower levels of social competence. The question is whether such people seek their place in spirituality, or whether social competence understood as openness to social exposure, maintaining intimate relationships and assertiveness are of less interest to people with high levels of spiritual development. Arguably, a lack of social competence is linked with introversion and orientation towards inner development.

The correlations of social competence with perceptions of God confirm the above findings. Persons with high levels of competence related to intimate behaviours tend not to perceive God as unpredictable God, God of the catechism, ideal God, God the teddy bear, God the feudal lord, God the healer, God like Zawisza, gentle and sensitive God, God of theologians, God the Rock and safe

God. The respondents with high levels of competence related to social exposure to a lesser extent perceive God as God of the catechism, ideal God, God the teddy bear, God the feudal lord, God the healer, God like Zawisza, gentle and sensitive God, God of theologians, God the Rock and safe God and frequently see him as Father. Those with high levels of assertiveness are less likely to perceive God as an unpredictable God, ideal god, God like Zawisza, gentle and sensitive God, God of theologians, God the Rock and safe God.

It might be interesting to analyse how spiritual development can be predicted based on such variables as trust, the acceptance of beliefs and the centrality of religion. The hierarchical regression analysis revealed that these variables are not good predictors of social development.

6.3. The respondents' spiritual involvement and the level of their cognitive development

The relationships between the respondents' spiritual involvement and their level of cognitive development are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. The relationships between the respondents' spiritual involvement and the level of their cognitive development

Variable related to spiritual development	**Variables with a statistically significant correlation (p<0.05) and correlation in Spearman's Rho**				
	Con-centration	**Con-formism**	**Non-con-formism**	**Heuristic thinking**	**Algorithmic thinking**
Trust		0.57	0.32		
Dependence	–0.35				
Autonomy	0.33				
Guilt		–0.37			
Identification			0.36		
Acceptance of beliefs		0.47			0.39
Centrality of re-ligion	–0.40	0.34			0.35
The images of God:					
Cruel God		0.33			0.35

Variable related to spiritual development	Variables with a statistically significant correlation (p<0.05) and correlation in Spearman's Rho				
	Con-centration	Con-formism	Non-con-formism	Heuristic thinking	Algorithmic thinking
Unpredictable God		0.38			
Weak God		0.36			
God of the cat-echism				–0.34	
Ideal God		0.42		–0.40	
God the feudal lord		0.38			
God the healer		0.45			
God like Zawisza		0.36			
Gentle and sensi-tive God		0.58			
God of industri-ous ants					0.38
God of theolo-gians	0.42		–0.37	–0.42	
God the Rock		0.43			
Safe God		0.45			

Source: own study

Heuristic thinking, which is associated with creativity, shows a positive correlation with trust and identification. Conformist thinking, which is considered non-creative, is positively correlated with trust, the acceptance of beliefs, and the centrality of religion. Algorithmic thinking, also regarded as non-creative, is positively correlated with the acceptance of beliefs and the centrality of religion. A negative correlation was found between conformism and guilt, suggesting that as conformism increases, individuals report lower levels of guilt. This may be related to the fact that conformist behaviour tends to be guided primarily by external control of behaviour.

Trust and identification positively correlate with nonconformist and heuristic thinking, which are manifestations of creativity. Trust, the acceptance of beliefs and the centrality of religion positively correlate with non-creative (i.e., conformist and algorithmic) thinking, while guilt negatively correlates with such thinking.

Trust has a positive correlation with both creative and non-creative thinking, while non-creative thinking—both algorithmic and conformist—is positively correlated with the acceptance of beliefs and the centrality of religion.

People with low levels of creative thinking (heuristic and non-conformist) perceive God primarily as God of theologians, God of the catechism, and ideal God, whereas those with high levels of non-creative thinking (algorithmic and conformist) tend to perceive God as cruel God, unpredictable God, weak God, ideal God, God the feudal lord, God the healer, God like Zawisza, gentle and sensitive God, God the Rock and safe God. Based on these results, it can be concluded that creative people rarely identify with the image of God conveyed by theologians and the catechism. The lack of creativity is most strongly associated with seeking safety in God.

Concentration, which is a trait related to the efficiency of performing cognitive tasks, shows little correlation with spiritual development.

Also here the hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to analyse the prediction of cognitive development under the influence of spiritual development. The following were selected as variables of spiritual development: trust, the centrality of religion and the acceptance of beliefs. Trust proved to be a significant predictor of both conformism (beta=0.40; p=0.01) and non-conformism (beta=0.36; p=0.04).

7. Discussion of the results and conclusions

The results of previous studies have demonstrated that a belief in a merciful God negatively correlates with such psychological symptoms as general anxiety and social anxiety. A belief in a merciful, benevolent God is also associated with greater hope and life satisfaction,[33] i.e., with better emotional functioning. The study described in the article has confirmed these results. Trust in God and positive emotions towards Him positively correlate with emotional intelligence, with the ability to understand emotions and the ability to express them. Negative emotions towards God and being afraid of Him positively correlate with trait anxiety and state anxiety. An interesting question is why co-humanitarianism turned out to be a negative predictor of understanding emotions. Perhaps a particular

[33] N. Krause, G. Ironson, *Religious involvement, God images, and life satisfaction*, "Mental Health, Religion & Culture" 22 (2019) issue 1, pp. 41–55.

opinion (that faith is related to the treatment of another person) which a person declares is not always what this person implements in life.

The authors of most previous studies have reported positive correlations between spirituality and emotional life, well-being, meaning in life, and life satisfaction.[34] This study found that spiritual development positively correlates with emotional development but not with social development. Most of the variables of spiritual development correlate negatively with both assertiveness and skills related to the area of social exposure and intimate behaviours. Thus, it seems that introverts, who often have problems with social behaviours, function better in the spiritual sphere. At the same time, the results have revealed that the link between spirituality and cognitive development is basically non-existent. Both creative and non-creative people are capable of trusting God.

In summary, it is worth emphasising that the sample used in the study was very small. Therefore, a larger sample would likely reveal additional significant correlations. It would also be valuable to conduct studies with gender differentiation. In this case, only women were included, which limits the generalisability of the findings to the broader population.

In conclusion, the results confirmed that spiritual development corresponds to emotional development and that the relationship between spiritual development and other spheres of development is rather complex. This means, however, that every person, regardless of their personality traits and intellectual ability, has a capacity for full spiritual development.

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Strategies for optimizing social jetlag in social work students

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Abstract

The frequently occurring phenomenon of social jetlag is a current problem that stimulates the development of diseases. The starting point for determining social jetlag is time regulation. It is determined by three factors: social time; which determines the interactions and tasks that organize life; physical time regulated by the sun, and biological time; which controls physiology (circadian rhythm). The mismatch between internal time and the social schedule in concert with solar time quanties the social jetlag. At issue is the mismatch between the natural preferences of circadian rhythm and the demands of social life. This results in different times for waking and sleeping. These cause sleep debt, which portends fatigue, insomnia but also longer-term effects on cardiovascular function, obesity and diabetes rates. For social work students, this phenomenon is particularly important in relation to the nature of the work for which they are preparing. Sensitive perceptions of one's own time preference for work and sleep are part of the self-care toolkit stimulating a reduction in burnout syndrome. The aim of this study is to identify the extent of social jetlag in social work students and to propose effective strategies for its optimization. The quantitative research strategy used predicts effective capture of this phenomenon. Through an original questionnaire distributed to Social Work students in the academic year 2023/2024, the extent of social jetlag was ascertained. The authors' questionnaire was divided into three sections. These identified the hourly distribution of activities (sleep, wakefulness, and eating) on academic and free days, whereas basic demographic characteristics were collected. Statistical processing was performed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28 and Datatab software. The Wilcoxon test was used to compare time metric data within a single group, while dissimilarity was determined in relation to the social schedule (instructional day vs. free day) of the students. Social jetlag was demonstrated in social work students. Through Mann-Whitney U-test, we identified a possible cause of social jetlag in the area of sleep. Extensive analysis of the results identified online strategy tools (Trello, Todoist, Asana, Forest) that can support effective time management and contribute to addressing the issue in social work students.

Keywords:

social jetlag, social work, time management, health, online applications

There is a close link between the chronological social jetlag and the negative consequences on people's health. The study analyses the theoretical, practical and empirical concepts of social jetlag. The initial author of the study is Roenneberg et al.,[1] who has been working on the issue continuously for several years. Resulting from the theoretical background, it is possible to describe social jetlag as a mismatch between the natural schedule of biological functions and the social program that causes desynchronization. The desynchronization itself has a deeper dimension. It is a structural disruption of the consistency of clock times: solar, social and biological. We present a research study seeking to analyze the degree and extent of the presence of social jetlag in social work students. A quantitative research strategy is employed. Several statistical tools such as Wilcoxon test, Mann-Whitney U-test are used for identification and interpretation of social jetlag and are analyzed through IBM SPSS Statistics 28 and Datatab software. Through the analysis, a fundamental factor supporting the mismatch of times has been identified: the need to work during the night and the disregard for basic biological needs such as sleep. Based on this, an online strategy is offered to help manage time effectively.

1. Social jetlag

It is important for the functioning of the organism that there is harmony and harmony between the internal functioning and the external environment. Roenneberg et al.[2] describe that life is governed by at least three types of clocks. These are the social clock (local time), which is subject to interaction and social scheduling. This is followed by solar time, which determines the earth's rotation around the sun and on its own axis. The last category is the biological clock, which governs physiological, biological processes in the body. At the same time, the authors point out that as long as the biological clock is stably synchronized with the sundial (by virtue of the entrainment of light and dark), it forms a synchronous

[1] T. Roenneberg, A. Wirz-Justice, M. Merrow, *Life between clocks: Daily temporal patterns of human chronotypes*, "Journal of Biological Rhythms" 18 (2003) issue 1, pp. 80–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/07487304022396.

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period, and this relationship is called "entrainment." The cycle of the circadian rhythm (biological clock) does not last exactly 24 hours. If the biological clock is shorter or longer, it must be shortened by shifting or shortening. In this sense, it is also important to point out that the current form of society contributes to the fact that the harmony of all times, which was historically undisturbed, has been desynchronized. This fact is pointed out Roenneberg[3] and states that historically there has been internal and external consistency. The social clock has been historically phase-consistent with the sundial (external consistency) as well as phase-consistent with the biological clock (internal consistency). While local time appears to remain socially consistent in modern industrialized societies, it has lost both its external and internal consistency. The external inconsistency is due to the introduction of the daylight saving time/winter time divide, which simply shifts social timing with little effect on biological timing. The internal inconsistency is supported by the waning power of clock strike through working in buildings that are not penetrated by large amounts of daylight, evening artificial light that disrupts the natural flow of darkness, as well as the use of smartphones and phones deep into the night. At the same time, all of these factors cause differences between when we work and when we have days off. There are noticeable differences in preferred timing of sleep and activities. These are regarded to be choronotypes whereby their underlying constant variable is the regulation of the circadian clock. The social schedule influences the activity level of each individually. Based on this, a mismatch may arise between the social and natural individual distribution of activities. This phenomenon of mismatch is referred to as **the social jetlag**.[4] The definition of jetlag describes Caliandro et al.[5] as denoting the mismatch between biological time, which is determined by our internal body clock, and social time, which is dictated mainly by social obligations such as school or work. At the same time, the authors note that in industrialised countries up to two-thirds of the studying or working population experience the social jetlag, often for several years.

[3] T. Roenneberg, A. Wirz-Justice, M. Merrow, *Life between clocks: Daily temporal patterns of human chronotypes*, "Journal of Biological Rhythms" 18 (2003) issue 1, pp. 80–90.

[4] M. Wittmann, J. Dinich, M. Merrow, T. Roenneberg, *Social jetlag: Misalignment of biological and social time*, "Chronobiology International" 23 (2006) issue 1–2, pp. 497–509, https://doi.org/10.1080/07420520500545979.

[5] R. Caliandro, et al., *Social jetlag and related risks for human health: A timely review*, "Nutrients" 13 (2021) issue 12, 4543, https://doi.org/10.3390/nu13124543.

2. Research methodology

The phenomenon of the social jetlag is present to a current degree in almost every segment of the human population. Based on an extensive analysis of studies and research on the subject, the need to identify the presence and extent of social jetlag in the field of social work has been established. The quantitative research strategy was chosen based on a formed objective of the thesis. The aim of the thesis is to interpret the optimal strategy for effective time management aimed at mitigating social jetlag in social work students.

Shaping the background of the social jetlag, it is possible to make a link with the postmodernist approach in social work. Parton and Marshall[6] demonstrate that the importance of postmodern perspectives links a number of social work perspectives that are important to highlight. They are mainly related to rapid change, changing social and environmental conditions, but also to the increase of life uncertainties in society. All these changes are shaping the nature and extent of people's work activities. These include shift work, work at unnatural times, the need for constant presence in the workplace and much more. All the transformations, and the associated transformations in the nature of technology use, have an impact on human functioning on biological needs such as sleep, which is influenced by social jetlag.

We chose a quantitative research strategy to further investigate the social jetlag. Hendl a Remr[7] describes that this type of research is variable-oriented, focusing on describing social variables and their relationships. Within this premise, we focus on identifying social jetlag in social work students. Based on the variables identified, we formulated hypotheses:

a) there is a significant difference between the time students wake up on a free day and the time they wake up on a teaching day,
b) there is a significant difference between the times when respondents consume food on a free day and a teaching day,
c) there is a significant difference between the time when students go to bed on a free day and when they go to bed on a teaching day,

6 N. Parton, W. Marshall, *Postmodernism and discourse approaches to social work*, in: *Social work*, eds. R. Adams, L. Dominelli, M. Payne, J. Campling, Palgrave, London 1998, pp. 240–249, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-14400-6_20.

7 J. Hendl, J. Remr, *Metody výzkumu a evaluace*, Portál, Praha 2017.

d) there is a significant difference between the time students go to bed on a free day and on a teaching day.

The author's questionnaire was chosen as the main instrument to measure and identify the prevalence of social jetlag in the research sample. This consisted of three parts: 1. demographic data, which provided information about the respondents; 2. social jetlag, an area containing metric items divided by the schedule of the day into free and academic day; 3. causes and consequences, which consisted of questions aimed at determining the identification of the causes and consequences of social jetlag. The questionnaire contained questions with binomial, metric and scaled items. Statistically, the data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics 28.0 and DATAtab software. Several statistical tests (Mann-Whitney U-test, Wilcoxon test) were used to validate the data set.

The research population consisted of students of social work at the University of Prešov, Faculty of Arts, Institute of Education and Social Work in bachelor, master and doctoral studies. Students' participation in the research was voluntary. The total population for the criteria set in this way consisted of 117 students based on the generation of the MAIS (Modular Academic Information System). Due to non-fulfillment of the conditions, some of the respondents' answers were excluded and consequently the final research sample consisted of 78 respondents. In terms of demographics and characteristics of respondents, it can be described that within gender, the female gender outnumbered the male gender with 61 females and 17 males. Representation within year groups was identified at all grade levels within each year group. With the largest group being representation from the first year of the Bachelor's degree.

3. Results of the work

A number of findings were identified within the results of the work. The main finding was that social work students demonstrated the presence of social jetlag. The following table shows the results that were identified based on Wilcoxon's test in each area. Where *w* value represents the Wilcoxon test result, *z* denotes the standardized deviation, *p* is the exact p-value, and *r* is the effect size.

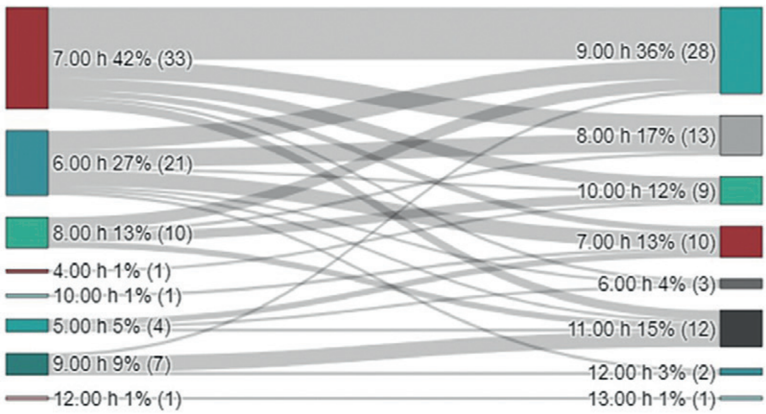
	Awakening	1. meal	2. meal	3. meal	preparation for sleep	settling into bed	sleep
w	558,5	917	1199	956,5	882	407	249
z	–2,65	– 0,83	–0,05	–0,96	–0,67	– 2,79	–3.31
p	0,008	0,406	0,959	0,339	0,502	0,006	0,001
r	0,3	0,09	0,01	0,11	0,08	0,31	0,37

Based on the highlighted results, it is possible to view the significant domains of Waking up, Getting into bed, Sleep as those in which social jetlag is demonstrated. Within the other domains, significant results were not demonstrated to identify social jetlag within the population. We also described the more closely identified domains by the time block of hours formed for all significant domains. The Waking up area is one of the worst for the overall set given that for the entire set only 6 respondents have no identified social jetlag in that area. Thus, students overwhelmingly wake up at different times for free and instructional days At the same time, the largest range of hours in this area is from 0 to 6 hours with 6 hours representing a very large shift.

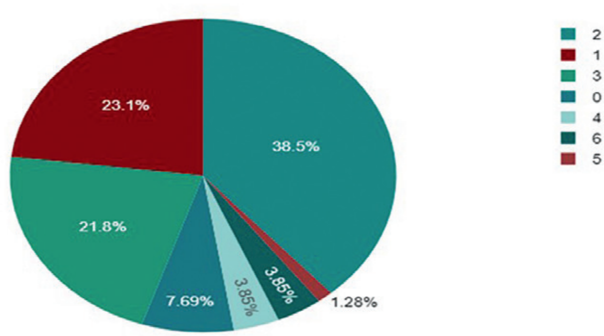
3.1. Interpretation of results

Awakening

Overall, social jetlag was found in this area in up to 73 students and was not detected in 5 cases. From the descriptive statistics, it can be described that the students had different wake up time during the free day compared to the class day. On days when students had classes, the (Mdn = 3 [6:00 h]) range was from 4:00 h to 12:00 h. On days when pupils did not have lessons, the (Mdn = 4 [9:00 h]) range was from 6:00 h to 1:00 h. This is a difference of 3 hours for Mdn. The data is shown in the following chart with the first column showing the times of instructional days and the second column showing the times of free days.



The number of jetlag hours ranged from 1 to 6 hours. The most frequent areas were 2 hrs 38.5%, 1 hr 23.1% and 3 hrs 21.8%. The distribution of hours is demonstratively shown in the following graph.

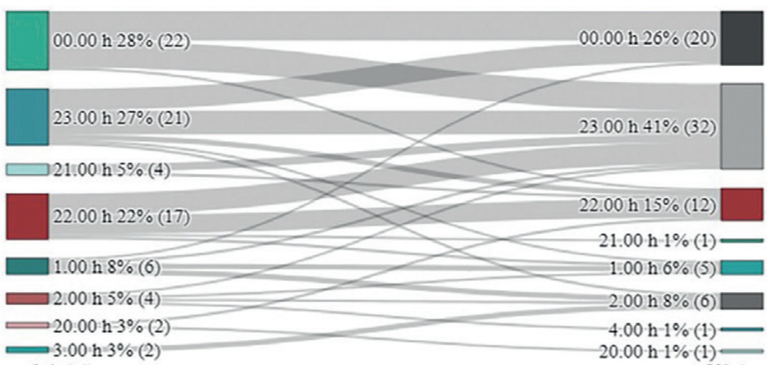


Differences between days (free/teaching) were tested by Wilcoxon test, which showed that the difference between days was statistically significant W = 558.5, p = 0.008. The p-value of 0.008 is below the set significance level of 0.05 which supports the significance of the test. The effect size r is 0.3, which is a medium effect. The significant data is shown in the following table.

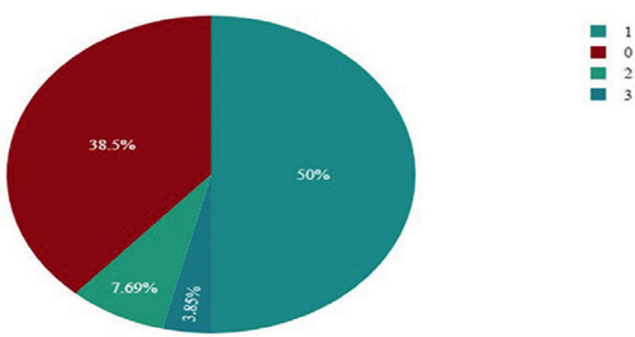
Awakening	n	average	Mdn	Standard deviation
Teaching	78	3.33	3	1,78
Free day	78	4.05	4	1,77

Settling into bed

The descriptive statistics in the area showed that 48 respondents had social jetlag present and 30 respondents did not have social jetlag present in the area. For both groups it was the same (Mdn = 3, [22:00 h]), with the time range being between 20:00 h and 3:00 h for the free day and between 20:00 h and 4:00 h for the teaching day. We show the detailed distribution in the following graph. The first left column is the free day and the right column is the instructional day.



The range of jetlag hours ranged from 1 h to 3 h. With the highest number of respondents was 1 hr (39 respondents), 2 hr (6 respondents), 3 hr (3 respondents). The distribution of hours is shown in the following graph.

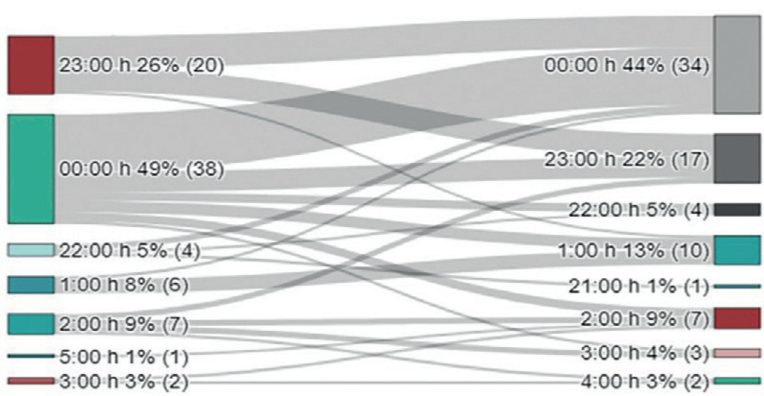


To test the significance of the difference between the free and instructional day, a Wilcoxon test was conducted, which showed that there is a statistically significant difference between the times students go to bed on the free and instructional day W = 407, p = 0.006. The p-value of 0.006 is below the set significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the result of Wilcoxon test was significant for the data. The effect size r is 0.31. At r = 0.31, this is a medium effect.

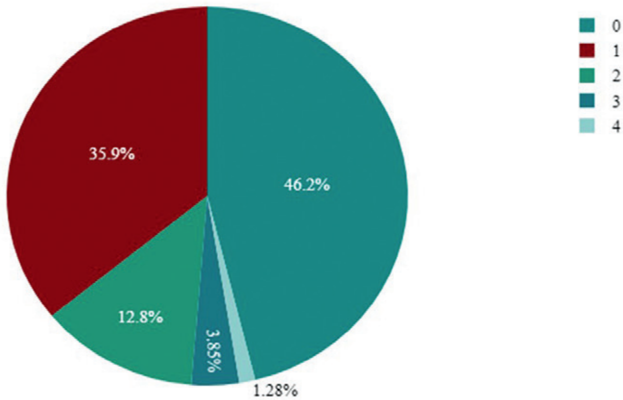
Settling into bed	n	Average	Mdn	Standard deviation
Lessons	78	3.67	3	1,59
Free day	78	2,96	3	1.44

Sleep

In the area of Sleep, descriptive statistics can be used to determine that the presence of social jetlag was identified in 42 cases, and in a number of 36 students the presence was not identified. Students on both free and academic days had the same high value (Mdn = 3). On academic days, the range was from 22:00 h to 5:00 h and on free days the range was from 21:00 h to 4:00 h. The Mdn for teaching days is 00:00 h and the Mdn for free days is 23:00 h. This is the hourly difference between free and teaching days. The Sankey diagram shows the difference between a free day and a teachin day.



Regarding the difference in the number of hours between the free day and the teaching day, there was a difference of 1 h (35.9%, 28 respondents) to 4 h (1 respondent, 1.28%) for the social jetlag in this area.

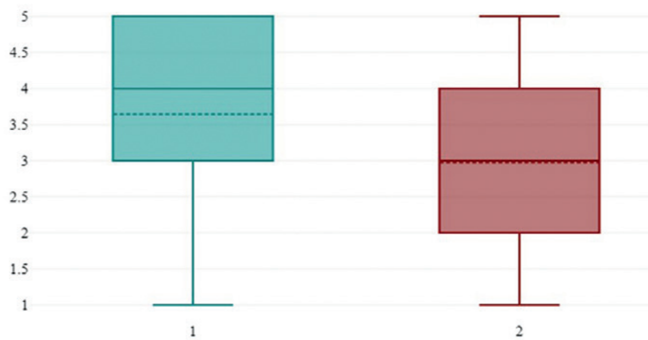


Confirming the differences between the groups, Wilcoxon test showed that the difference between working and free day was statistically significant, W = 249, p = 0.001. The p-value of 0.001 is below the set significance level of 0.05. Therefore, the result of Wilcoxon test was significant. The effect size r is 0.37. At r = 0.37, there is a medium effect size.

Sleep	n	Average	Mdn	Standard deviation
Lessons	78	78	3.03	3
Free day	78	78	3.19	3

The interpreted results clearly show the prevalence of social jetlag in social work students. The reason in question can be analyzed through further testing. Mann-Whitney U-test was conducted for social jetlag and sleep to the variable of sleep deprivation. Through the analysis of the answer to the question – "I delay sleep so that I can/can work during the night" – was (Mdn = 4) for the group in which social jetlag occurred and (Mdn = 3) for the group in which social jetlag did not occur. A Mann-Whitney U-test conducted for the above data showed that the difference between the groups with and without social jetlag for the sleep domain was statistically significant, U = 560, n1 = 39, n2 = 39, p = 0.046. The effect size *r* was 0.23. which is a small effect. The magnitude of the difference is insignificant in the following graph with No. 1 indicating the presence of social jetlag and No. 2 indicating its absence. Based on this test, it can be determined that the group for whom social jetlag was demonstrated agreed to a greater extent with the statement "I delay sleep so that I can/can work during the night"

Thus, to a greater extent they ignore their own sleep preferences and disrupt the natural adjustment of circadian rhythms.



4. Discussion

For the above data, it can be characterized that the social jetlag represents a significant and frequently occurring phenomenon in society. In the following overview, we present the individual negative consequences.

The application dimension of social jetlag is described by Haraszti et al.[8] and report that social jetlag is negatively correlated with academic performance in college students. The authors point to several underlying causes. The first is that the research was conducted in Hungary due to which the time zone is in Central European orientation and thus sunlight had a large influence on the chronotype. They also point out that the negative effect of social jetlag is demonstrable on weekly average benefit. At the same time, these claims are supported by other findings showing that there is a relationship between sleep time and academic performance. Students who go to bed at later times perform worse in the morning. Negative health consequences are described by Parson et al.,[9]

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8 R. A. Haraszti, et. al., *Social jetlag negatively correlates with academic performance in undergraduates*, "Chronobiology International" 31 (2014) issue 5, pp. 603–612, https://doi.org/10.3109/07420528.2013.879164.

9 M. J. Parsons, et al., *Social jetlag, obesity and metabolic disorder: investigation in a cohort study*, "International Journal of Obesity" 39 (2015) issue 5, pp. 842–848, https://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2014.201.

who report that obesity and metabolic disorders are significantly related to the social jetlag. Due to the fact that an unnatural environment for functioning is created (one that is not in alignment with the biological clock), it generates a negative shift in the body's functioning that causes disruptions in sleep timing, energy homeostasis, and overall disruption of circadian rhythms. It is the degree of circadian disruption that causes the misalignment in the functioning of the organism that is the guiding factor. Similarly, it states Levandovski,[10] that the social jetlag is a risk factor for the development of depression. Significantly, they point out that therapies that focus on changing the clocks in accordance with light therapy, sleep deprivation, and a strict time schedule offer effective treatments. Concurrently, Wongová et al.[11] characterize that work that has a natural time schedule characterized by a mismatch between endogenous rhythms and social time may promote metabolic factors that predispose to diabetes and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease. Complementary Beauvalet Castilhos et al.[12] argue that this social jetlag is objectionable in several respects. The primary one is the stimulus itself, which gradually disrupts the structure of the natural sequence of biological processes, while at the same time it is an aspect of the consequences, which include the area of health and behavioural processes. Among the main consequences, the authors rank epilepsy, various psychiatric symptoms, mood disorders, cognitive disorders, excessive use of stimulants, cardiometabolic risk.

As we have shown, the social jetlag issues have a negative impact on health, academic performance, and overall body functioning. We point out the need to address the topic especially in the long term through various remediations. One of them is to address time management for productive and non overwhelming studying in students. We take a solution-focused approach in designing the solution.

[10] R. Levandovski, *Depression scores associate with chronotype and social jetlag in a rural population*, "Chronobiology International" 28 (2011) issue 9, pp. 771–778, https://doi.org/10.3109/07420528.2011.602445.

[11] Wong C., Odom S. L., et al., *Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with autism spectrum disorder: A comprehensive review*, "Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders" 45 (2015) issue 7, pp. 1951–66, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-014-2351-z.

[12] J. Beauvalet Castilhos, et al., *Social jetlag in health and behavioral research: a systematic review*, "ChronoPhysiology and Therapy" 7 (2017), pp. 19–31, https://www.dovepress.com/social-jetlag-in-health-and-behavioral-research-a-systematic-review-peer-reviewed-fulltext-article-CPT (25.07.2024).

In this respect it is important to note that according to Murray et al.[13] is a Solution-Focused, Future-Focused Approach. It helps to move towards a future that should build on present solutions. In addressing this issue, we focus on the design of online tools that support student time management.

In the following section, we will present several online tools that have the potential to improve time management and working with assignments and tasks. These online applications or tools include: 1. Asana; 2. Trello; 3. Forest; 4. Todoist.

Asana

It is an online tool that also doubles as a phone and computer app. It is a tool that manages work efficiency. It allows for an active monitoring progress, collaborate, highlights the advised features for assigning tasks, tracking time, creating projects, goals, tasks, as well as it serves as a database for files that can be pasted to projects. For the user, it offers a comprehensive analysis of progress, distribution and scheduling of tasks and time. It is possible to figure in and choose the free version or the Premium version. The difference is mostly just for the possibility of collaboration and the number of collaborators.[14]

Trello

Through a mobile or online application, it is possible to work on your tasks in a very simple way. Trello is a tool that organises tasks through tables. It is possible to move tasks between columns to track progress. The user interface is intuitive and simple for organizing tasks. It is available as a free version but also the Premium.[15]

Forest

It is a mobile application that is primarily focused on concentration and increasing productivity at work. Its principle consists of planting trees, which are conditioned to grow (the tree grows only if the study mode is set in the application and this is not interrupted by opening other windows on the phone). It offers

[13] S. Murray S., et al., *Time management for STEMM students during the continuing pandemic*, "Trends in Biochemical Sciences" 47 (2022) issue 4, pp. 279–283.

[14] https://help.asana.com/hc/en-us/articles/14250783001627-How-to-start-using-Asana (25.8.2024).

[15] https://trello.com/tour (25.8.2024).

the possibility to track productivity through the visualization of the number of trees. The user navigates the app very easily as it doesn't have many features.[16]

Todoist

It is an application whose main task is personal management of simple tasks. It is possible to schedule tasks and deadlines. It offers possible synchronization between devices via online access or mobile app. The user can intuitively organize time and tasks. It is accessible affordably in a free version or the premium version with extended features.[17]

All these online features offer scope for efficient time management. Optimal allocation of daily time for responsibilities is granted. Free time can help to ensure that students are not in a time crunch and do not have to postpone sleep in order to work on assignments during the day. Every single app has a different focus. The most comprehensive tool appears to be Asana, which offers a space for detailed project organization to track progress. It can be updated constantly while keeping track of every task since its platform is also available in an app on the phone, on the computer or on the web. However, at the same time, its disadvantage is that it is more demanding and difficult for the user as it requires a detailed planning of each area which may not be maximally useful for students. A simpler option can be Todoist, it is a very intuitive tool that neatly organizes all the tasks including dealines. The latter may be more accessible due a simple language and the lower level of functionality.

Within the formulation of conclusions it is possible to determine that the stated hypotheses:

(a) There is a significant difference between the time students wake up on a free day and the time they wake up on a teaching day,
(b) there is a significant difference between the times when respondents consume food on a free day and a teaching day,
(c) there is a significant difference between the time students go to bed on a free day and on a teaching day,
(d) there is a significant difference between the time students go to bed on a free day and on a teaching day.

[16] https://www.forestapp.cc (26.8.2024).
[17] https://todoist.com/cs/help/articles/whats-new-WV4aRXKsN (25.8.2024).

The hypotheses were tested and the results confirmed the hypotheses in three cases (a, c, d) while in one case the hypothesis was not confirmed and was refuted (b).

Conclusions

The phenomenon of social jetlag is a risk that can cause several very negative consequences for physical and mental health. A high prevalence of social jetlag has been demonstrated in social work students. The need to identify possible solutions to reduce social jetlag is highly desirable for the formation of healthy lifestyles and learning optimal work habits that promote healthy lifestyles, resilience to negative potential phenomena such as burnout syndrome, etc. A possible cause of jetlag was also identified as a lack of perception of one's own physiological needs (sleep) and consequently the implementation of studying at night. Through those findings, strategies were formulated towards optimizing the time schedule. Productivity, time and studying must be silfully managed and organized so that assignments and tasks are not needed to be performed at night.

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Parsons M. J., et al., *Social jetlag, obesity and metabolic disorder: investigation in a cohort study*, "International Journal of Obesity" 39 (2015) issue 5, pp. 842–848, https://doi.org/10.1038/ijo.2014.201.

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Roenneberg T., Wirz-Justice A., Merrow M., *Life between clocks: Daily temporal patterns of human chronotypes*, "Journal of Biological Rhythms" 18 (2003) issue 1, pp. 80–90, https://doi.org/10.1177/07487304022396.

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Psychological resilience, tendency to ruminate, and well-being in young adults

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between psychological resilience, the tendency to ruminate, psychological well-being in young adults, and to analyze group differences in these variables. The study involved 174 young adults aged 18–35. Participants completed the Psychological Resilience Scale, the Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire, and Carol Ryff's Psychological Well-Being Scale. Analysis of the results revealed a negative correlation between psychological resilience and the tendency to ruminate, a positive correlation between psychological resilience and well-being, and a negative correlation between the tendency to ruminate and well-being. Significant differences were found in the variables between men and women as well as between individuals who had experienced traumatic life events and those who had not. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of factors that influence mental health in young adults and provide valuable information for both research and psychological practice.

Keywords

psychological resilience, ruminations, well-being, young adults

Introduction

Recent years have seen a noticeable trend among young adults to delay significant life decisions, a phenomenon referred to in scientific literature as a moratorium on the fulfillment of developmental tasks. Young people are increasingly engaged in exploring diverse opportunities, which, though fostering self-actualization, may heighten the risk of mental health issues.[1] Research indicates an increase in perceived stress during this stage of life[2] that can be exacerbated by socio-cultural shifts and global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic or armed conflicts. Axiologically, also the absence of stable—among others transcendent—value systems may weaken young people's mental resilience and complicate decision-making[3]. Factors that facilitate effective stress management and help maintain psychological well-being need, therefore, examining.

This article focuses on the relationship between psychological resilience, the occurrence of rumination, and the psychological well-being of individuals aged 18–35. Previous research in this area has centered on clinical populations, leaving uncharted waters regarding the specific challenges that young people are beset with outside clinical settings. Understanding these relationships may be crucial for developing psychological support strategies and mental ill-health prevention programs for this age group.

1. Theoretical foundations of the study

Psychological resilience is considered a key factor in effectively coping with stress and challenging experiences. Individuals with high psychological resilience are able to mobilize their resources in the face of adversity, exhibiting emotional

1 A. Franczok-Kuczmowska, M. Kuzian, *Psychospołeczne uwarunkowania funkcjonowania i zdrowia psychicznego w okresie wczesnej dorosłości*, "Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis. Studia Psychologica" 11 (2018), pp. 115–134.

2 A. A. Stone, J. E. Broderick, A. Deaton, *A snapshot of the age distribution of psychological well-being in the United States*, "Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America" 107 (2010) no. 22, pp. 9985–9990.

3 E. Wysocka, *Religijność młodzieży studenckiej – przypisywane religii znaczenia w życiu codziennym (dwie dekady zmian)*, "Przegląd Religioznawczy" (2019) no. 4 (274), pp. 105–120.

stability and the ability to distance themselves from intense emotions.[4] Psychological resilience can also be understood as the capacity to maintain a high level of well-being despite unfavourable circumstances. It enables individuals to employ essential skills to handle difficult situations, supporting their well-being and fostering an increased sense of self-efficacy and control over their lives.[5] Resilient individuals cope better with challenges, manage stress more effectively, and are more likely to identify benefits in difficult experiences. Psychological resilience is also associated with cognitive and emotional flexibility, which contributes to internal behavioral regulation and adaptive capabilities.[6] [This paragraph ought to be shortened: the same is said with too many sentences.]

In contrast, rumination is defined as a maladaptive coping strategy characterized by repetitive thinking about unpleasant, difficult, or painful experiences, particularly those related to the past[7] [Can we have experiences related to the future?]. Rumination can hinder one's ability to take action and perpetuate feelings of stress, generating negative beliefs. Theoretical models of rumination generally emphasize its detrimental impact on an individual's mental health. Rumination translates into brooding over negative events or emotions, a process that intensifies unpleasant feelings and, as a result, negatively affects a person's mood.[8]

Psychological resilience and tendencies toward rumination are both associated with neuroticism—a personality trait with a strong genetic basis that is brought about by difficulties in restoring emotional balance after stressful events. Individuals with higher levels of rumination may take longer to recover as they focus on reflections about events rather than taking appropriate remedial action. High psychological resilience is a protective factor against rumination, as resilient individuals tend to focus on solving problems rather than engaging in fruitless analysis. Research has also shown that psychological resilience

4 F. Yi, X. Li, X. Song, L. Zhu, *The underlying mechanisms of psychological resilience on emotional experience: Attention-bias or emotion disengagement*, "Frontiers in Psychology" 11 (2020), pp. 1–12.

5 C. E. Waugh, A. Sali, *Resilience as the ability to Maintain Well-Being: An allostatic active inference model*, "Journal of Intelligence" 11 (2023) no. 8, pp. 1–17.

6 A. Asif, H. Yasin, L. Iqrar, *Personal growth initiative, resilience and psychological wellbeing in young adults of Pakistan*, "Journal of Asian Development Studies" 13 (2024) no. 1, pp. 412–421.

7 P. D. Trapnell, J. D. Campbell, *Private self-consciousness and the five-factor model of personality: distinguishing rumination from reflection*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 76 (1999) no. 2, pp. 284–304.

8 M. C. Eisma, M. S. Stroebe, *Rumination following bereavement: an overview*, "Bereavement Care" 36 (2017) no. 2, pp. 58–64.

moderates the relationship between stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression that often accompany high levels of rumination.[9]

Both psychological resilience and ruminative tendencies are tied to well-being defined as an overall evaluation of life that makes one function properly across various areas and is not confined to experiencing positive emotional states.[10] Ryff and Keyes describe well-being through six dimensions: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relationships with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance.[11]

Research conducted by Kulawska indicates a positive relationship between psychological resilience and well-being among pedagogy students in Poland, suggesting that a similar relationship may exist across the broader population of young adults.[12] Rumination, on the other hand, as an ineffective response to stress that hinders effective problem-solving, can diminish levels of well-being. Ruminative tendencies trigger maladaptive cognitive styles, such as self-criticism and pessimism, which are likely to negatively influence perceived well-being levels.[13] It is also worth noting that individuals who frequently dwell on past events experience difficulties in achieving psychological comfort and maintaining positive social relationships.[14] Data on the co-existence of ruminative tendencies with the eudaimonic concept of well-being are scarce.

2. Research methodology

2.1. Research problem, objectives, and hypotheses

Our research problem was grounded in the considerations outlined above and was formulated as follows: what relationship, if any, holds between psychological

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9 C. T. Gloria, M. A. Steinhardt, *Relationships among positive emotions, coping, resilience and mental health*, "Stress and Health" 32 (2016) no. 2, pp. 145–156.

10 D. Karaś, J. Cieciuch, *Polska adaptacja kwestionariusza dobrostanu (Psychological Well-Being Scales) Caroll Ryff*, "Roczniki Psychologiczne" 20 (2017) no. 4, pp. 815–835.

11 C. D. Ryff, C. L. Keyes, *The structure of psychological well-being revisited*, "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology" 69 (1995) no. 4, pp. 719–727.

12 E. Kulawska, *Poziom i korelaty prężności psychicznej studentów wczesnej edukacji w wybranych uczelniach w Polsce*, "Forum Pedagogiczne" 10 (2020) no. 1, pp. 111–128.

13 L. M. Smart, J. R. Peters, R. A. Baer, *Development and validation of a measure of self-critical rumination*, "Assessment" 23 (2016) no. 3, pp. 321–332.

14 S. Nolen-Hoeksema, B. E. Wisco, S. Lyubomirsky, *Rethinking rumination*, "Perspectives on Psychological Science" 3 (2008) no. 5, pp. 400–424.

resilience, the tendency to ruminate, and well-being among young adults? This question was to be answered by a specially designed study.

Research hypotheses were formulated and tested in alignment with the theoretical foundations:

- **H1:** Psychological resilience is negatively correlated with the tendency to ruminate in young adults.
- **H2:** Psychological resilience is positively correlated with well-being in young adults.
- **H3:** The tendency to ruminate is negatively correlated with well-being in young adults.

To deepen the understanding of these variables, comparative analyses within the studied population were performed to answer:

- whether there are differences in the levels of psychological resilience, tendency to ruminate, and well-being between young adult women and young adult men;
- whether young adults who have experienced particularly challenging life events differ in terms of psychological resilience, tendency to ruminate, and well-being compared to young adults without such experiences.

2.2. Research Instruments

The Psychological Resilience Scale (PRS), the Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire (RRQ), and the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS) were the instruments used in this study.

The **Psychological Resilience Scale (PRS)**, developed by Ryś and colleagues, consists of 35 items that assess five dimensions of psychological resilience: 1) attitude toward difficulties and problems; 2) self-attitude in challenging situations; 3) somatization; 4) emotional sphere and interpersonal relations; and 5) attitude toward psychological injuries.[15] In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the individual scales ranged from 0.68 to 0.86.

The **Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire (RRQ)**, in the Polish adaptation by Słowińska, Zbieg, and Oleszkowicz, includes 24 items divided into two subscales: *Rumination*, referring to the involuntary focus on one's experiences

[15] M. Ryś, *Psychologiczne uwarunkowania kształtowania relacji w prawidłowych i dysfunkcyjnych systemach rodzinnych. Metody badań*, Wydawnictwo AEH Warszawa 2024.

triggered by anxiety, and *Reflection*, concerning engagement in better self-understanding, driven by personal curiosity.[16] Cronbach's alpha for the Rumination subscale was 0.89.

The **Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWBS)**, in the Polish adaptation by Karaś and Cieciuch, comprises 84 items designed to measure well-being from a eudaimonic perspective. This tool includes six subscales: (1) autonomy; (2) environmental mastery; (3) personal growth; (4) positive relations with others; (5) life purpose; and (6) self-acceptance.[17] Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the individual subscales ranged from 0.78 to 0.90, while the overall scale score was 0.96.

2.3. Participants

The study, targeting young adults, was conducted online using the questionnaire tools described above, in compliance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of their involvement, the purpose and procedure of the study, and were assured of full anonymity, with results used solely for scientific purposes. Participants were recruited using the snowball sampling method, whereby the link to the study was initially distributed to individuals who met the age criteria and who were then asked to share the link further with others fitting the same criteria.

The study included 174 individuals aged 18 to 33 years (M = 23.67; SD = 2.44), with 53.4% (93 individuals) identifying as female and 46.6% (81 individuals) as male. The largest percentage of participants had incomplete higher education—53.4% (93 individuals), followed by 33.3% (58 individuals) with higher education, 12.6% (22 individuals) with secondary education, and 0.6% (1 individual) with primary education. Regarding relationship status, 49.4% (86 individuals) were in informal relationships, 42% (73 individuals) identified as single, and 8.6% (15 individuals) were married. The majority, 96.6% (168 individuals), did not have children, while 3.4% (6 individuals) had.

As for the financial status, 47.1% (82 individuals) rated it as "rather good," 37.4% (65 individuals) as "average," 12.1% (21 individuals) as "very good," 1.7%

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16 A. Słowińska, A. Zbieg, A. Oleszkowicz, *Kwestionariusz Ruminacji-Refleksji (RRQ) Paula D. Trapnella i Jennifer D. Campbell – polska adaptacja metody*, "Polskie Forum Psychologiczne" 19 (2014) no. 4, pp. 457–478.

17 D. Karaś, J. Cieciuch, *Polska adaptacja kwestionariusza dobrostanu*, pp. 815–835.

(3 individuals) as "poor," 1.1% (2 individuals) as "rather poor," and 0.6% (1 individual) refrained from answering. 82.8% of the participants (144 individuals) came from intact families, while 17.2% (30 individuals) were from single-parent families. Within the single-parent group, 60% (18 individuals) cited parental divorce as the reason, 16.7% (5 individuals) reported the death of the father, and another 16.7% (5 individuals) cited parental separation.

58% (101 individuals) experienced significant hardships in life, such as parental alcoholism, psychological abuse, serious illness, the death of a loved one, or physical abuse. Of these cases, 52.5% (53 individuals) encountered these experiences during adolescence, 34.7% (35 individuals) in childhood, and 12.9% (13 individuals) in adulthood. In addition, 42% (73 individuals) did not encounter events they would classify as very difficult.

3. Presentation of the results

3.1. Correlation analysis

To test the hypotheses regarding the co-occurrence and directional relationships between mental resilience, rumination tendencies, and well-being, we conducted linear correlation analyses using Pearson's *r* coefficient, with a significance level of α = 0.05. The results of these analyses are presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3.

Table 1. Correlations Between Specific Scales of the Mental Resilience Scale and the Rumination Scale (N = 174)

Variable	RRQ – Rumination	
	r	p
SOP – Attitude toward difficulties and problems	–0.53	<0.001
SOP – Attitude toward oneself in difficult situations	–0.59	<0.001
SOP – Somatization	–0.49	<0.001
SOP – Emotional sphere and relationships with others	–0,53	<0,001
SOP – Attitude towards wounds	–0,61	<0,001

These results suggest significant negative correlations between the various dimensions of mental resilience (attitude toward difficulties and problems, attitude toward oneself in difficult situations, and somatization) and rumination.

Each degree of the Mental Resilience Scale shows a strong inverse relationship with the tendency to ruminate, indicating that higher resilience in each area is associated with lower rumination levels.

As shown in Table 1, all subscales of the Mental Resilience Scale demonstrated negative correlations with the Rumination Scale. In line with the hypothesis, it was found that the higher the level of mental resilience, the lower the tendency to ruminate.

Table 2. Correlations Between Subscales of the Mental Resilience Scale and Scales of the Well-Being Questionnaire (N = 174)

Variable	PWBS – Autonomy	PWBS – Environmental mastery	PWBS – Personal growth	PWBS – Positive relations with others	PWBS – Purpose in life	PWBS – Self-acceptance	PWBS – Overall score
SOP – Attitude toward difficulties and problems	0.54***	0.74***	0.53***	0.26***	0.65***	0.69***	0.73**
SOP – Attitude toward oneself in difficult situations	0.55***	0.71***	0.44***	0.27***	0.57***	0.72***	0.70**
SOP – Somatization	0.40***	0.50***	0.26***	0.15	0.34***	0.48***	0.46**
SOP – Emotional sphere and relationships	0.43***	0.58***	0.37***	0.40***	0.45***	0.58***	0.60**
SOP – Attitude toward wounds	0.29***	0.49***	0.26***	0.29***	0.25***	0.53***	0.46**

Note: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

The results from Table 2 lead to the conclusion that nearly all correlations proved to be statistically significant, with the exception of the relationship between the Positive Relations with Others scale and the Somatization scale. The highest correlation coefficients were observed between Attitude toward difficulties and problems and Environmental mastery, Purpose in life, and Self--acceptance. Similarly, a strong correlation was found between Attitude toward oneself in difficult situations and both Environmental mastery and Self-acceptance. A strong association was noted between Attitude toward difficulties and problems and overall well-being score. These findings align with expectations, indicating a positive relationship between mental resilience and well-being.

Table 3. Correlations between individual scales of the Well-being Questionnaire and the Rumination scale (N = 174)

Variable	RRQ – Rumination	
	r	p
PWBS – Autonomy	–0,41	<0,001
PWBS – Environmental mastery	–0,49	<0,001
PWBS – Personal growth	–0,17	0,023
PWBS – Positive relations with others	–0,17	0,027
PWBS – Life purpose	–0,33	<0,001
PWBS – Self-acceptance	–0,52	<0,001
PWBS – Total score	–0,46	<0,001

Table 3 shows that all the subscales of the Well-being Questionnaire are negatively related to the Rumination scale. The highest correlations were observed for the Self-acceptance, Mastery over the environment and Autonomy scales, and their value can be assessed as moderate. The remaining correlations were low or very low. The results are consistent with the adopted assumption that the higher the level of the tendency to ruminate, the lower the level of well-being.

3.2. Between-group difference analysis

To examine whether women display higher levels of mental resilience, rumination, and well-being compared to men, an independent sample t-test was conducted. The assumption of normality for the distributions of the studied variables was confirmed through statistical analysis, as skewness and kurtosis measures were within the acceptable range of <–1, 1>. Next, the assumption of homogeneity of variance between the compared groups was tested. Levene's test results were statistically non-significant for all variables, suggesting that this assumption proved correct. A chi-square test was conducted to assess the equivalence in group sizes. The result was statistically non-significant ($\chi^2 = 0.83$; $p = 0.363$), confirming the relative equivalence in group sizes. The results of the t-test and Cohen's d effect sizes are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. T-tests for Questionnaire Scales between female (n = 93) and male (n = 81) Groups

Variable	Women (M)	Women (SD)	Men (M)	Men (SD)	t	df	p	d
SOP – Attitude towards difficulties and problems	3.24	0.65	3.52	0.69	–2.75	172	0.007	–0.42
SOP – Attitude towards self in difficult situations	2.55	0.87	3.21	0.93	–4.78	172	<0.001	–0.73
SOP – Somatization	2.58	0.79	3.30	0.75	–6.10	172	<0.001	–0.93
SOP – Emotional sphere and relationships	2.82	0.60	3.16	0.75	–3.35	172	<0.001	–0.51
SOP – Attitude towards wounds	2.53	0.80	2.93	0.86	–3.23	172	0.001	–0.49
RRQ – Rumination	3.81	0.85	3.55	0.84	2.02	172	0.045	0.31
PWBS – Autonomy	3.80	0.89	4.16	0.87	–2.68	172	0.008	–0.41
PWBS – Environmental mastery	3.76	0.83	3.94	0.82	–1.48	172	0.141	–0.23
PWBS – Personal growth	4.33	0.69	4.36	0.72	–0.27	172	0.786	–0.04
PWBS – Positive relations with others	4.35	0.77	4.20	0.77	1.21	172	0.227	–0.18
PWBS – Purpose in life	4.16	0.89	4.25	0.88	–0.65	172	0.517	–0.10
PWBS – Self-acceptance	3.70	1.08	3.91	0.98	–1.35	172	0.178	–0.21
PWBS – Overall well-being	4.02	0.69	4.14	0.66	–1.19	172	0.236	–0.18

Note: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001*

The data in Table 4 shows statistically significant differences in certain scales between women and men.

Statistically significant differences were observed across all scales of the Mental Resilience Scale, as well as in the Rumination and Autonomy scales. Women scored higher on the Rumination scale (M = 3.81; SD = 0.85) compared to men (M = 3.55; SD = 0.84), with a small effect size (d = 0.31). For the remaining scales, men scored higher than women. The largest differences between women and men were found in the subscales of the Mental Resilience Scale, particularly in the areas of Attitude towards difficulties and problems and Somatization.

Next, differences in the levels of the studied variables were examined between individuals who had experienced very challenging events and those who had not. Statistical analysis, including skewness and kurtosis measures, indicated that most variables were approximately normally distributed, with the exception of the Rumination and Self-Acceptance scales. The chi-square test result was statistically significant ($\chi^2 = 4.51$; $p = 0.34$), suggesting an imbalance in group sizes. Therefore, a random sample of 73 individuals was selected from the group that had experienced challenging events to meet this assumption. Levene's test result was significant only for the Rumination scale, indicating that the assumption of homogeneity of variances did not prove correct for this scale. The results of the independent samples t-test are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Independent samples t-test results for the scales of the questionnaires between the group of individuals who had not experienced a very challenging life event (n = 73) and the group who had experienced a very challenging life event (n = 73).

Scale	Group 1	Group 2	t	df	p	d
	M	SD	M	SD		
SOP – Attitude towards difficulties and problems	3.51	0.67	3.21	0.67	2.67	144
SOP – Attitude towards self in difficult situations	3.09	0.91	2.67	0.95	2.78	144
SOP – Somatization	3.24	0.79	2.65	0.86	4.37	144
SOP – Emotional sphere and relationships	3.13	0.67	2.82	0.72	2.71	144
SOP – Attitude towards I wounds	3.05	0.74	2.43	0.82	4.78	144
RRQ – Rumination	3.50	0.95	3.89	0.73	–2.74	135.01
PWBS – Autonomy	4.06	0.82	3.84	0.93	1.50	144
PWBS – Environmental mastery	3.99	0.80	3.70	0.89	2.12	144
PWBS – Personal growth	4.33	0.68	4.34	0.75	–0.08	144
PWBS – Positive relations with others	4.28	0.79	4.23	0.78	0.38	144
PWBS – Life purpose	4.28	0.85	4.09	0.89	1.29	144
PWBS – Self-acceptance	4.02	0.95	3.56	1.08	2.75	144
PWBS – Total score	4.16	0.64	3.96	0.70	1.80	144

Note: Group 1 = individuals who had not experienced a very challenging life event; Group 2 = individuals who had experienced a very challenging life event.

The table shows statistically significant differences for the scales within the Psychological Resilience Scale (SOP), as well as for Rumination and Self--Acceptance. Specifically, Group 1 scored higher on measures of resilience and environmental mastery, while Group 2 scored higher on Rumination.

Statistically significant differences between the groups were found in all subscales of the Psychological Resilience Scale, in the Rumination subscale, and in two subscales of the Well-Being Questionnaire—Environmental mastery and Self-acceptance. Individuals who had not experienced very challenging life events scored higher on all subscales of the Psychological Resilience Scale, as well as on the Environmental mastery and Self-acceptance subscales, and had lower scores on the Rumination scale compared to those who had experienced difficult events. The effect sizes (d-Cohen) indicate that the largest differences were observed in the areas of Somatization and Attitude towards wounds.

4. Discussion of the results

The main objective of this study was to examine the relationships between psychological resilience, rumination tendencies, and well-being in young adults. Based on the literature review and previous research findings, three main hypotheses and additional research questions regarding intergroup differences were formulated.

The first hypothesis posited that there would be negative relationships between psychological resilience and rumination in young adults. The empirical verification of this hypothesis confirmed the validity of this assumption (Table 1). It was found that higher levels of psychological resilience were associated with lower levels of rumination in young adults. These findings are consistent with the existing knowledge about psychological resilience that helps individuals cope with everyday challenges and rumination that hinders effective problem-solving and decision-making. Referring to the research by Waugh and Sali,[18] who analyzed the relationships between psychological resilience and self-confidence or a sense of agency, it can be concluded that frequent unwanted thoughts related to unpleasant events or self-reflection are associated with lower resilience. Resilient individuals tend to experience more positive emotions and possess

[18] C. E. Waugh, A. Sali, *Resilience as the ability to Maintain Well-Being*, pp. 1–17.

the ability to emotionally distance themselves from extreme feelings, unlike individuals prone to rumination.[19]

The second hypothesis expected positive correlations between psychological resilience and well-being in young adults. This relationship was confirmed by significant positive correlations between all subscales of psychological resilience and the overall well-being score (Table 2). These results are consistent with previous studies that highlight the clear links between psychological resilience and mental health.[20] Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that psychological resilience plays a crucial role in how young adults evaluate their overall life satisfaction. A healthy attitude toward difficulties and problems along with a constructive attitude toward one's self in difficult situations seem to be particularly important for better environmental mastery, which reflects a sense of the individual's agency and ability to shape reality according to one's needs. It also reflects self-acceptance, which manifests itself in a positive attitude toward one's self and a mature evaluation of one's strengths and weaknesses.[21] Both elements facilitate overcoming challenges and coping with inevitable life setbacks, contributing to a higher level of well-being.

The third hypothesis posited that rumination tendencies would coexist with well-being in young adults. This hypothesis was confirmed by significant negative correlations (Table 3). The highest correlation coefficient was found for the relationship between rumination and the self-acceptance scale (Table 3). This may be due to the fact that rumination plays a role in constructing a negative self-image by focusing on repeated thoughts about one's mistakes, flaws, or failures. This leads to increased self-criticism and, consequently, diminished self-acceptance. This conclusion aligns with research on rumination in clinical groups, especially among individuals suffering from depression.[22] Another dimension of well-being that was most strongly correlated with the rumination scale was environmental mastery (Table 3). Therefore, a lack of control over one's

[19] F. Yi, X. Li, X. Song, L. Zhu, *The underlying mechanisms of psychological resilience on emotional experience*, pp. 1–12.

[20] T. Hu, D. Zhang, J. Wang, *A meta-analysis of the trait resilience and mental health*, "Personality and Individual Differences" (2015) no. 76, pp. 18–27.

[21] D. Karaś, J. Cieciuch, *Polska adaptacja kwestionariusza dobrostanu*, pp. 815–835.

[22] R. Cooney, J. Joormann, F. Eugène, E. Dennis, I. H. Gotlib, *Neural correlates of rumination in depression*, "Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioral Neuroscience" 10 (2010) no. 4, pp. 470–478.

thoughts can generate a sense of lack of control over the external environment, which, in turn, inhibits individuals from attempting to cope with challenges.[23]

4.1. Intergroup analyses

The intergroup analyses indicated that young adult women exhibited higher levels of rumination than young adult men (Table 4). Considering the fact that women in the general population are more likely to exhibit symptoms of depression and anxiety, this could amplify their tendency toward rumination, thereby creating a vicious cycle of negative thoughts that sustain these symptoms. Emotional coping styles may also play a significant role in this, as studies by Howerton and Gundy[24] suggest that women are more likely than men to rely on emotional coping strategies. Emotional coping is closely related to rumination, as both mechanisms focus on internal emotional states.[25]

Significant sex differences were also observed in the level of psychological resilience. Young men showed higher levels of psychological resilience than young women (Table 4). This is consistent with studies conducted among adults in Poland that suggest that men tend to have higher levels of psychological resilience than women.[26]

However, within the studied sample of young adults, no significant differences in well-being were found between women and men. This suggests that despite the differences in psychological resilience and rumination, sex may not play a significant role in the overall well-being of young adults in this specific sample.

4.2. Comparison of groups with and without life-altering experiences

A comparative analysis between young adults who had not experienced a very difficult life event and those who had revealed that the first group had significantly higher scores in all aspects of psychological resilience, rumination, and

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23 S. Nolen-Hoeksema, B. E. Wisco, S. Lyubomirsky, *Rethinking rumination*, pp. 400–424.
24 A. Howerton, K. Van Gundy, *Sex differences in coping styles and implications for depressed mood*, "International Journal of Stress Management" 16 (2009) no. 4, pp. 333–350.
25 S. Nolen-Hoeksema, B. E. Wisco, S. Lyubomirsky, *Rethinking rumination*, pp. 400–424.
26 A. Lasota, K. Tomaszek, S. Bosacki, *Empathy, resilience, and gratitude—Does gender make a difference?*, "Anales de Psicología" 36 (2020) no. 3, pp. 521–532.

two dimensions of well-being: environmental mastery and self-acceptance (Table 5). Individuals who have not experienced a traumatic event are likely not to feel regret about the past or engage in the repetitive rumination of events that could lead to chronic stress or negative emotional states. Self-acceptance may also be easier for individuals who have not experienced traumatic events that could diminish their sense of self-worth. The absence of such difficult experiences might mean that these individuals still have resources that help maintain high levels of psychological resilience.

In the examined sample, there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of the overall well-being score (Table 5). This suggests that experiencing a very difficult life event does not play a significant role in overall life satisfaction but impacts certain dimensions of life, such as emotional resilience, coping, and self-acceptance.

4.3. Limitations of the study

For all the confirmation of the hypothesized relationships, it is important to note some limitations that may affect the interpretation of the findings.

The first limitation is the correlational nature of the analyses. Correlations allow only the identification of the co-occurrence of the variables, but they do not point to conclusions about causality. This means that while statistically significant relationships were found between mental resilience, rumination, and well-being, it cannot be definitively stated which of these variables influences which others.

The second limitation is that most of the study participants were students, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader young adult population. Students may have specific characteristics, such as higher levels of education, access to social support resources, or fewer life experiences, which could influence the results and their interpretation.

4.4. Future research directions

Nonetheless, the results align with the existing literature on the determinants of mental resilience and serve as a good starting point for further studies. Future analyses could consider additional psychological resources, such as basic hope or self-esteem, which may also influence the development of mental resilience and well-being.

Longitudinal studies could provide more precise information on how the levels of the variables change over time. This would allow for a better understanding of how mental resilience, rumination, and well-being evolve over a longer period and how they may influence each other.

Another important direction would be to investigate the impact and effectiveness of various therapeutic interventions aimed at enhancing mental resilience, reducing rumination, and improving well-being among young adults. Such studies could contribute to the development of effective support programs to help young adults better cope with life challenges, thereby improving their quality of life.

5. Conclusions

The verification of the relationship between mental resilience, the tendency for rumination, and well-being in the young adult population is of immense importance both scientifically and practically. The results expand the knowledge about the determinants of mental health quality in young adults, which has important implications for future research and psychological practice. These findings provide valuable information for psychologists, educators, and specialists working with young people. Increased awareness of the factors affecting mental health quality in this age group may lead to the development of more effective support strategies, including prevention, interventions, psychoeducation, and educational and therapeutic programs. Ultimately, this could contribute to improving the quality of life of young adults. It is also essential to support young people in seeking foundations and moral values that may serve as significant aids in strengthening their psychosocial well-being.

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Effective management of social benefits for at-risk families: research in the Małopolska Region

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Abstract

The article presents an analysis of the effectiveness of managing social benefits for at-risk families in the Małopolska region. The main objective was to identify the role of social workers as social service managers in the administration of support for vulnerable families. The method used was a diagnostic survey method (CAWI), with data collected from 312 respondents. The results show differences in the evaluation of the system's effectiveness, with a prevailing view of moderate efficiency and a strong need to simplify administrative procedures. Key tools identified include access to socio-economic databases, expert consultations, and inter-institutional cooperation. The results also reveal correlations between job satisfaction and perceived fairness and flexibility of the system. Systemic supporting at-risk families requires not only effective management but also enhanced professional competence among social workers. The authors advocate for systemic adaptation to changing social and economic conditions.

Keywords

social security, at-risk families, social workers, social benefits, social services management

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1. Introduction

To be effective, organization management requires a complex approach.[1] At the local level, such organizations include social service centers and social assistance centers. These organizations deal with the distribution of benefits for at-risk families. The benefits, often called social benefits, which are granted to families vulnerable to different risks,[2] are part of social services and are the key support instrument that determines the improvement of the quality of life of individuals and their families in difficult financial and social situations. The idea is to provide the beneficiaries with a minimum standard

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[1] Effective organization management is one of the fundamental aspects of organization functioning, that include personnel policy, organizational culture, recruitment processes and existing managerial challenges. In the case of public administration units, human resource management and organization of work becomes of particular importance due to their influence on the quality of the services provided and the realization of public tasks. The research in the Małopolska region has focused on social workers as managers responsible for effective distribution of social benefits among at-risk families. Social workers are often case managers. W. Walczak, *Uwarunkowania polityki personalnej i ich wpływ na relacje międzyludzkie w organizacji*, "Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Oeconomica" (2013) no. 282, p. 284; E. Kowalczuk, *Kultura organizacyjna jako nowoczesne narzędzie zarządzania w samorządzie terytorialnym*, "Prace Naukowe Wałbrzyskiej Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania i Przedsiębiorczości" (2015) no. 33 (3), p. 156.

[2] Threats to at-risk families. Social risks involve situations or events that have a negative impact on the functioning of a family in social and economic dimension. They usually result in the loss of income, decrease of the quality of life, sometimes also deteriorated health due to e.g. unemployment, violence, addictions, accidents, disability. They not only disturb the individual's financial and social stability but also lead to other negative consequences in the family's development and stability. The legal point of view on this issue is presented in the Polish literature in, among others: J. Jończyk, *Prawo zabezpieczenia społecznego*, Zakamycze, Kraków 2006; W. Jaśkiewicz, C. Jackowiak, W. Piotrowski, *Prawo pracy w zarysie*, PWN, Warszawa 1985; J. Młyński, *Podstawy pracy socjalnej. Od teorii do praktyki*, WN UKEN, Kraków 2023; I. Sierpowska, *Bezpieczeństwo socjalne jako dobro publiczne*, "Zeszyty Naukowe Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej im. Witelona w Legnicy" (2015) no. 16 (3), pp. 45–58; Z. Domański, *Bezpieczeństwo socjalne*, "Journal of Modern Science" (2017) no. 2 (33), pp. 367–384; B. Rysz-Kowalczyk, *Leksykon polityki społecznej*, Instytut Pracy i Spraw Socjalnych, Warszawa 2002; J. Auleytner, K. Głąbicka, *Polityka społeczna pomiędzy opiekuńczością a pomocniczością*, WSP TWP, Warszawa 2000. And in the foreign publications: D. Pieters, *Social security: An introduction to the basic principles*, Kluwer Law International, Alphen aan den Rijn 2006, p. 136.

of living as well as safety and stability in life. The benefits can be financial or non-financial.[3]

Family allowance, social pensions, housing allowances, supplementary benefits and social services such as advisory, counseling, psychological[4] and social support form the landscape of systemic support.[5] However, these benefits are only effective if they are adapted to the needs of the beneficiaries. This, in turn, requires proper analysis of the clients' situation by social workers.[6] In this context, thanks to their competence and benefit management, social workers create a "protective parachute" for at-risk families. To be effective, they also must cooperate with other institutions, educational units and NGOs. This facilitates a holistic approach to the problems faced by at-risk families. Therefore, monitoring the effectiveness of the benefit distribution and adapting the support strategy to the changing reality, labor and service markets are necessary for effective management of the human capital of beneficiaries in this area.[7]

This article provides an analysis of the effective management of social benefits for at-risk families. The main research problem was formulated as follows: How to effectively manage social benefits for at-risk families.The main research purpose is the analysis of management of social benefits for at-risk families. The study was conducted using the diagnostic survey method, the technique was the survey and the tool was a survey questionnaire. The analysis also included the source materials (the literature on the subject) and observations.

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3 M. Grewiński, *Świadczenia a konteksty usług społecznychi socjalnych*, in: *System pomocy społecznej w Polsce – wyzwania i kierunki*, eds. M. Grewiński, A. Zasada-Chorab, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2012, pp. 63–65.

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5 *Meritum. Pomoc społeczna. Wsparcie socjalne*, ed. I. Sierpowska, Wolters Kluwer, Warszawa 2022, pp. 24–26; D. Moroń, *System świadczeń rodzinnych jako forma wsparcia rodziny w Polsce*, in: *Współczesne wyzwania polityki społecznej wobec rodziny*, eds. A. Kubów, J. Szczepaniak, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu, Wrocław 2010, pp. 323–343 (Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu, 146).

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2. Methods

The results presented in this article were obtained from the study conducted in 2025 among the staff members (social workers) of the Social Assistance Centers and the Social Services Center in the Małopolska region. The study was conducted among all professional social service managers in the Małopolska voivodship—about 1,600 individuals. As a result, 312 questionnaires were obtained, which means 5% of maximum error at 95% reliability.

The research was quantitative, and the research technique used was a computer-aided website interview (CAWI) conducted using the survey questionnaire. As for the sample characteristics, the majority of the group were women (91.3%), persons aged 41–45 years (26.9%), with higher education (90.7%), social work experience of over 20 years (29.8%), married (73.1%), generally satisfied with their job as social workers (45.8%) and rather not recommending the social worker career to their family/friends (30.1%). The detailed characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent profile

Respondent profile		n	%
Gender	women	285	91.3
	men	27	8.7
Age in years	up to 30	33	10.6
	31–35	29	9.3
	36–40	49	15.7
	41–45	84	26.9
	46–50	52	16.7
	51–55	43	13.8
	more than 55	22	7.1
Education	secondary	29	9.3
	university degree	283	90.7
Professional experience	up to 1 year	29	9.3
	2–5 years	62	19.9
	6–10 years	34	10.9
	11–15 years	41	13.1
	16–20 years	53	17.0
	more than 20 years	93	29.8

Respondent profile		n	%
Marital status	single (not married)	44	14.1
	married	228	73.1
	informal partnership	12	3.8
	divorced	21	6.7
	widow/er	7	2.2
Satisfaction from work as social worker	Definitely not satisfied	18	5.8
	Rather not satisfied	38	12.2
	Hard to say	83	26.6
	Rather satisfied	143	45.8
	Definitely satisfied	30	9.6
Recommending social worker career to family/friends	Definitely not	76	24.4
	Rather not	94	30.1
	Hard to say	88	28.2
	Rather yes	44	14.1
	Definitely yes	10	3.2
Total		312	100.0

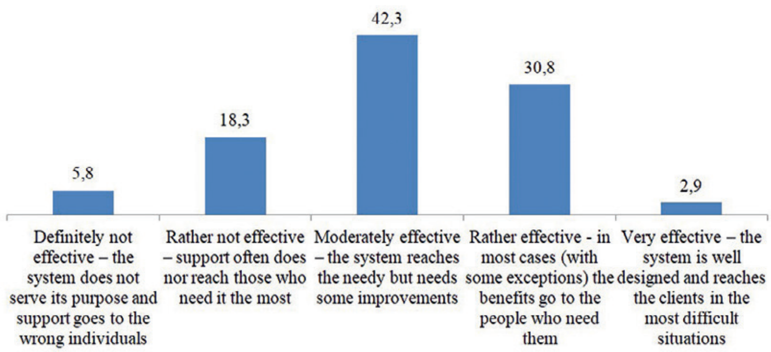
Source: Authors' own compilation based on a survey among employees of Social Service Center and Social Assistance Centers in Małopolska region

Statistical calculations were performed using the SPSS Statistic software, while the Pearson's chi-square test of independence, Pearson's R correlation, student's t-test and Anova analysis were used to show the occurrence of statistically significant relations between the variables. Correlations with a significance level of $p<0.05$ were considered statistically significant.

3. Analysis of the results

In the first question, the respondents were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the present social benefit management system in terms of reaching the most needy persons (Figure 1). Their declarations were divided, with the largest percentage of the respondents evaluating the present system as moderately effective, meaning that it reaches the needy but needs some improvements—42.3% of indications. Almost one-third of the respondents (30.8%) thought that the system is rather effective as in most cases (with some exceptions) the benefits go to the people who need them. Almost one in five respondents evaluated the system as rather ineffective because support often does not reach the needy individuals—18.3% of indications. In addition, 5.8% of the respondents admitted that the system is definitely not effective, does not serve its purpose and the assistance goes to the wrong individuals. On the other hand, 2.9% of the surveyed social workers declared that the system of managing social benefits is very effective, well designed and reaches the clients in the most difficult situations.

Figure 1. What do you think about the effectiveness of the present social benefit management system in terms of reaching the most needy persons? N=312 (%)



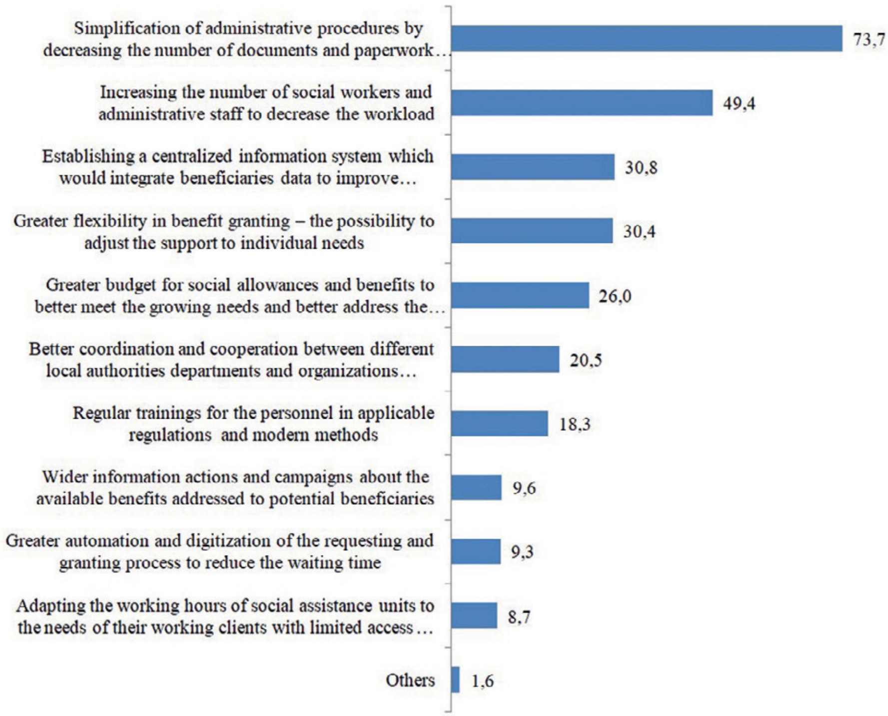
Source: Authors' own compilation based on a survey among employees of Social Service Center and Social Assistance Centers in Małopolska region.

When comparing the respondent subgroups, it can be noted that the effectiveness of the present social benefit management system in terms of reaching the most needy persons was evaluated significantly higher by those with secondary education (chi=12.647, p=0.013) and married (chi=33.424, p=0.006) Additionally, the greater job satisfaction (r=0.119, p=0.035) and the more frequently recommended career of a social worker (r=0.126, p=0.026), the more positive evaluation of the present social benefit management system. It is also worth noting that respondents who evaluated more positively the effectiveness of the present social benefit management system in terms of reaching the most needy persons, more often declared that the present benefit system supports individuals in overcoming difficult situations (r=0.485, p<0.001), they also more often considered the system fair in providing access to assistance to all who need it (r=0.486, p<0.001) and they more often positively evaluated the flexibility of the system in responding to urgent, individual needs (r=0.447, p<0.001).

When asked about changes in organization and management of the social benefits that could improve their effectiveness and availability, almost three-quarters of the respondents (73.7%) pointed to the simplification of administrative procedures by decreasing the number of documents and paperwork required to grant the benefits (Figure 2). Almost half of the sample also opted for increasing the number of social workers and administrative staff to decrease the workload (49.4%). Nearly one-third of the respondents stated that such a change would be establishing a centralized information system which would integrate beneficiaries data to improve cooperation between institutions involved, as well as greater flexibility in benefit granting—the possibility to adjust the support to individual needs. These indications were given by 30.8% and 30.4% of the respondents, respectively. In this context, less than one in ten respondents opted for wider information actions and campaigns about the available benefits addressed to potential beneficiaries (9.6%), greater automation and digitization of the requesting and granting process to reduce the waiting time (9.3%) and adapting the working hours of social assistance units to the needs of their working clients with limited access to standard operating hours (8.7%).

When comparing the analyzed changes with the respondents' profile, it can be noted that male respondents significantly more often opted for greater automation and digitization of the requesting and granting process to reduce the waiting time (chi=5.859, p=0.015) and wider information actions and campaigns about the available benefits addressed to potential beneficiaries (chi=5.405, p=0.020). Respondents aged 31–35 years and 46–50 years significantly more frequently indicated better coordination and information exchange between different local authority departments and organizations involved in social tasks (chi=16.004, p=0.014). Wider information actions and campaigns about the available benefits addressed to potential beneficiaries were also significantly more often declared by single respondents (chi=11.726, p=0.020).

Figure 2. What changes in organization and management of the social benefits could improve their effectiveness and availability? N=312 (%)

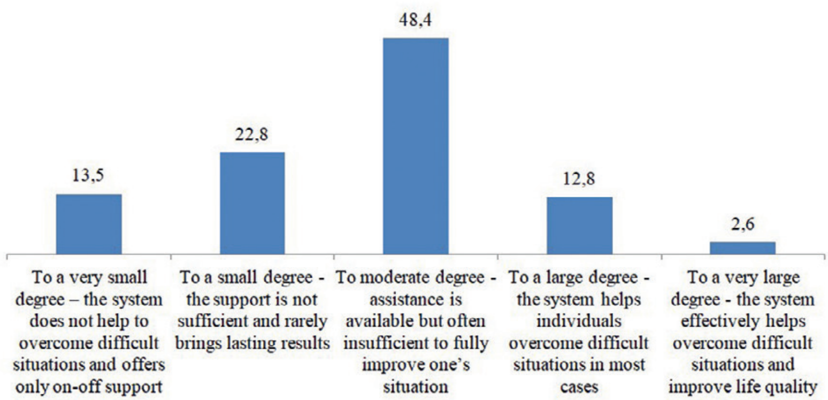


Source: Authors' own compilation based on a survey among employees of Social Service Center and Social Assistance Centers in Małopolska region.

The social workers were also asked to evaluate to what degree does the present system of granting social benefits support individuals who are trying to overcome difficulties (e.g. long-term unemployed, single mothers, persons with disabilities) (Figure 3). The analysis revealed that almost half of the sample evaluated the system as moderately effective because assistance is available but often insufficient to fully improve one's situation (48.4%). Almost one in four respondents thought that the support is insufficient and rarely brings lasting results (22.8%), whereas 12.8% declared that the system helps individuals overcome difficult situations in most cases. Then, according to 13.5% of the respondents, the present social benefit system supports individuals who are trying to overcome difficult situations to a very small degree, while for 2.6%

the system effectively helps overcome difficult situations and improve life quality to a very large degree.

Figure 3. To what degree do you think the present system of granting social benefits supports individuals who are trying to overcome difficult situations (e.g. long-term unemployed, single mothers, persons with disabilities)? N=312 (%)



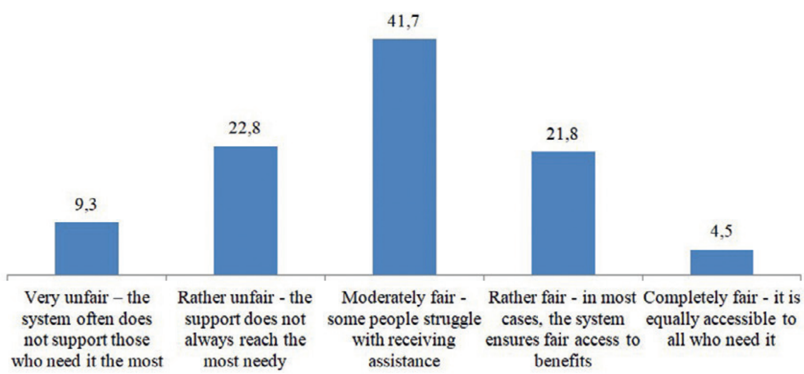
Source: Authors' own compilation based on a survey among employees of Social Service Center and Social Assistance Centers in Małopolska region.

The detailed analysis showed that the greater job satisfaction ($r=0.130$, $p=0.021$) and the more frequently recommended career of a social worker ($r=0.164$, $p=0.004$), the greater willingness to declare that the present system of granting social benefits supports individuals in overcoming difficult situations.

In addition, the more often the respondents declared that the present benefit system supports individuals who are trying to overcome difficult situations, the more positively they evaluated the effectiveness of the present social benefit management system in terms of reaching the most needy persons ($r=0.485$, $p<0.001$), the more often they considered the system fair in providing access to assistance to all who need it ($r=0.435$, $p<0.001$) and the more often they evaluated positively the flexibility of the system in responding to urgent, individual needs ($r=0.465$, $p<0.001$)

The analysis of declarations regarding the fairness of the present social benefit system in providing access to assistance has yielded some interesting results (Figure 4). As it can be noticed, the opinions were again strongly divided. The greatest percentage of respondents (41.7%) evaluated the system as moderately fair as some people struggle with receiving assistance. Almost the same percentage evaluated the present system as rather unfair (the support does not always reach the most needy) or rather fair (in most cases, the system ensures fair access to benefits)—22.8% and 21.8%, respectively. One in eleven respondents thinks that the system is very unfair and often does not support those who need it the most (9.3%). In turn, 4.5% declared that the present social benefit system is completely fair because it is equally accessible to all who need it.

Figure 4. How do you evaluate the present social benefit system in terms of providing fair access to assistance to all who need it? N=312 (%)



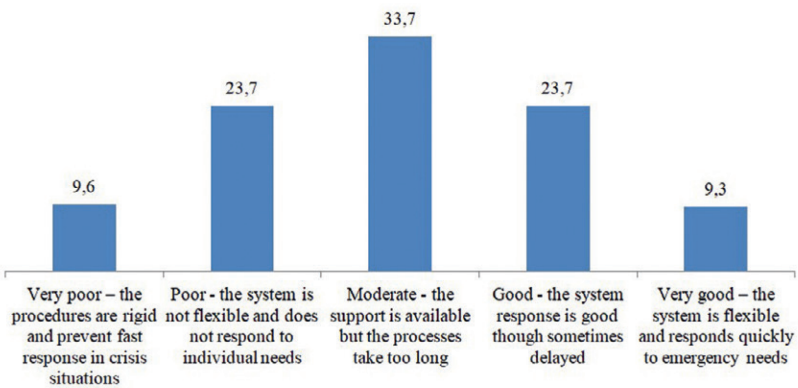
Source: Authors' own compilation based on a survey among employees of Social Service Center and Social Assistance Centers in Małopolska region.

When comparing the subgroups, it can be noted that the greater satisfaction from being a social worker ($r=0.123$, $p=0.030$) and more frequently recommended social worker career ($r=0.143$, $p=0.011$), the more positive evaluation of the present social benefit system in terms of fair access to assistance.

Moreover, the more positive evaluation of the present social benefit system in terms of fair access to support, the more positive evaluation of the effectiveness of the system in terms of reaching the most needy persons ($r=0.486$, $p<0.001$), the more frequent declarations that the present benefit system supports individuals who are trying to overcome difficult situations ($r=0.435$, $p<0.001$), and they more positive evaluation of the flexibility of the system in responding to emergency, individual needs ($r=0.436$, $p<0.001$).

The respondents were also asked to evaluate the flexibility of the social benefit system in responding to urgent, individual needs (e.g. in case of emergency or crisis situations) (Figure 5). In this case, the responses were distributed almost symmetrically as the same percentage of the respondents evaluated the system flexibility as good (the system response is good though sometimes delayed) or poor (the system is not flexible and does not respond to individual needs)—both options were chosen by 23.7% of the respondents. It should also be mentioned that almost the same share of the respondents evaluated the system flexibility as very good or very poor—9.3% and 9.6%, respectively. In addition, one in three respondents evaluated the system flexibility as moderate—the support is available but the processes take much time (33.7%).

Figure 5. How do you evaluate the flexibility of the social benefit system in responding to urgent, individual needs (e.g. in case of emergency or crisis situations)? N=312 (%)



Source: Authors' own compilation based on a survey among employees of Social Service Center and Social Assistance Centers in Małopolska region.

When comparing this feature with the respondents' profiles, it can be observed that the greater the satisfaction from work, the more positive the evaluation of the flexibility of the social benefit system in responding to urgent, individual needs (e.g. in case of emergency or crisis situations) ($r=0.159$, $p=0.005$).

It is also worth noting that respondents who more positively evaluated the flexibility of the system in responding to emergency, individual needs were also more positive about the effectiveness of the present social benefit management system in terms of reaching the most needy persons ($r=0.447$, $p<0.001$), they more often declared that the present benefit system supports individuals in overcoming difficult situations (r=0.465, p<0.001), and they more often considered the system fair in providing access to assistance to all who need it (r=0.436, p<0.001).

The last question involved a 5-degree scale evaluation of the most helpful forms of additional support in managing social benefits in the respondents' everyday work. The analysis showed that the most frequently chosen form of support was access to a database that would facilitate verification of the socio-economic situation of the clients and, consequently, accelerate the decision-making processes. Another popular form of support were consultations with social law and policy experts to better understand the relevant regulations. These indications received an average of 4.40 points on the 1–5 scale. With similar frequency, the respondents pointed out better communication and cooperation with other institutions like unemployment offices or NGOs, and psychological support for social workers to help them cope with work-related emotional load—4.32 and 4.29 respectively. The respondents definitely less often declared the need for support in the area of flexible working hours and remote work opportunities to adjust their working hours to the clients' individual needs (3.76 on average) as well as access to advanced IT tools enabling faster and more efficient processing of requests (3.73) (Figure 6).

The more detailed analysis revealed that the greater professional experience, the less often chosen support in the form of: access to advanced IT tools for faster and more efficient processing of requests (r=–0.118, p=0.038), regular trainings and workshops on applicable regulations and best practices in benefit management (r=–0.128, p=0.024), increased number of workers to process social benefits to reduce the workload (r=–0.119, p=0.035) and access to consultations with social law and policy experts to better understand the regulations (r=–0.119, p=0.035). In turn, the greater satisfaction from work, the more often declared the need for psychological support for social workers to help them cope with work-related emotional load (r=0.124, p=0.028).

When comparing the specific forms of support, it turns out that the strongest positive correlations have been noted for the following, significantly more often chosen, indications:

- access to a database to facilitate verification of the clients' socio-economic situation, which in turn would accelerate the decision-making processes, and centralized system of information about the benefits to streamline information for the beneficiaries: Pearson's r=0.505, p<0.001

- centralized system of information about the benefits to streamline information for the beneficiaries and access to consultations with social law and policy experts to better understand the regulations: Pearson's r=0.461, p<0.001
- access to a database to facilitate verification of the clients' socio-economic situation, which in turn would accelerate the decision-making processes, and access to consultations with social law and policy experts to better understand the regulations: Pearson's r=0.439, p<0.001

Figure 6. What forms of additional support in managing social benefits would be the most helpful in your everyday work? N=312 (%)

Source: Authors' own compilation based on a survey among employees of Social Service Center and Social Assistance Centers in Małopolska region.

4. Discussion and conclusions

Supporting at-risk families is not only our social responsibility but also a widely understood investment in the future well-being of families and local communities. Properly targeted social benefits can reduce risks such as poverty, violence and addictions, improve the quality of life and strengthen social relationships.[8] In this regard, they help build fair society where every citizen has the right to live with dignity. Every citizen is a full member of the social and family system. Because of this, their functioning depends on the available support and management skills of the representatives of the social service sector—social workers whose effectiveness correlates with how effectively vulnerable families improve their functioning.

The study conducted in the Małopolska region correlates, to some extent, with similar studies performed in other parts of Poland. However, there are not many of them and there is not much discussion about the results. In 2010, an article by D. Moroń was published, where the author points out that family benefits are an important form of support to the poorest families, but to remain effective, this solution requires regular validation mechanisms and needs to be adapted to the changing needs. After 14 years of systemic support of at-risk families, the postulates to introduce a more flexible approach and adaptation mechanisms to validate and update the benefits remain relevant. The study was conducted in 2020 by M. Holewa's bachelor's dissertation titled *Family benefits in Polish family policy* focused on the citizens' awareness of the available benefits. The results showed that this awareness was insufficient. The article referred to, in the study, that improving the awareness and competencies of social workers is a research gap in effective management of social benefits for at-risk families.

Similar study was conducted in 2021 by K. Kukla and titled *Effectiveness of social programs supporting families in Poland and selected European countries.*[9] The study included the analysis of a wide range of support programs (family and social) in terms of their functionality and perception by the stakeholders. The conclusion was that despite the purposes being legitimate, the operational

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8 T. Pawlak, *Rola świadczeń socjalnych w przeciwdziałaniu ubóstwu*, Wydawnictwo UMCS, Lublin 2023, p. 128.

9 K. Kukla, *Efektywność programów socjalnych wspierających rodziny w Polsce i wybranych krajach europejskich.* Praca licencjacka, Wydział Zarządzania i Komunikacji Społecznej Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2021, promotor K. Peter-Bobik.

effectiveness requires better coordination and simplified communication. The research in Małopolska region also highlights the need to simplify the procedures and relations between institutions, which confirms Kukla's manipulation regarding the improvement of support systems effectiveness.

Tu summarize the result of the study presented herein, it should be emphasized that more than one-third of the respondents positively evaluated the effectiveness of the present social benefit management system in terms of reaching the most needy individuals (33.7%). Some objections were present among almost one quarter of the surveyed professionals (24.1%). In turn, 42.3% noticed both disadvantages and advantages of the present social benefit management system in terms of reaching the most needy persons.

Regarding changes in the administration and management of social benefits that could improve their effectiveness and availability, almost three quarters of the respondents (73.7%) pointed to simplification of administrative procedures by decreasing the number of documents and paperwork required to grant the benefits. A high percentage of the respondents also opted for increasing the number of social workers and administrative staff to decrease the workload (49.4%).

When evaluating to what degree does the present system of granting social benefits support individuals who are trying to overcome difficult situations, more than one-third of the respondents gave negative answers (36.3%). Positive evaluation came from 15.4%, whereas almost half of the respondents did not choose any of the sides (48.4%).

When evaluating the fairness of the present social benefit system in providing access to assistance, positive responses were indicated by 26.3%, while negative indications were given by 32.1% of the surveyed professionals. In turn, 41.7% of the respondents remained neutral.

Indications regarding the flexibility of the social benefit system in responding to urgent, individual needs (e.g. in case of emergency or crisis situations) were the most divided, as positive evaluation was given by 33% and negative evaluation by 33.3% of the respondents. The rest choose the neutral answer.

When evaluating additional forms of support in managing the social benefits, the respondents most frequently opted for access to a database that would facilitate verification of the socio-economic situation of the clients and, consequently, accelerate the decision-making processes. This solution was followed by access to consultations with social law and policy experts to better understand the relevant regulations. Both answers received an average of 4.40 points on the 1–5 scale.

In the light of the above, several important recommendations and postulates were formulated:

1. Study managerial competencies of social workers as the key factor in effective support of at-risk families should be further developed.
2. Models integrating social management and digital tools to facilitate verification of clients' situation and decision-making should be introduced.
3. Standards of benefit system flexibility should be created, that would take into account the individual needs of families in crisis situations.
4. The influence of job satisfaction among social workers on the quality of the services provided should be analyzed, as it can be an indicator of the system's effectiveness.
5. Inter-institutional cooperation systems should be designed, especially at the local level to provide more comprehensive support to at-risk families.

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Wellbeing and mental health of seniors with different social background in Slovakia

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Abstract

Senior satisfaction with life can be defined as a retrospective assessment that reflects the overall level of satisfaction, well-being, and emotional response to the aging process. To search for significant psychosocial factors that influence seniors' satisfaction with life and mental health. A retrospective cross-sectional study was conducted using a structured questionnaire to assess various aspects of the lives of seniors living in rural areas. The research targeted seniors residing in the Nitra region, resulting in the collection of 170 properly completed questionnaires. These provided valuable insights into the experiences, challenges, and needs of seniors in this demographic. There was a statistically significant effect of women's previous experience of working life, the effect of psychological state before retirement, and the effect of mental health ($p < 0.014$) on senior's satisfaction with living conditions. Seniors who had a wider social network ($p < 0.021$)

were significantly more satisfied with the aging, as were seniors who had poor living conditions after retirement ($p < 0.032$). Seniors with a living plan were significantly more satisfied with the quality of life than seniors with passive attitude and lack of free time activities ($p > 0.017$). There is a correlation between the social background of the senior, his working experience and life-satisfaction ($p > 0.030$). Depression symptoms were found in 19.2% of older adults and anxiety symptoms in 24.8%. A correlation was shown between a higher prevalence of depression and anxiety and between the number of diseases and low social support linked with life satisfaction.

Keywords

Senior satisfaction with life, mental health, social background

1. Introduction

Population aging is becoming a major demographic and social challenge in many countries, including Poland and Slovakia. According to projections by the Polish Central Statistical Office, by 2050, people aged 60 and older are expected to constitute approximately 40% of Poland's total population. This demographic shift has important implications for healthcare systems, social policy, and community support structures. Healthy life expectancy is a key indicator of population well-being. Based on World Bank data, the average poverty- and disease--free life expectancy at birth is 77.6 years for Poland and 77.5 years for Slovakia, highlighting the importance of promoting not only longer life but also life free from illness and social disadvantage.[1]

The influence of socio-demographic factors on quality of life in the elderly seems to vary considerably among different populations, which may be due to the fact that different instruments are used to measure quality of life.[2] Polish seniors reported a mean satisfaction with their overall quality of life of 3.80, while their satisfaction with their health status averaged 3.28. In a comparable study[3] by Ćwirlej-Sozańska et al., which included 973 individuals aged 60–80 years living in rural areas of southeastern Poland, the average quality of life score was 3.58, and the mean health satisfaction score was 3.40. Compared to our results the slovak average scare was lower and the life satisfaction was poorer than in polish seniors.

The aging population represents a growing social and public health challenge, particularly in rural areas, where access to healthcare and social services is often limited. Seniors living in these regions face multiple barriers, including long travel distances to medical facilities, insufficient transportation options, and limited availability of professional care. These factors can significantly affect their physical health, mental well-being, and overall quality of life. The main research problem addressed in this study concerns the relationship between access to services, social support, financial security, and the mental and physical

[1] B. Kowalczyk et al., *Quality of life in seniors living in home environment in Poland and Slovakia*, "Annals of Agricultural and Environmental Medicine" 31 (2024) no. 4, pp. 552–559.

[2] M. Sováriová Soósová, *Determinants of quality of life in the elderly*, "Central European Journal of Nursing and Midwifery" 7 (2016) no. 3, pp. 484–493.

[3] A. B. Ćwirlej-Sozańska, et al., *Quality of life and related factors among older people living in rural areas in south-eastern Poland*, "Annals of Agricultural and Environmental Medicine" 25 (2018) no. 3, pp. 539–545.

health of seniors living in rural environments. Specifically, the study seeks to determine how these interconnected factors influence well-being, satisfaction, and readiness for aging among older adults with different social backgrounds living in rural areas. The specific aim of this research is to analyze the correlations between healthcare accessibility, financial conditions, social and psychological factors, and seniors' mental health outcomes.

For instance, financial conditions significantly impact health outcomes, as seniors with limited resources often face barriers to accessing medications, nutritious food, and adequate healthcare services. Similarly, rural environments pose unique challenges, such as limited transport and mobility, which restrict access to essential services, further exacerbating disparities for seniors in these areas. Seniors with higher satisfaction levels and strong support networks report better mental health outcomes, emphasizing the importance of fostering positive psychological and social environments for aging individuals.

The research on the quality of life, mental health, and life satisfaction of seniors is grounded in several psychological and pedagogical theories that explain how older adults perceive, evaluate, and engage with their environment.

1. Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (Carstensen, 1992)

This theory suggests that as people age, they become more selective in their social interactions, focusing on emotionally meaningful relationships and experiences. This concept informs the study's focus on social support, family bonds, and social engagement as determinants of well-being and mental health among seniors that was also confimed in the results of Soosova research.[4]

2. Active Aging and Lifelong Learning (World Health Organization, 2002)

From a pedagogical perspective, the active aging framework emphasizes the role of continued learning, social participation, and engagement in meaningful activities in promoting health and life satisfaction in older adults. This led to the investigation of seniors' participation in educational, recreational, and social activities and its relationship to their psychological readiness, autonomy, and quality of life, which was also confirmed in the study of Pikula.[5]

3. Psychosocial Model of Aging (Baltes & Baltes, 1990) describes how older adults adapt to age-related losses by selecting goals, optimizing resources, and compensating for functional decline. This framework supports the assessment

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[4] M. Sováriová Soósová, *Determinants of quality of life in the elderly*, pp. 484–493.

[5] N. Pikuła, *Poczucie sensu życia osób starszych. Inspiracje do edukacji w starości*, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Impuls", Kraków 2015.

of coping strategies, functional abilities, and adaptive behaviors in maintaining life satisfaction and mental well-being.

4. Theoretical Model Developed in the Study Building on these concepts, the author proposed an integrated model of senior well-being, linking health status, financial security, social support, psychological readiness, and educational engagement to overall life satisfaction. In this model:

- Health and functional abilities form the foundation for daily life autonomy.
- Social support and family relationships act as protective factors for mental health.
- Psychological readiness and meaningful engagement through education, hobbies, and social activities enhance life purpose and resilience.
- Financial security and access to services moderate the ability to maintain quality of life.

Older adults living in rural areas often experience more pronounced psychological, social, and physical consequences of loneliness than their urban counterparts. Research indicates that seniors in rural regions tend to exhibit higher levels of social isolation and alienation, which can negatively affect their overall well-being.[6] Demographic and epidemiological trends, including the increasing number of older adults living alone—particularly women due to higher male mortality and longer female life expectancy—further exacerbate this issue. The natural reduction or loss of social networks over time intensifies emotional loneliness and, in some cases, leads seniors to seek institutional care. Factors such as the death of a spouse, periods of mourning, or diminished direct contact with family members can further amplify feelings of isolation.[7]

Empirical studies support the link between well-being, quality of life, and seniors' performance across physical, psychological, and environmental domains. Zboina et al.[8] found that physical limitations, especially difficulties in walking

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[6] P. Chruściel et al., *Differences in the quality of life dependent on family status of the elderly living in rural areas – a cross-sectional survey*, "Annals of Agricultural and Environmental Medicine" 25 (2018) no. 3, pp. 532–538.

[7] P. Tománek, L. Radková, S. Buzalová, *Impacts of the coronavirus pandemic on social problems and poverty of the elderly in Slovakia*, "The Person and the Challenges: The journal of theology, education, canon law and social studies inspired by Pope John Paul II" 14 (2024) no. 2, pp. 131–146.

[8] B. Zboina et al., *Biopsychosocial factors shaping perception of quality of life of elderly people in long term care*, "Polish Journal of Environmental Studies" 15 (2006) no. 2a, pp. 940–944.

and mobility, significantly restrict the ability to maintain social contacts, contributing to social exclusion and loneliness. These mobility constraints are also associated with psychological consequences, including depressive symptoms.[9] Similarly, the study[10] observed that seniors deprived of family support reported lower quality of life scores across multiple domains.

Further evidence from Płaszewska-Żywko et al.[11] highlights that older adults often rate their health poorly, which is consistent with age-related dependency on others due to restricted mobility. Comparable findings were reported by Kurowska et al.,[12] where seniors living alone scored highest in the environmental domain of quality of life, suggesting that their satisfaction is influenced by the living environment rather than social or physical factors. This study[13] indicates that physical functioning is frequently rated lower, reflecting age-related declines. Interestingly, despite these challenges, the social domain often receives relatively high evaluations, indicating that seniors value social contacts and interactions when available. These patterns align with the current study, where the physical domain of quality of life was assessed most positively, highlighting the nuanced relationship between health, mobility, social engagement, and overall well-being in rural seniors.[14]

[9] L. Trnková, M. Kilíková, *Interventions leading to increasing the health literacy of diabetics,* "International Journal of Health, New Technologies and Social Work" 16 (2021) no. 4, pp. 72–73.

[10] A. Pavlovičová, T. Pavlovičová, *Impact of social services transformation process on feelings and emotionality of seniors*, "Przegląd Nauk Stosowanych" (2023) no. 38, pp. 9–26.

[11] L. Płaszewska-Żywko et al., *Sprawność funkcjonalna u osób w wieku podeszłym w domach pomocy społecznej*, "Problemy Higieny i Epidemiologii" 89 (2008) no. 1, pp. 62–66.

[12] K. Kurowska, W. Błaszczuk, *Wpływ wsparcia na jakość życia miesz kańców Domu Pomocy Społecznej,* "Psychogeriatria Polska" 10 (2013) no. 1, pp. 33–40.

[13] J. Bieľak, P. Majda, J. Jurko, Z. Budayová, *The theology of social work in the chosen volumes of Slovak authors*, International Scientific Board of Catholic Researchers and Teachers in Ireland, Dublin 2016, p. 345.

[14] M. Tabali et al., *The relationship between health-related quality of life and care dependency among nursing home residents in Germany: a longitudinal study*, "Gerontology & Geriatric Research" 4 (2015) no. 5, pp. 1–6.

2. Methods

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional research strategy designed to identify and analyze relationships between key determinants of well-being among seniors living in rural areas. The strategy was based on a correlational and comparative approach, using analysis of variance (ANOVA) to test differences and associations among variables such as health status, access to services, social support, financial conditions, and mental health.

The goal was to provide empirical evidence of how socioeconomic, environmental, and psychosocial factors interact to shape the health and life satisfaction of rural seniors.

The research sample consisted of 170 seniors aged 60–68 living in villages with the 10–20 km distance to the nearest town, of which 15% were divorced, 27% were without a partner, 42% lived in a household with a partner, and the remaining participants were single seniors living alone. They lived in rural areas and had an average level of education ranging from high school to undergraduate degree.

The research focused on the quality of life and mental health of seniors living in rural areas, with special emphasis on how access to healthcare services, financial security, social support, and psychological readiness for aging influence their well-being.

Objectives

1. To examine the relationship between health status and access to healthcare services among rural seniors.
2. To assess the effect of social support on satisfaction with life and mental health.
3. To explore the impact of financial conditions on health outcomes.
4. To analyze how the rural environment affects the satisfaction with the life.
5. To identify psychological and social factors (self-esteem, family support, readiness for aging) associated with mental health and wellbeing.

Hypotheses

H1: Seniors with better access to healthcare services report significantly better health status.

H2: Higher levels of social support are positively associated with greater well-being and mental health.

H3: There is a corelation between mental health and financial conditions.

H4: Different psychological aspects affect mental health among seniors with different social backgrounds.

Research tools

In this study, standardized and validated measurement instruments were used to ensure the reliability and accuracy of the collected data. One of the key tools applied was the Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), a widely recognized instrument developed by Diener et al. (1985). The SWLS measures the cognitive dimension of subjective well-being, focusing on an individual's overall evaluation of their life satisfaction rather than specific emotional states. The scale consists of five statements (e.g., *"In most ways my life is close to my ideal"*), which respondents rate on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The total score ranges from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating greater life satisfaction. The SWLS has demonstrated high internal consistency and reliability, with reported Cronbach's alpha coefficients typically ranging between 0.79 and 0.89.

We used the **Personal Financial Wellness Scale** (PFW)—short version as a standardized instrument developed to measure an individual's **subjective financial well-being—**that is, how financially secure and in control a person feels, rather than their objective income level. It assessed dimensions such as the ability to meet financial obligations, manage debt, save for the future, and feel comfortable with one's financial situation. Respondents rate statements on a Likert-type scale (e.g., from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree"). Psychometric testing of the scale has demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$), indicating that its items reliably measure the same construct. Test–retest reliability coefficients reported in previous studies ranged between $r = 0.78$ and 0.85, confirming temporal stability. The PFW has also shown strong predictive validity across multiple cultural contexts, as it correlates significantly with objective indicators of financial status and overall life satisfaction.

The results of the statistical analysis confirmed several significant relationships between the variables investigated. Both ANOVA and Chi-square (χ^2) tests revealed that health status, access to healthcare services, social support, financial conditions, and psychological readiness significantly influence the well-being and mental health of rural seniors.

3. Results

The findings of this study highlight critical correlations between various aspects of rural seniors' lives, emphasizing areas that require targeted interventions to improve their quality of life. The ANOVA results demonstrate significant associations between health status, social support, financial conditions, access to services, and overall satisfaction with life.

For **health status and access to services**, the analysis revealed a significant effect with an F-value of 8.45 and a p-value of 0.010. This indicates that variations in access to healthcare services strongly correlate with differences in health status among rural seniors. The observed mean square (MS) of 62.84 suggests a substantial impact of service accessibility on maintaining or improving health. The significant correlation between health status and access to healthcare services ($p = 0.010$) underscores the importance of equitable healthcare delivery in rural areas. Seniors in rural regions often face barriers such as long travel distances, limited transportation options, and a scarcity of medical professionals[15]. These challenges directly impact their ability to maintain good health. It has been shown that increased healthcare accessibility is associated with better health outcomes among elderly populations. The significant relationship between social support and quality of life ($p = 0.024$) aligns with existing research that highlights the protective role of social networks for seniors. Social connections can mitigate feelings of isolation and loneliness, which are common in rural settings[16].

The analysis demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between health status and access to healthcare services, $p = 0.010$, $MS = 62.84$. This finding indicates that seniors with easier access to healthcare (shorter travel distance, better transport options, and regular availability of medical professionals) reported significantly higher levels of perceived health status compared to those facing barriers in service access.

A supporting Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 12.36$, $p = 0.008$) confirmed that the proportion of seniors with good or very good health was significantly higher among those with high accessibility to healthcare facilities.

15 L. Radková, S. Buzalová, E. Kenderešová, *Therapeutic support for social service recipients with disabilities,* "Revue Internationale des Sciences Humaines et Naturelles" 14 (2024) no. 3, pp. 77–90.

16 D. Barkasi, V. Noga, *Choosing social work as a field of study*, "Acta Patristica" 15 (2024) no. 31, pp. 115–123.

The relationship between social support and overall well-being / quality of life was found to be statistically significant, $r = 1.73$, $p = 0.024$, $MS = 49.17$. Seniors with stronger social networks and frequent contact with family and friends reported higher levels of life satisfaction and lower indicators of loneliness and depressive symptoms.

The Chi-square test further supported this association ($\chi^2 = 10.27$, $p = 0.019$), indicating that seniors with high perceived social support were more likely to report good mental health and positive emotional well-being compared to those with limited social connections. Therefore, H2 was confirmed. Social support plays a crucial protective role in maintaining psychological balance and improving overall life satisfaction among rural seniors.

Similarly, **financial condition** and health status were significantly related, as evidenced by an F-value of 7.85 and a p-value of 0.012. The association between financial conditions and health status (p = 0.012) reflects the socioeconomic disparities that often exacerbate health inequities. Seniors with limited financial resources struggle to afford medications, nutritious food, or necessary healthcare services, leading to poorer health outcomes. The Chi-square test $\chi^2 = 11.42$, $p = 0.015$, showed the existence of a significant correlation between mental health levels and financial situation categories. Seniors with lower income were overrepresented in the group with poor mental health (29.8%), while financially secure seniors reported predominantly medium to high mental health (45.7% and 33.8%).

The analysis of **the rural environment and service access** yielded an F-value of 5.34 and a p-value of 0.029, indicating a significant relationship. The mean square of 43.78 points to the challenges seniors face in rural settings due to limited access to essential services. The significant correlation between the rural environment and access to services (p = 0.029) confirms the unique challenges faced by seniors living in rural areas. Limited access to transport, mobility barriers, lack of social services and community service in small villages.

Lastly, the relationship between **satisfaction and mental health** was also significant, with an F-value of 4.89 and a p-value of 0.018. The link between satisfaction and mental health (p = 0.012) underscores the interconnected nature of emotional well-being and overall life satisfaction. Seniors with higher levels of satisfaction tend to report better mental health outcomes. Interventions aimed at improving satisfaction could include recreational activities, volunteer opportunities, and mental health counselling. Such programs would not only enhance emotional well-being but also contribute to a sense of purpose and fulfilment in later life.

Table 1. ANOVA Results for Correlations Between Key Factors

Factors	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Medium square	F-Value	p-Value
Health Status and Access to Services	2	62.84	8.45	0.010
Social Support and Quality of Life	2	49.17	6.73	0.024
Financial Condition and Health Status	2	56.14	7.85	0.012
Rural Environment and Service Access	2	43.78	5.34	0.029
Satisfaction and Mental Health	2	37.44	4.89	0.018

Seniors with medium mental health levels showed the highest readiness for aging (45.7%), followed by those with high (33.8%) and low (20.5%) levels. A statistically significant relationship ($F = 4.56$, $p = 0.013$) indicates that psychological readiness is key to better mental health. Positive working experiences before retirement also contributed significantly to mental well-being ($F = 3.78$, $p = 0.028$), with medium mental health seniors reporting the highest percentage (50.4%).

Low self-esteem was most common in seniors with low mental health (29.8%), while higher self-esteem correlated with better outcomes ($F = 4.21$, $p = 0.032$). Similarly, seniors with fewer pre-retirement social connections and limited family support were more likely to experience poorer mental health ($F = 4.89$, $p = 0.019$; $F = 4.33$, $p = 0.031$). These findings underscore the importance of psychological readiness, positive work experiences, social networks, and family support in promoting mental well-being among seniors.

Several psychological and social indicators were found to be significantly related to mental health, as shown in Table 2.

- Psychological readiness for aging was significantly associated with mental health ($p = 0.013$).
- Positive working experiences before retirement also had a significant influence ($p = 0.028$).
- Self-esteem and other factors were significantly correlated with mental health outcomes ($p = 0.032$).

The Chi-square tests reinforced these relationships, confirming that seniors with strong family support and wider social networks were significantly more likely to belong to the high mental health category ($\chi^2 = 13.58$, $p = 0.011$). Conversely, those reporting low self-esteem, weak social ties, and unstable family environments were more frequently found in the low mental health group.

Therefore, H4 was accepted. Mental health is influenced by multiple psychological and social aspects, including readiness for aging, self-esteem, social connectedness, and prior life experiences, which vary according to social background.

Table 2. Correlation factors and mental health

Level	Low	Medium	High	F-Value	p-Value
Good psychological readiness for the aging	20.5	45.7	33.8	4.56	0.013
Working experiences before retirement	18.2	50.4	31.4	3.78	0.028
Low self-esteem and confidence	29.8	43.1	27.1	4.21	0.032
Narrow social network before retirement	34.6	39.7	25.7	4.89	0.019
Unstability and low family support in aging	36.2	41.3	22.5	4.33	0.031

The analysis highlights that psychological readiness for aging, fulfilling work experiences, high self-esteem, strong social networks, and stable family support are critical factors influencing seniors' mental health. Seniors who excel in these areas tend to experience better mental health outcomes, while those facing challenges in these domains are more likely to encounter poor mental well-being. These findings emphasize the need for interventions that enhance readiness for aging, foster social connections, and strengthen family support to address mental health challenges in older populations.

Although the relationship between housing conditions, equipment, and household assistance was not statistically significant ($p = 0.073$), a pattern emerged. Seniors who rated their housing as "Very Good" (33.8%) reported greater satisfaction with their living conditions than those in the "Low" (20.5%) or "Good" (25.7%) categories. Social support played a significant role in satisfaction, with those reporting "Low" satisfaction (40.4%) often lacking strong social networks compared to those with "Very Good" satisfaction (18.2%).

While access to clean water and sanitation was not directly significant in this study, its importance for health and quality of life remains evident. Financial security emerged as a key determinant of satisfaction with living conditions, as seniors with higher incomes were better able to afford necessities such as food, healthcare, and housing.[17]

Seniors with a living plan were significantly more satisfied with the quality of life than seniors with a passive attitude and lack of free time activities ($p > 0.017$).

The results of the study highlight several factors that influence the mental health and life satisfaction of seniors. The analysis suggests that engagement in personal interests, hobbies, and social activities, as well as the presence of family support and common activities, plays a significant role in enhancing seniors' life satisfaction.[18] Specifically, seniors who actively participate in hobbies and social activities reported higher satisfaction levels, although this factor did not reach statistical significance (p-value = 0.110), suggesting that while it may influence satisfaction, it is not as strongly correlated as other factors.

A lack of free time activities and networking, however, was found to significantly decrease satisfaction (p-value = 0.017). Seniors with limited opportunities for social interaction and engagement in activities outside the home tend to experience lower life satisfaction, highlighting the importance of maintaining an active lifestyle and social connections for mental well-being.[19]

Family support and shared activities were also identified as significant contributors to life satisfaction (p-value = 0.023). Seniors with strong family ties and opportunities for joint activities experienced higher satisfaction, underscoring the positive role of familial relationships in supporting mental health during aging. This finding reinforces the importance of social networks in mitigating feelings of loneliness and isolation.[20]

On the other hand, factors such as isolation, loneliness, passivity, and psychological problems did not have a statistically significant effect on satisfaction

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17 G. Paľa, M. Gažiová, J. Gruber, L. V. Apakina, A. Lesková, *Psychological-social attitudes of seniors towards stressful situations in the home environment*, "Journal of Education Culture and Society" 15 (2024) no. 2, pp. 563–571.

18 M. Roubalová, R. Králik, P. Kondrla, *Importance and method of teaching biblical Hebrew and aramaic in religious education of children and adults,* "Journal of Education Culture and Society" 12 (2021) no. 1, pp. 59–67.

19 E. Z. Jarmoch, M. Pavliková, M. Gažiová, G. Paľa, A. Datelinka, *Social work and socio-pathological phenomena in the school environment*, "Acta Missiologica" 16 (2022) no. 2, pp. 130–145.

20 E. Weiss, B. Akimjakova, G. Paľa, Y. Nickolaeva Biryukova, *Methods of re-education of specific learning disorders*, "Journal of Education Culture and Society" 14 (2023) no. 1, pp. 185–192.

(p-value = 0.187), though the higher F-value (5.40) indicates that these issues may still play a role in seniors' overall well-being, but their impact appears to be less direct. Similarly, a lack of involvement in senior community activities also did not show a statistically significant relationship with life satisfaction (p-value = 0.166), suggesting that while community engagement is important, it may not be as critical as family support or individual activities in contributing to mental health. In conclusion, the findings suggest that seniors' life satisfaction is most strongly influenced by family support, engagement in activities, and social connections. While issues like isolation and a lack of community involvement were less significant statistically, they still represent important aspects of mental health in aging.[21] Promoting social interaction, family bonding, and opportunities for meaningful engagement are key to enhancing mental health and overall life satisfaction in seniors. The correlation between the rural environment and service access (F-value = 5.34, p = 0.029) highlights how the lack of healthcare facilities and support systems in rural areas challenges seniors' ability to maintain their quality of life. This finding is consistent with *Vansač and Belovičová*[22], who advocate for localized healthcare solutions to address these gaps.

4. Discussion

This finding aligns with existing research that suggests increased healthcare accessibility is associated with better physical and mental health among elderly populations. Interventions aimed at improving transportation options and ensuring the availability of healthcare professionals in rural areas could mitigate health disparities and enhance the overall quality of life for seniors. The significant effect observed in the relationship between healthcare access and health status (F-value = 8.45, p = 0.010) underscores the vital role that equitable healthcare services play in maintaining or improving seniors'

21 K. Bundzelová, J. Neborásková, *Burnout syndrome among social workers in social service facilities in the context of the survived covid-19 pandemic situation and possibilities of its prevention*, "Przegląd Nauk Stosowanych" (2023) no. 38, pp. 63–83.

22 P. Vansač, M. Belovičová, *The importance of dialogue and respecting anthropological and cultural aspects in the evangelisation of Roma*, "Acta Missiologica" 13 (2019) no. 2, pp. 214–222.

health. This finding aligns with research by Bieľak et al.[23] which emphasize the challenges faced by rural seniors due to limited healthcare infrastructure, long travel distances, and insufficient medical capacities. Gombita et al.[24] said rural areas often lack adequate healthcare services, which has been linked to poorer health outcomes among elderly populations.[25] Study[26] indicates healthcare for rural seniors affects the quality of lifelong living. The analysis also found a significant correlation between social support and quality of life ($p = 0.024$), which aligns with authors Styczen and Budayová,[27] who highlight the protective role of social networks. Social isolation and loneliness are significant concerns for seniors in rural areas, where community connections are often weaker.[28] The current research confirms that seniors with stronger social networks report higher quality of life, suggesting that fostering social support mechanisms, such as community engagement programs and volunteer support, is crucial for enhancing seniors' well-being. Financial security plays a pivotal role in enabling seniors to afford healthcare.[29] The relationship between financial condition and health status ($p = 0.012$) confirms findings by Leskova et al.[30] and Beňo[31] which show that limited financial resources restrict access to medications and treatments, negatively affecting seniors' health

23 J. Bieľak, P. Majda, J. Jurko, Z. Budayová, *The theology of social work*, p. 345.

24 P. Gombita et al., *Senior homeless population was Covid-19 free in 3 shelter communities after adapting the life Island model*, "Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention" 11 (2020) no. 3, pp. 78–79.

25 A. Akimjak, L. Hanus, J. Hlinický, *Sakrálne umenie vo svetle Druhého Vatikánskeho koncilu a stav na Slovensku*, Katolícka univerzita v Ružomberku, VERBUM vydavateľstvo KU, Ružomberok 2019, p. 24.

26 Z. Budayová, M. Svoboda, M. Kóša, C. Tudose, I. Molchanova, *Lifelong learning and development for social workers*, "Journal of Education Culture and Society" 13 (2022) no. 2, pp. 359–368.

27 A. Styczen, Z. Budayová, *Zarządzanie zasobami ludzkimi w szpitalu powiatowym w warunkach niedoboru kadry medycznej – sudium przypadku Myślenic*, in: *Sociální média v oblasti řízení lidských zdrojů,* VIII, Uherské Hradište 2025.

28 Z. Budayová, M. Svoboda, M. Kóša, C. Tudose, I. Molchanova, *Lifelong learning and development*, pp. 359–368.

29 L. Janáčková, J. Fialová, A. Tyrol, E. Kováč, M. Pavlíková, *Support options for seniors in hospitals*, "Acta Missiologica" 18 (2024) no. 2, pp. 116–127.

30 A. Lesková, M. Yochanna, *Values and education for values of today's youth*, "Journal of Education Culture and Society" 15 (2024) no. 2, pp. 35–42.

31 P. Beňo, I. Juhásová, M. Samohýl, *Knowledge on fetal alcohol syndrome in Slovak population*, "Iranian Journal of Public Health" 48 (2019) no. 3, pp. 552–553.

and overall life satisfaction. Beňo[32] study along with findings by Maják and Beňo[33] confirmed that quality of life tends to decrease with age. This decline is often attributed to factors such as diminished physical health, increased prevalence of chronic conditions, reduced social engagement, and challenges in maintaining mental well-being. These studies emphasize the importance of targeted interventions to support older adults, focusing on enhancing their physical, emotional, and social quality of life.

The significant relationship between psychological readiness for aging and mental health (F-value = 4.56, p = 0.013) reinforces the findings of Bursová[34] and Trnková,[35] who argued that psychological preparation plays a crucial role in maintaining mental well-being in later life specially focusing on communication aspects and social networks. Seniors who feel more psychologically prepared for aging tend to exhibit better mental health, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to help seniors prepare for aging both emotionally and practically.[36] Free time activities might support mental well-being in aging time later.[37] Kenderešova and Rác[38] presented in the study that the family can provide support to prevent anxiety and loneliness if the seniors spend less time

32 P. Beňo, M. Samohýl, *The treated drug users in the Slovak Republic*, "Iranian Journal of Public Health" 46 (2017) no. 9, pp. 1295–1296.

33 M. Marák, P. Beňo, *The opinions of persons with hearing impairment on the help of assistive devices – hearing aids*, "Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention" 9 (2018) no. 1, pp. 60–66.

34 J. Bursová, J. Cherchowska, Z. Budayová, P. Martukanič, *Educational activity and life satisfaction of people in senior age*, "Journal of Education Culture and Society" 15 (2024) no. 2, pp. 252–268.

35 Ľ. Trnková et al., *Applying the nurse's communication skills*, in: *Zborník z XI. Medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie: Konvergencia poskytovania zdravotnej a sociálnej starostlivosti pre pacientov/klientov*, Wydawnictwo Katedry Filozofii Akademii Ekonomiczno-Humanistycznej w Warszawie, Warszawa 2025, pp. 109–115.

36 M. Dávidová, M. Hardy, *Attachment theory in relation to the meaningfulness of life*, "Global Virtual Conference" 4 (2016) no. 1, pp. 17–22; M. Dávidová, M. Hardy, D. Bachyncová Giertlová, J. Briššáková, *Súčasný stav a výzvy poskytovania ošetrovateľskej starostlivosti v zariadeniach sociálnoprávnej ochrany detí a sociálnej kurately*, in: *Zborník z XI. medzinárodnej vedeckej konferencie, Konvergencia poskytovania zdravotnej a sociálnej starostlivosti pre pacientov/klientov*, Wydawnictwo Katedry Filozofii, Warszawa 2025, pp. 53–63.

37 S. Buzalová, P. Vansač, P. Tománek, J. Rottermund, *Mental health and work-life balance among workers in social services*, "Clinical Social Work and Health Intervention" 15 (2024) no. 5, pp. 5–15.

38 E. Kenderešová, R. Rác, "Przegląd Nauk Stosowanych" (2023) no. 38, pp. 35–52.

outside the community. The family provides necessary support to increase well-being and acceptance of health status.[39]

Seniors with positive working experiences prior to retirement showed better mental health, as evidenced by the F-value of 3.78 and p-value of 0.028. This finding is consistent with Dirgová and Buzalová[40], who suggested that fulfilling careers contribute to a sense of purpose and stability in later life. Work experiences that provide a sense of accomplishment and self-worth appear to promote positive mental health outcomes in retirement. Restrictions on movement and social gatherings severely affected the elderly, increasing feelings of loneliness and isolation.[41] Social networks, a critical factor for seniors' mental health, were disrupted, limiting their emotional support. This isolation likely contributed to declines in psychological well-being, as reflected in higher rates of anxiety and depression.[42] The pandemic disrupted access to regular healthcare services, particularly for seniors in rural areas, as medical resources were redirected to manage COVID-19 cases.[43] This aligns with findings that access to healthcare is a determinant of seniors' quality of life confirmed by Stachoň study.[44] Many elderly individuals missed essential check-ups and treatments, which likely worsened existing health conditions due to historical aspects of social work development.[45] Pikula research[46] employed a mixed-methods approach, including quantitative tools (MLQ Questionnaire, Rasch Loneliness Scale, sentence completion technique) and qualitative methods (group interviews, content analysis of narratives). The findings reveal that Polish seniors focus on the present, considering their life purpose largely realized and grounded in past achievements. In contrast,

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[39] G. Paľa, M. Gažiová, J. Gruber, L. V. Apakina, A. Lesková, *Psychological-social attitudes of seniors*, pp. 563–571.

[40] E. Dirgová, S. Buzalová, *Development of labor market policy and unemployment in Slovakia*, in: *Actual social, health and pathological problems in society*, SAE, Krakow 2024.

[41] V. Maszlak et al., *Zero Covid-19 incidence among two large shelters of homeless population in rural settlement – in march-to july 2020: An important role of partial lockdown*, "Lekársky obzor" 69 (2020) no. 11, pp. 379–380.

[42] S. Zabavová, *Kresťanský aspekt a reflexia pôsobenia pomáhajúceho profesionála z pohľadu supervízora*, in: Supervision days in 2019, Nowy Sącz 2020, pp. 113–118.

[43] P. Vansač, V. Noga, *Spiritual accompaniment of patients in palliative care affected by the Covid-19 pandemic,* "Acta Missiologica" 15 (2021) no. 2, pp. 213–233.

[44] M. Stachoň et al., *Sociálna kritika a sociálna práca*, Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici Belianum, Banská Bystrica 2021, p. 143.

[45] L. Radková, *Vybrané kapitoly z teórie sociálnej práce*, Vysoká škola zdravotníctva a sociálnej práce sv. Alžbety v Bratislave, Bratislava 2023.

[46] N. Pikuła, *Poczucie sensu życia osób starszych.*

Polish seniors in Canada show a future-oriented perspective, motivated by plans, goals, and continued personal development even after achieving significant life milestones. Across both groups, relationships—with family, community, God, and oneself—play a crucial role in constructing meaning. Strong family bonds were especially notable among the diaspora, while seniors in Poland maintained closer neighborhood relationships, partially compensating for weaker family ties.[47] Polish seniors report higher levels of physical health, functional ability, and general life satisfaction, whereas Slovak seniors demonstrate stronger psychological well-being and environmental satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of considering both physical and psychological dimensions when evaluating quality of life in older adults and suggest that interventions to improve senior well-being may need to be tailored to the specific strengths and needs.[48]

5. Conclusions

The results of this study underscore the multifaceted nature of life satisfaction and mental health in rural seniors. The findings of this study confirm that the well-being and mental health of rural seniors are determined by a complex interplay of healthcare accessibility, social support, financial security, and psychological readiness for aging. Statistically significant relationships were identified between health status and access to healthcare services ($p = 0.010$), social support and well-being ($p = 0.024$), financial conditions and health status ($p = 0.012$), and psychological and social factors influencing mental health ($p < 0.05$ across multiple variables).

Seniors with better access to healthcare, stronger social networks, higher self-esteem, and stable financial conditions reported superior physical health, greater life satisfaction, and lower prevalence of psychological distress. Conversely, those experiencing social isolation, poor financial stability, and limited service accessibility were more prone to poor mental health and reduced quality of life. By addressing these factors, communities can create more supportive environments that enable seniors to lead fulfilling and healthy lives.

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47 Z. Szarota, *Wyzwania dla nowej starości – esej gerontologiczn*y, "Studia Paedagogica Ignatiana" 26 (2023) no. 3, pp. 37–60.

48 B. Kowalczyk et al., *Quality of life in seniors living in home environment in Poland and Slovakia*, pp. 552–559.

In social work practice, the findings of this study emphasize the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to supporting rural seniors. Social workers should adopt case management models that coordinate medical, psychological, and social support services to address the multifaceted needs of older adults. This approach ensures that seniors receive continuous care that goes beyond medical assistance to include emotional well-being, social participation, and access to community resources.

Training and professional development programs for social workers should place particular emphasis on the early identification and prevention of depression, loneliness, and financial distress among older adults. These conditions often remain undiagnosed in rural areas, where stigma, isolation, and limited professional resources hinder timely intervention. By developing strong assessment and communication skills, social workers can play a key role in detecting early signs of mental or social decline and connecting seniors with appropriate services or support networks. Furthermore, social work practice should actively promote community-based initiatives that enhance social inclusion and intergenerational engagement. Programs such as volunteer visiting services, home-based care, peer support groups or senior clubs. Pikuła[49] argues that education in later life can help seniors rediscover meaning and counteract loneliness. By engaging in educational and personal development activities, seniors can strengthen their sense of purpose, set goals, and maintain active engagement with life. A meaningful life, according to the author, is a driving force that motivates action, personal growth, and social participation.

Recommendations for further research

The present findings open several promising directions for future scientific inquiry. Future studies should employ longitudinal designs to track changes in health, mental well-being, and life satisfaction among seniors over time, allowing researchers to identify causal pathways between access to services and health outcomes. Comparative studies between urban and rural elderly populations are also recommended to explore potential differences in resource accessibility, coping strategies, and resilience. In addition, qualitative research—such as in-depth

[49] N. Pikuła, *Poczucie sensu życia osób starszych.*

interviews or focus groups—would provide valuable insights into how seniors perceive aging, social relationships, and life satisfaction in their own words and lived experiences. Further investigation should also focus on interventions that enhance psychological readiness for aging, including mindfulness-based or resilience-enhancing programs that promote adaptation and mental well-being. Finally, cross-cultural research is needed to evaluate the validity and adaptation of measurement instruments, such as the WHOQOL-BREF, the Aging Perceptions Questionnaire (APQ), to ensure their reliability and cultural relevance in diverse rural settings.

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Die soziale Verantwortung von Journalisten und Medien in der Lehre von Johannes Paul II.

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Abstract

Neben vielen anderen Merkmalen zeichnet sich das Pontifikat von Johannes Paul II. durch seine Offenheit gegenüber der Welt der Medien aus. Dies gilt sowohl für die zahlreichen Treffen des Papstes mit Journalisten als auch für die Einbeziehung von Medienthemen in seine Lehre. Der Papst sah in der wachsenden Bedeutung der Medien als Schöpfer von Realität sowohl Chancen als auch Gefahren. Daher widmete er in seinen jährlichen Botschaften zum Welttag der sozialen Kommunikation große Aufmerksamkeit der Verantwortung von Journalisten und Medienschaffenden für die Schaffung eines moralischen Medienraums, der auf menschlichen Werten und Würde basiert.

Ziel der Autoren des Artikels ist es, die wesentlichen Elemente der Botschaft von Johannes Paul II. zu identifizieren, die seiner Meinung nach entscheidend für das sozial verantwortliche Verhalten von Journalisten und Medien sind.

Schlüsselwörter

Johannes Paul II., Medien, Menschenwürde, Meinungsfreiheit, soziale Verantwortung der Medien

Abstract

Social responsibility of journalists and media in the teaching of John Paul II

The pontificate of John Paul II is characterised, among many other things, by its openness to the media world. This applies both to the Pope's numerous meetings with journalists and to the inclusion of media issues in his teaching. The Pope saw both opportunities and dangers in the growing importance of the media as a creators of reality. Therefore, in his annual Messages for World Communications Day, he devoted much space to the responsibility of journalists and media creators to create a moral media space based on the value of the human person and his or her dignity.

The authors of this article aim to identify the essential elements of John Paul II's message that are crucial for the socially responsible action of journalists and the media.

Keywords

John Paul II, media, human dignity, freedom of speech, social responsibility of the media

1. Einleitung

Das Pontifikat von Johannes Paul II. war eine einzigartige Zeit der Erneuerung des öffentlichen Diskurses durch die Bezugnahme auf die Werte der Wahrheit, Würde, Freiheit und Solidarität. Es war eine Erfahrung und eine Inspiration für Journalisten und Medienschaffende, die sich sowohl durch die Offenheit Johannes Pauls II. für dieses Umfeld entwickelte, als auch durch die Sensibilität des Heiligen Vaters für die Probleme, die sich aus der wachsenden Bedeutung der Medien als Schöpfer von Wirklichkeit ergeben. Es ist anzunehmen, dass Karol Wojtyla seine Kenntnisse der Funktionsweise der Medien in Polen im Umgang mit institutioneller Zensur, Ideologisierung der Nachrichten, Propaganda und Einschränkungen der Unabhängigkeit von Journalisten erworben hat. Als Philosoph und Theologe, der eine personalistische Weltanschauung vertrat, stellte Johannes Paul II. grundsätzlich das Prinzip der Person und ihres Wohls über alles. In einer schwierigen Zeit des globalen politischen und sozialen Wandels sensibilisierte er die Journalisten für die Wahrheit der Botschaft und die Verantwortung der Journalisten. Im Apostolischen Schreiben *Die schnelle Entwicklung* schrieb er: "In einer organischen und korrekten Sicht des menschlichen Fortschritts können und müssen die Medien die Gerechtigkeit und Solidarität fördern, indem sie Ereignisse exakt und wahrheitsgetreu wiedergeben, Probleme und Situationen umfassend analysieren und unterschiedliche Meinungen zu Wort kommen lassen. Die obersten Kriterien der Wahrheit und der Gerechtigkeit bilden in der reifen Ausübung der Freiheit und Verantwortung den Rahmen für eine authentische Ordnung von Pflichten im Umgang mit den modernen, machtvollen sozialen Kommunikationsmittel."[1]

Das Ziel dieses Artikels ist es, Elemente der an Journalisten und Medienschaffende gerichteten Botschaft der Lehre Johannes Pauls II. zu identifizieren: Grundlage der Analyse sind die Botschaften für die Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel und andere Äußerungen von Johannes Paul II. zu den Medien. Den medienwissenschaftlichen Rahmen bilden die Theorien des

[1] Johannes Paul II, Apostolisches Schreiben *Die schnelle Entwicklung*, 24.01.2005, Nr. 3. Der renommierte Experte für Medienethik, Prof. Michał Drożdż, bezeichnete diesen "Brief" als "das kürzeste Handbuch für journalistische Ethik" und "den kürzesten Kodex für Mediendeontologie"; vgl. M. Drożdż, *Nie ma wolności słowa bez… Spojrzenie etyczne na wolność mediów i wolność słowa*, In: *Współczesne media. Wolne media?*, Bd. 1, Hrsg. I. Hofman, D. Kępa-Figura, Wydawanictwo Uniwersytetu Marii Curie-Skłodowskiej, Lublin 2010, S. 19.

qualitativen Journalismus, des Medieneinflusses, der Professionalisierung und Deprofessionalisierung des journalistischen Berufs und der Grundsätze der journalistischen Ethik.

2. Die personalistische Norm als axiologisches Prinzip

In der Lehre von Johannes Paul II. ist das axiologische Prinzip der sozialen Kommunikation die "personalistische Norm", nach der der Mensch und seine Würde den wichtigsten ethischen Wert darstellen. Das bestimmende Element dieser Norm ist die Verantwortung für und gegenüber dem Menschen. Das personalistische Paradigma basiert auf Dialog, Beziehung und Interaktion und schließt – Intoleranz und Gewalt aus. Es ermöglicht die Schaffung eines medialen moralischen Raums, in dem Güte, Verantwortung, Integrität und Respekt zusammenkommen.[2] In der journalistischen Ethik entsprechen dem: Glaubwürdigkeit, Integrität, Respekt vor sich selbst und anderen.[3] Ein wichtiger Aspekt der "personalistischen Norm" ist die Freiheit, einer der Schlüsselbegriffe in der Lehre von Johannes Paul II. Er schrieb: "Die Gefahr der gegenwärtigen Situation besteht darin, dass man im Gebrauch der Freiheit von der ethischen Dimension zu abstrahieren versucht – das heißt von der Dimension des moralisch Guten und Bösen. Der spezifische Freiheitsbegriff, der heute in der öffentlichen Meinung immer noch weit verbreitet ist, lenkt die Aufmerksamkeit von der ethischen Verantwortung ab. Was heute im Mittelpunkt steht, ist die Freiheit selbst. Es wird gesagt: Es ist wichtig, frei zu sein und diese Freiheit ungehindert zu nutzen, ausschließlich nach eigenem Ermessen, das in Wirklichkeit nur eine Laune ist. Das ist klar: Es handelt sich um eine Form des primitiven Liberalismus. Sein Einfluss ist in jedem Fall verheerend."[4]

Die Bedeutung dieser Aussage liegt darin, dass sie die Spannung zwischen der Freiheit, sich im Hinblick auf die ethische und soziale Verantwortung für

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2 Vgl. M. Drożdż, *Osoba i media. Personalistyczny paradygmat etyki mediów*, Biblos, Tarnów 2005; K. Wojtyła, *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1982; K. Wojtyła, *Człowiek w polu odpowiedzialności*, Ośrodek Dokumentacji Pontyfikatu Fundacji Jana Pawła II, Rzym–Lublin 1991.

3 J. Pleszczyński, *Etyka dziennikarska i dziennikarstwa*, Wydawnictwo Difin, Warszawa 2015; T. Styczeń, *Wprowadzenie do etyki*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1993; M. Drożdż, *Etyczne orientacje w mediosferze*, Biblios, Tarnów 2006.

4 Jan Paweł II, *Pamięć i tożsamość*, Znak, Kraków 2005, S. 41–42.

das Gute zu entscheiden, und den Kriterien der politischen und kulturellen Korrektheit sowie des Individualismus deutlich macht.

In den Reden von Johannes Paul II. bestimmte das Thema Freiheit und Verantwortung maßgeblich die sozialen Botschaften. Es ist anzumerken, dass der Papst die Medien als eine Art Transmissionsriemen für universelle Werte betrachtete, deren Verteidigung seine Amtszeit prägten, und dass er Journalisten als Ausführende eines öffentlichen Vertrauensberufes sah. Aus der Sicht der Medienwissenschaft wurde das Ansehen des Journalistenberufes in den Jahren des Pontifikats von Johannes Paul II. und bis heute durch die Überzeugungen der Öffentlichkeit im Hinblick auf Mission und soziale Verantwortung geprägt.[5]

3. Verantwortung und Funktionen der Medien

Die gesellschaftliche Verantwortung der Medien besteht darin, sich am öffentlichen Diskurs zu beteiligen, und zwar in Bezug auf Funktionen, die sich unter anderem aus den Theorien über die soziale und kulturelle Wirkung der Medien ergeben. Diese Verantwortung ist umso größer, je mehr desintegrierte Medienöffentlichkeiten zu Mediennutzern (Sendern und Empfängern) werden, je mehr Codes und Sprachen der Kommunikation parallel und vollständig koexistieren und je mehr Ideen und Werte von den Nutzern der Medienpolyphonie diskutiert, verhandelt oder übernommen werden. Als eigenständiger Teil der öffentlichen Sphäre erfüllen die Medien in erster Linie Informations-, Bildungs- und Kontrollfunktionen.

In klassischen Modellen der sozialen Kommunikation werden diese Funktionen wie folgt beschrieben: Beobachtung der Umwelt, Koordinierung der Reaktionen auf Ereignisse, Vermittlung des kulturellen Erbes,[6] Hervorhebung von Ereignissen und Personen, Verstärkung sozialer Normen,[7] Vermittlung von

5 Vgl. M. Gruchała, *Dziennikarstwo: służba społeczna czy biznes? Analiza porównawcza badań opinii publicznej w latach 1996–2006*, In: *Współczesne media. Wolne media…*; A. Stępińska, B. Secler, K. Adamczewska, D. Halagiera, D. Zadrożniak, K. Łapińska, *Usługa, rozrywka czy służba obywatelska? Dziennikarstwo jakościowe w świetle badań nad rolami pełnionymi przez polskich dziennikarzy*, In: *Współczesne media. Wolne media…*.

6 H. D. Lasswell, *The structure and function of communication in society*, In: *The communication of ideas. A series of addresses*, Hrsg. L. Bryson, Harper & Brs., New York 1948, S. 32–51.

7 P. F. Lazarsfeld, R. K. Merton, *Mass communication, popular taste, and organized social action*, In: *The communication of ideas*, S. 95–118.

Werten, Unterhaltung,[8] Meinungsaustausch, Vermittlung von Wissen.[9] Bei der Umsetzung der sozialen Verantwortung scheinen die abgeleiteten Funktionen, d.h. die erzieherischen und sozialisierenden (integrierenden) Funktionen, am wichtigsten zu sein.

Die soziale Verantwortung der Medien ergibt sich aus ihrer Positionierung als Erkenntnisinstrument und als solches beeinflussen sie die Einstellungen und Entscheidungen der Nutzer. Daher sollte dieses Problem im Zusammenhang mit den folgenden Themenkomplexen betrachtet werden: Wert und Kultur der Information, Paradigma des Qualitätsjournalismus, journalistische Professionalität, Medienerziehung. Zu den Faktoren für die Bewertung von Informationen gehören Verständlichkeit, Objektivität, Originalität, Aktualität, Relevanz, Interaktivität, Transparenz, Manövrierbarkeit. Es geht folglich um die Verantwortung des Journalisten für die Glaubwürdigkeit und Zuverlässigkeit von Informationen, die anhand von Quellen geprüft werden und verschiedene Standpunkte berücksichtigen (Meinungspluralismus). Informationskultur kann als die Sprache der Kommunikation auf der Ebene von Wort und Bild verstanden werden, gemäß dem Motto von "Quest France": "Sprechen, ohne zu verletzen, zeigen, ohne zu schockieren, bezeugen, ohne zu aggressiv zu sein, enthüllen, ohne zu verurteilen unter Berücksichtigung des hohen Grades der Mediatisierung der Realität. Qualitativer (seriöser) Journalismus ist eine Form der Information und der öffentlichen Berichterstattung über Themen, die für das Publikum von Bedeutung sind, in einer globalen oder lokalen Perspektive, und die durch die Autorität des Autors glaubwürdig ist."[10]

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[8] C. R. Wright, *Functional analysis and mass communication*, "Public Opinion Quarterly" 24 (1960) Nr. 4, S. 605–620.

[9] W. Schramm, F. S, Siebert, T. Peterson, *Four theories of the press: The authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and soviet communist concepts of what the press should be*, University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1956. Vgl. B. Dobek-Ostrowska, *Podstawy komunikowania społecznego*, Astrum, Wrocław 1999; T. Goban-Klas, *Media i komunikowanie masowe*, PWN, Warszawa 1999; W. Pisarek *Wstęp do nauki o komunikowaniu*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2008; S. Michalczyk, *Teorie komunikowana masowego: skrypt dla studentów dziennikarstwa i komunikacji społecznej*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, Katowice 2019.

[10] Vgl. M. Chyliński, S. Russ-Mohl, *Dziennikarstwo*, Grupa Wydawnicza Polska-Press, Warszawa 2008; S. Mocek, *Meandry dziennikarskiego świata*, In: S. Mocek, *Dziennikarstwo, media, społeczeństwo*, ISP PAN–Collegium Civitas Press, Warszawa 2005; I. Hofman, *Dziennikarstwo poważne – wartość w mediach na przykładzie Polski*, "Communication Today" 3 (2012) Nr. 1, S. 94–103; M. Pataj, *Dziennikarstwo poważne*, In: I. Hofman, E. Górka, J. Maguś, M. Pataj, *Publicystyka Leopolda Ungera. W kierunku dziennikarstwa poważnego*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek–Instytut Literacki Kultura, Toruń–Paryż 2018.

Seit etwa 2005 besteht in Polen ein Interesse an der Theorie und Praxis dieser Art von Journalismus, das vor allem durch die Auswirkungen der Boulevardisierung der Medien, den technologischen Determinismus und die Absenkung der professionellen Standards, einschließlich der ethischen Standards in der Arbeit von Journalisten, ausgelöst wurde. Postulate für eine Rückkehr zum Modell des seriösen Journalismus wurden von Journalisten selbst (einschließlich der Redakteure meinungsbildender Zeitschriften) als Reflexion über den Zustand der Medien aufgestellt. In den Umweltdiskursen wurden Probleme wie die Emotionalisierung und Personalisierung der Nachricht, die Prominenz des Berufs, die Unterwürfigkeit der Medien, die Skandalisierung, die Verrohung der Sprache, die Straffreiheit für unprofessionelle Sender, die ungeprüfte Informationen verbreiten, die Unterwerfung unter den politischen Einfluss usw. identifiziert. In einer Situation der Deprofessionalisierung des Berufsstandes liegt die Lösung für einige der Probleme in der Medienerziehung, die darin besteht, das Publikum ständig für Manipulationsmechanismen, Schwierigkeiten bei der Entschlüsselung von Informationen, Sprachmuster und die Folgen der Verbreitung von Hassreden und falschen Informationen zu sensibilisieren. Die Medienerziehung ihrerseits beruht auf der Erfahrung, dass sich die Sehgewohnheiten der Mediennutzer ändern, wenn sie das vom Sender der Botschaft geschaffene Bild der Welt als real akzeptieren. Zusammenfassend lässt sich sagen, dass die soziale Verantwortung von Journalisten und Medien aus der Tatsache resultiert, dass die Berichterstattung von Journalisten/Medien die Wahrnehmung der Realität prägt, die über die unmittelbare Erfahrung des Publikums hinausgeht; daher besteht die Notwendigkeit, sich um die Zuverlässigkeit, Vollständigkeit und Ethik der Nachricht zu bemühen und das Bewusstsein der Journalisten für ihre Verantwortung für ihre Botschaft zu schärfen. Die soziale Verantwortung der Journalisten und der Medien drückt sich darin aus, die Verflachung der sozialen Bindungen, die Gleichgültigkeit des Publikums gegenüber realen Problemen (z. B. die Medien angesichts von Kriegen und Terroranschlägen, der Migrationskrise, des Klimawandels usw.) und die Ablehnung von gemeinschaftsbildenden Werten (wie Vertrauen, Loyalität, Gegenseitigkeit, Solidarität, Respekt, Gerechtigkeit) zu verhindern.[11] Diese Verantwortung beginnt bei der Vermittlung

[11] Vgl. P. Sztompka, *Sześć fundamentów wspólnoty*, "Idee dla Polski" – thinkletter, 27.10.2019, https://www.kongresobywatelski.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/ko-piotr_sztompka_szesc_fundamentow_wspolnoty.pdf.

von Inhalten, der Wahl der Diskurssprache, der Anerkennung ethischer Werte und gipfelt als Prozess in der Bildung eines informierten Medienpublikums.

4. Analyse wichtiger Dokumente und Reden von Johannes Paul II

Johannes Paul II. traf wiederholt mit Journalisten, nicht nur der katholischen Medien, zusammen und richtete Appelle und Botschaften an sie. Die häufigen Pressekonferenzen, die dieses Pontifikat prägten, förderten ein Klima des Vertrauens, und Johannes Paul II. sprach mit Respekt von der Arbeit der Journalisten. Er nannte diesen Beruf eine Mission, eine Berufung, eine Botschaft, einen Dienst und verglich ihn sogar mit dem Priesteramt. Ein Beispiel: "Die Beeinflussung der öffentlichen Meinung darf nicht allein von wirtschaftlichen Faktoren, von Gewinnstreben und Besitzstandswahrung bestimmt sein. Stattdessen sollte sie als eine in gewissem Sinne *heilige* Aufgabe betrachtet werden, die man in dem Bewusstsein ausübt, dass einem die mächtigen Medien zum Wohle aller anvertraut sind, insbesondere zum Wohle der Schwächsten in der Gesellschaft – von Kindern bis zu den Armen, von Kranken bis zu den Ausgegrenzten und Diskriminierten.“[12]

Bei einem Treffen mit Journalisten in Hiroshima am 25. Februar 1987 sprach Johannes Paul II. von den "hohen Idealen“ des Berufsstandes und beschrieb sie mit den folgenden Worten: "hohe Ideale: nicht Sensationslust, nicht Beherrschung der öffentlichen Meinung, nicht Manipulation der menschlichen Einstellungen, nicht Machtgier, sondern: Wahrheit und Liebe im Dienste des einzelnen Menschen.“[13] Im Jahr 1983 erklärte er: "Der Beruf des Journalisten sollte als *Aufgabe* verstanden werden, die öffentliche Meinung zu informieren und zu formen.“[14]

Die Verwendung moralisch-ethischer Kategorien in Bezug auf Journalisten war das Ergebnis einer bemerkenswerten Intuition und dann einer sehr guten Anerkennung des Potenzials der Medien bei der Verkündigung der Frohen

12 Jan Paweł II, *Prawdziwi chrześcijanie i znakomici dziennikarze*, "L'Osservatore Romano" (2000) Nr. 7–8, S. 20.

13 Jan Paweł II, *Wspaniała misja, zaszczytne poświęcenie*, In: *Jan Paweł II. Nauczanie papieskie* III, 1, 1980, Pallottinum, Poznań 1985, S. 263.

14 Jan Paweł II, *Posłannictwo informowania i formowania opinii publicznej według kryteriów prawdy, obiektywizmu i jawności*, "L' Osservatore Romano" (1983) Nr. 2, S. 19.

Botschaft im weitesten Sinne (nicht nur in der Dimension der Evangelisierung). Eine beispielhafte chronologische Abfolge der Äußerungen von Johannes Paul II. überzeugt davon, dass er fast von Beginn seines Pontifikats an die Rolle der Journalisten und der Medien deutlich hervorgehoben hat: "Zweifelsohne bilden die Massenmedien heute eine der großen Kräfte, welche die Welt prägen. In wachsender Zahl sind auf diesem Gebiet Menschen mit guter Begabung und bester Vorbereitung dazu berufen, hier ihr Betätigungsfeld zu finden und die ihnen eigene Berufung zu erfüllen. Die Kirche denkt an sie in aufmerksamer Verbundenheit und mit Achtung, und sie betet für sie. Wenige Berufe erfordern soviel Energie, Hingabe, Lauterkeit und Verantwortungsbewusstsein wie dieser, und es gibt wenig Berufe, die einen ähnlich großen Einfluss auf die Geschicke der Menschheit haben;"[15]"Die Kirche, die die enormen Möglichkeiten der Massenmedien wahrnimmt, hat zu dieser positiven Beurteilung stets auch Aufforderungen hinzugefügt, die über bloßen Enthusiasmus hinausgehen, und ruft dazu auf, zu reflektieren und zu bedenken, welche Suggestivkraft diese Medien besitzen und weiterhin besitzen werden in ihren verschiedenen Einflüssen auf den Menschen;"[16] "Die Mittel der Sozialen Kommunikation können – richtig genutzt – dazu beitragen, eine menschliche Gemeinschaft zu schaffen und aufrechtzuerhalten, die auf Gerechtigkeit und Liebe beruht; und insoweit sie das tun, werden sie Zeichen der Hoffnung sein. Die Medien der gesellschaftlichen Kommunikation sind in der Tat der neue "Areopag" der Welt von heute – ein großes Forum, das im besten Fall den Austausch wahrheitsgemäßer Informationen, konstruktiver Ideen und echter Werte ermöglicht und so Gemeinschaft schafft."[17]

Johannes Paul II. verknüpfte das Funktionieren der Medien mit der Verantwortung, die Haltung der Gemeinschaft zu prägen und gleichzeitig offen für den Dialog zu sein. Freiheit, Güte und Wahrheit wurden zu grundlegenden Elementen des journalistischen Auftrags. Im Jahr 1984 erläuterte er seinen Standpunkt: "Der journalistische Auftrag erfordert heute mehr noch als gestern fachliche Kompetenz und moralische Verantwortung. Denn mit diesen mächtigen

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[15] Johannes Paul II, *Soziale Kommunikationsmittel und Familie*. Botschaft zum XIV. Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, 1980.

[16] Johannes Paul II, *Soziale Kommunikation und verantwortliche menschliche Freiheit*. Botschaft zum XV. Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, 1981, Nr. 1.

[17] Johannes Paul II, *In der Kraft des Heiligen Geistes die Hoffnung vermitteln*. Botschaft zum XXXII. Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, 1998, Nr. 4, 5.

Instrumenten kann sie das Bewusstsein für das Gute prägen. Sie kann ihnen einen Sinn für Gott einflößen, sie zur Tugendhaftigkeit erziehen, ihre Hoffnung stärken, ihre Sensibilität für transzendente Werte wiederbeleben. Ihre Arbeit kann all das erleuchten, leiten und unterstützen, was wirklich der authentischen und integralen Entwicklung des menschlichen Zusammenlebens dient."[18]

Da er sich der Auswirkungen der technologischen Revolutionen bewusst war, stellte Johannes Paul II. unter Bezugnahme auf die wichtigsten ethischen Werte den Journalisten Aufgaben. Sie betreffen die Art und Weise, wie wir in einer Situation kommunizieren, in der sich Kommunikation hin zu einer schnelleren, unreflektierten, Zeit und Raum auslöschenden, übermäßig (bis hin zum Chaos) mit Informationen überladenen Angelegenheit verändert hat. Er sagte unter anderem: "Die Anstrengungen zur Förderung eines kritischen Gewissens müssen intensiviert werden. Dieses Gewissen soll die Einstellungen und das Verhalten nicht nur von Katholiken und brüderlichen Christen, sondern von allen Männern und Frauen, Erwachsenen und Jugendlichen prägen, sodass sie als freie und verantwortliche Personen die Produktionen und Auswahlmöglichkeiten der Medien der sozialen Kommunikation erkennen, beurteilen und entsprechend handeln können."[19] In einer anderen Rede an die katholischen Journalisten Italiens fügte er hinzu: "Der Journalismus ist eine Arbeit, die, indem sie die Intelligenz in den Dienst der Wahrheit und des Guten stellt, eine bedeutende Rolle bei der Orientierung der Mentalität und des individuellen und sozialen Gewissens spielt."[20]

Viel Aufmerksamkeit schenkte der Heilige Vater der Qualität der Information: "Der Tag, an dem man sagen kann, dass *die Übermittlung von Informationen* wirklich gleichbedeutend ist mit dem Aufbau brüderlicher Bande, und *dass Information* selbst *Solidarität* bedeutet, wird der Tag sein, an dem die sozialen Medien ihr schönstes Ziel erreichen;"[21] "Gemäß dem Recht auf Information, das jeder Mensch hat, sollte der Inhalt der Botschaft immer der Wahrheit entsprechen und unter Berücksichtigung von Gerechtigkeit und Liebe vollständig

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[18] Jan Paweł II, *Do dziennikarzy: jesteśmy towarzyszami podróży w służbie pokoju między ludźmi*, "L'Osservatore Romano" (1984) Nr. 7, S. 9.

[19] Johannes Paul II, *Soziale Kommunikation und verantwortliche menschliche Freiheit*. Botschaft zum XV. Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, 1981, Nr. 6.

[20] Jan Paweł II, *Posłannictwo informowania i formowania opinii publicznej według kryteriów prawdy, obiektywizmu i jasności*, "L'Osservatore Romano" (1983) Nr. 2, S. 19.

[21] Johannes Paul II, *Soziale Kommunikation und die Förderung von Solidarität und Brüderlichkeit zwischen Völkern und Nationen*. Botschaft zum XXII. Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, 1988.

sein;"[22] "Vermeiden Sie oberflächliche Informationen und eine einseitige Betonung des Negativen sowie Sensationslust ohne Rücksicht auf die Persönlichkeitsrechte jedes Einzelnen. Es gibt keine Informationen oder Botschaften ohne Bezug zu Werten."[23] In diesen Aussagen modellierte er de facto die Verantwortungsmuster von Journalisten für das Wohlergehen der Mediennutzer, das sich in einem Gefühl der Subjektivität ausdrückt. Zuverlässig aufbereitete Informationen stellen die Glaubwürdigkeit des Journalisten und seine Werkstattkompetenz dar, vor allem aber zeugen sie von einer partnerschaftlichen, relationalen Haltung gegenüber dem Publikum. Ein Beispiel: "Die richtige Ordnung der sozialen Kommunikation und eine gerechte Aufteilung ihres Nutzens unter voller Wahrung der Rechte aller schaffen Bedingungen und ein Klima, das einen gegenseitig bereichernden Dialog zwischen Bürgern, Nomaden und verschiedenen Kulturen ermöglicht. Ungerechtigkeit und Unordnung in diesem Bereich hingegen begünstigen das Entstehen von Konfliktsituationen."[24] Johannes Paul II. definierte die Aufgabe des Journalismus im Zusammenhang mit der Synergie der zivilisatorischen Prozesse: "In einer organischen und korrekten Sicht des menschlichen Fortschritts können und müssen die Medien die Gerechtigkeit und Solidarität fördern, indem sie Ereignisse exakt und wahrheitsgetreu wiedergeben, Probleme und Situationen umfassend analysieren und unterschiedliche Meinungen zu Wort kommen lassen."[25] Er sagte auch: "Die Art Ihrer Arbeit bringt es mit sich, dass Sie über eine Vielzahl von Ereignissen urteilen, aber das erfordert nicht nur ein großes Verantwortungsbewusstsein, sondern auch absolute Objektivität und Unparteilichkeit. Die Wahrheit muss die Quelle und das Kriterium für die Freiheit der Information sein", und weiter: "Da der Journalismus ein Zeugnis für die täglichen Aktivitäten des Menschen ist, kann er nicht umhin, von seiner angeborenen Würde zu zeugen." [26]

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22 Johannes Paul II, *Soziale Kommunikation für eine christliche Förderung der Jugend*. Botschaft zum XIX. Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, 1985, Nr. 2.

23 Johannes Paul II, *Ansprache an die Vertreter aus dem Bereich der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel*, Einsiedeln, 16.06.1984.

24 Johannes Paul II, *Soziale Kommunikation und die Förderung des Friedens*. Botschaft zum XVII. Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, 1983; Ähnlich in: *Soziale Kommunikation im Dienst von Gerechtigkeit und Frieden*. Botschaft zum XXI. Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel, 1987.

25 Johannes Paul II, Apostolisches Schreiben *Die schnelle Entwicklung*, 24.01.2005.

26 Jan Paweł II, *Prawda winna być źródłem i kryterium wolności także w informacji*, 10.02.1984, In: A. Lewek, *Media i dziedzictwo w nauczaniu Jana Pawła II*, Instytut Papieża Jana Pawła II, Warszwa 2008.

Die Kraft der Botschaft, die direkt von den ausgewählten Zitaten ausgeht, macht im Grunde jeden Kommentar überflüssig. Johannes Paul II. sprach zu den Journalisten aus der Position einer Autorität, die sich mit den Medien beschäftigt und sich ihrer Bedeutung bewusst ist. Als er den Beruf des Journalisten aus einer axiologischen Perspektive heraus definierte, benutzte er ständig den Dreiklang: Wahrheit, Güte, Würde. Beim aufmerksamen Hören auf die Lehre des Heiligen Vaters zeigt sich, dass sie von den Paradigmen des Qualitätsjournalismus geleitet ist. Dieser Journalismus erfüllt als wünschenswerte Art der Kommunikation über wichtige Themen die Kriterien der vom Papst angesprochenen Werte. Aus den Äußerungen von Johannes Paul II. lässt sich schließen, dass er der sozialen Wirkung und der Verantwortung der Journalisten große Aufmerksamkeit schenkte. Er beobachtete die Prozesse der Trivialisierung von Problemen, der Verrohung der Sprache, der Nachlässigkeit in Bezug auf die Genauigkeit der Informationen, der emotionalen Erzeugung von Bildern der Realität, die in der Realität des "globalen Dorfes" fast zu einem Prinzip der Arbeit von "Journalisten" wurden (die Anführungszeichen dienen dazu, die Deprofessionalisierung des Berufs zu betonen). Metaphorisch gesprochen verloren die Worte ihre Bedeutung, sie schlossen aus, verletzten, deformierten die Realität und nahmen den Menschen die Zuflucht zu sicheren Informationen und Erklärungen. Auch Journalisten, insbesondere in Polen nach 2005 (u.a. Chefredakteure der meinungsbildenden Presse, ermutigt durch Pater Adam Boniecki), haben in unterschiedlicher Intensität im Medienraum gegen diese Prozesse agiert. Aus den Lehren von Johannes Paul II. lässt sich ableiten, dass er die Arbeit von Journalisten als einen öffentlichen Vertrauensberuf betrachtete, der sie zu einer ethischen Kommunikation im Geiste der Wahrheit, der Freiheit und des Guten verpflichtet.

In diesem Zusammenhang ist es wichtig zu erwähnen, dass die Linie von Johannes Paul II. durch die Tätigkeit des Päpstlichen Rates für die sozialen Kommunikationsmittel bestätigt wurde, der sich auf das Dekret über die sozialen Kommunikationsmittel *Inter mirifica* des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils stützt. Der Vorgänger des Rates war die Päpstliche Kommission für die Kommunikationsmittel, die 1988 von Johannes Paul II. in ihrem Rang erhoben wurde. In der Zeit bis zum Ende seines Pontifikats formulierte der Rat eine Reihe von Anordnungen, die in Dokumenten wie: ‚Pornographie und Gewalt in den Kommunikationsmedien' (1989), ‚Richtlinien für die ökumenische und interreligiöse Zusammenarbeit im Kommunikationswesen' (1989), ‚Aetatis Novae' (1992), ‚100 Jahre Kino' (1995), ‚Ethik in der Werbung' (1997), ‚Ethik in den sozialen

Kommunikation' (2000), ,Kirche und Internet' (2002), ,Ethik im Internet' (2002), die Rede von Erzbischof J. P. Foley anlässlich des 50-jährigen Bestehens des Weltverbandes der Werbetreibenden (2003), Presseveröffentlichungen zu dem von Papst Johannes Paul II. für die Botschaft zum Welttag der sozialen Kommunikationsmittel jeweils gewählten Thema (2005). Die vom Rat herausgegebenen Dokumente deckten sich mit den Themen der Medienansprachen des Heiligen Vaters über die Entwicklung der Informationstechnologie, die Medienerziehung, die Medienethik, die Meinungsfreiheit, die Verantwortung des Senders und des Publikums für die Qualität der Kommunikation und den Einsatz der Medien in der interkulturellen Kommunikation. Auf der Grundlage der Lektüre dieser Texte ist es auch möglich, die Bedeutung und Interpretation der sozialen Verantwortung von Journalisten und Medien in Bezug auf das menschliche Wohlergehen abzuleiten.

5. Schlussfolgerungen

Wie aus den Analysen hervorgeht, betrachtete Johannes Paul II. die Arbeit von Journalisten nicht nur als Beruf, sondern als eine Mission. Er betonte, dass der Einfluss der Medien auf die öffentliche Meinung auf ethischen Werten basieren sollte und nicht ausschließlich auf wirtschaftlichem Interesse oder Sensationslust. In der journalistischen Arbeit stehen Wahrheit, Güte und die Würde des Menschen im Vordergrund, und die Aufgabe des Journalisten besteht darin, zu informieren, die öffentliche Meinung zu gestalten sowie Gerechtigkeit und soziale Solidarität zu fördern.

Der Papst sah die Medien als ein mächtiges Instrument, das bei richtiger Anwendung eine Gemeinschaft auf moralischen Werten aufbauen und einen konstruktiven Dialog zwischen Menschen ermöglichen kann. Dabei legte er besonderen Wert auf die Qualität der Informationen, die Vermeidung von Oberflächlichkeit und Sensationsjournalismus sowie auf die Verantwortung der Medienschaffenden gegenüber ihrem Publikum. Seine Lehre machte deutlich, dass Journalismus ein öffentlicher Vertrauensberuf ist, der sowohl berufliche Kompetenz als auch moralische Verantwortung erfordert.

Johannes Paul II. war sich der Herausforderungen durch technologische Entwicklungen und Informationsüberfluss bewusst und appellierte daher an die Förderung eines kritischen Gewissens der Rezipienten, an ethische Kommunikation sowie an die Zusammenarbeit der Medien zum Wohle der Allgemeinheit.

Die Lehre von Johannes Paul II. beeinflusste die Diskussionen über die Medienethik, insbesondere die Pflichten und Rechte von Journalisten. Ein indirekter Beweis dafür war die Art und Weise, wie über sein Ableben und den anschließenden Heiligsprechungsprozess berichtet wurde.[27]

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[27] *Odchodzenie Jana Pawła II do Domu Ojca w polskich mediach*, Hrsg. L. Dyczewski, A. Lewek, J. Olędzki, Księgarnia św. Jacka, Katowice 2007; *Wielkość czy autorytet. Jan Paweł II w przekazach polskich mediów podczas Jego kanonizacji*, Hrsg. J. Olędzki, T. Sasińska-Klas, Stowarzyszenie Absolwentów Dzieło, Warszawa 2016.

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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

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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 misso*. "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

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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 C. 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 niewiastą stworzył ich*, Wydawnictwto Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Urbino 1980, p. 21.
20 K. Wojtyła, *Mężczyzną i niewiastą 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

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[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 niewiastą 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,

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[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

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[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 affianced 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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The Reich and Mikołajków families from Dębica in the face of the Shoah

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Abstract

The aim of the research was to show the history of the Jewish Reich family hiding during World War II with the Polish Mikołajków family on Kościuszko street in Dębica, in the light of biographical accounts and previous studies, and to present the negative and positive conditions for helping a family by another family in a situation of direct threat to the lives of members of both families. The biographical method was used in the writing of the article. Examining a fragment of the history of two families from a biographical perspective allowed for a better understanding of individual fates against the background of historical events.

Keywords

family studies, Polish family, Jewish family, Shoah, Righteous Among the Nations

1. Introduction

Politicians who drag entire nations into wars destroy them, degenerating not only the generation that participates in them, but also the ones that follow them, and the process of accusations, settlements, ethical instability is experienced by subsequent generations. The bloodiest war in history, World War II, claimed an estimated 60–85 million victims. The nation that was most brutally treated by Nazi Germany was the European Jews. Between 1939 and 1945, the Germans murdered about six million Jews in Europe, including about three million Polish Jews. Only a few survived.

This article presents the story of the rescue of the Jewish Reich family by the Mikołajków family from Dębica during the German occupation.

As Włodzimierz Bonusiak writes, Dębica found itself within the range of war operations as early as September 2, 1939. Around 6 p.m., 30 German planes dropped dozens of bombs, causing significant damage to the city. On September 8, the Germans crossed the Wisłoka River near Pilzno and the 22nd Armoured Corps occupied Dębica. A long period of captivity and fighting began for the city and its residents. The civil authorities of the district office, which was Dębica, cooperated with the police, which was divided into two formations (the security police and the order police). The security police (Sipo) was represented in Dębica by the Gestapo, the security service and the criminal police. W. Bonusiak states that near Dębica there was a large military training ground ("Heidelager"), a POW camp, a forced labour camp, and in the city itself there was a detention centre, which means that the residents of the city and its surroundings were under strong police surveillance and great physical and moral pressure. The German invader was convinced that he could use terror to ensure the safe operation of the war machine and the implementation of specific population and economic policy goals. In terms of population policy, the primary goal adopted by the German Nazis was the direct and indirect extermination of the inhabitants of the city and district. According to estimates, at the beginning of the occupation, the population of Dębica was about 10,000, including about 3,000 Jews and 7,000 Poles. As a result of German actions,[1] at the beginning of the occupation, as Ruben Siedlisker-Sarid writes, the Germans, with the help

[1] W. Bonusiak, *Podczas wojny obronnej i okupacji niemieckiej*, in: *Dębica. Zarys dziejów miasta i regionu*, eds. J. Buszko, F. Kiryk, SECESJA Publishing and Printing House, Kraków 1995, pp. 449–462.

of the city authorities, organized a census of the entire population of Dębica and issued yellow identification cards (Kennkarte) to the Jews and grey cards to the Poles "The Jews of Dębica understood that they had found themselves in a trap from which there was no escape."[2] In 1941, the Germans established a ghetto in Dębica, where 12,000 Jews from Dębica and the surrounding towns were crammed into a small area in tragic conditions. The Nazis systematically deported Jews to the death camps in Bełżec or murdered them in the ghetto or in the Jewish cemetery. They also selected a group of Jews, who were transported in trucks to the place of mass execution in the Wolica forest, where an estimated 180–600 people were shot. The final liquidation of the ghetto in Dębica took place in April 1943.[3] The Jewish community of Dębica, which at that time was about 1/3 of its inhabitants and had been shaping the life of the city together with the Poles for centuries, ceased to exist. Only a few citizens of the Jewish community survived, who managed to escape from the city or were saved by the people of Dębica or the inhabitants of nearby towns. The tragedy of the Jews during World War II unfolded before the eyes of Polish citizens, who at the same time were also subjected to German terror. The majority of Polish society remained passive towards the tragedy of the Jews, many showed hostility and hatred towards them, and only a few provided them with help, as Elżbieta Rączy[4] wrote about it. The Mikołajków family from Dębica, who helps the Jewish Reich family and other Jews from Dębica, belong to this minority. Jacek Leociak states: "Heroism is not a social norm and does not set universally applicable standards of behaviour. Not everyone can and wants to be a hero. There is no heroism on a mass scale. Heroism is a 'deviation from the norm,' an exception, defying the instinct of self-preservation in the name of values higher than preserving one's own life. If we do not want to acknowledge this, we betray the memory of the Righteous and plunge them into the abyss of banality. The natural reflex of each of us is to move our hand back when we find ourselves near a flame.

2 R. Siedlisker-Sarid, *Zagłada dębickich Żydów*, in: *Sefer Dembic. Księga pamięci żydowskiej społeczności Dębicy*, ed. D. Leibel, Willa Wiluszówka, Dębica 2021, p. 182.

3 R. Siedlisker-Sarid, *Zagłada dębickich Żydów*, pp. 180–191; *Księga Dębicy. Kolebka naszej młodości. Wspomnienia żydowskich mieszkańców Dębicy*, ed. A. S. Więch, transl. and ed. by I. Socha, Society of Friends of Science in Przemyśl, Przemyśl 2014; I. Socha, *Żydzi w Dębicy*, https://dembitzer.pl/?page_id=693 (07.08.2024).

4 E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945*, Institute of National Remembrance, Rzeszów 2008; E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945*, Institute of National Remembrance, Rzeszów 2014.

Those who dared to help Jews, risking their own lives and the lives of their loved ones, were able to hold their hand in the flame and not move it back."[5]

Maria Fern states: "Out of the blood-drenched pages of Nazi history have come countless tales of heroism and selfless courage, but few can match the story of the young Catholic physician, Dr. Alexander Mikolajkow, and his wife, Leokadja, who risked death for themselves and their two small sons "to show there were decent people left who valued human life and human dignity."[6]

2. Purpose of the work and methodology used

The aim of the conducted research is to show the history of the Reich family hiding during World War II with the Mikołajków family on Kościuszko street in Dębica—in the light of biographical accounts and previous studies—and to present the negative and positive conditions of a family providing assistance to another family in a situation of direct threat to the lives of members of both families. The biographical method was used in the writing of the article. It consists of describing and analysing the course of a human life or its fragment against the background of a specific fragment of social reality. The analysis includes oral and written texts concerning the life experiences of specific individuals. This method is useful in the case of research conducted within the humanities and social sciences. The presented article is situated within the family sciences, as the focus will be on the behaviours and attitudes of the Reich and Mikołajków families in the face of the Shoah. Thanks to biographical research, it is possible to describe a given phenomenon and better understand it by studying individual fates.[7]

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5 J. Leociak, *Dyskurs o pomocy*, "Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały. Pismo Centrum Badań nad Zagładą Żydów IFiS PAN" 4 (2008), p. 13.

6 M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic… Next door was the Gestapo*, "New York Post", Sunday, 10.01.1960, pp. M4–M5.

7 See also B. Sieradzka-Baziur, *Dokument osobisty jako źródło danych na temat polskiej rodziny żydowskiej w czasie drugiej wojny światowej i po jej zakończeniu*, in: *Obszar Europy Środkowej w geopolityce mocarstw (od Mitteleuropy do integracji europejskiej)*, eds. G. Baziur, P. Skorut, Publishing House of the State Higher Vocational School, Oświęcim 2017, pp. 207–229.

The corpus of texts examined includes:

1. The account of survivor Efraim Reich is contained in an article by Maria Fern from 1960. In it, he presented his war experiences as part of his broader efforts to obtain a US visa for Leokadia Mikołajków.
2. The account of survivor E. Reich and L. Mikołajków contained in an article by Maria Fern Eckman from 1961.[8]
3. The account of L. Mikołajków published in a book edited by Richard C. Lukas from 1989.[9]
4. *Za co dostałam medal Sprawiedliwi Wśród Narodów Świata*, a film interview given by L. Mikołajków in 1997 to journalist Zofia Zaks for the "Shoah Witnesses" foundation founded by director Steven Spielberg (DVD).
5. An account of E. Reich from the resources of the Institute of National Remembrance, https://zyciezazycie.pl/zyz/relacje/887,Efraim-Reich.html.

In this body of biographical texts, the following are visible in the foreground: Efraim Reich, one of the rescued, and the rescuers: Leokadia and Aleksander Mikołajków, whose fates intertwined during the Holocaust of the Jews in Dębica. In the background there are other rescued members of the Reich family, in the next there are the young sons of the Mikołajków family, who also contributed to saving Jews, the dying Jews, the co-inhabitants of the Mikołajków family house, additional people supporting the Mikołajków family during the aid provided to the Reichs (the Kunysz family and Mrs Chmielowa, a baker, a milkman) and at the other end of the spectrum the German torturers and the blue police.

The research problem posed in the article is as follows: What were the negative and positive conditions for the help provided to the Reich family by the Mikołajków family?

8 M. Fern Eckman, *"Those were years not to forget…" A sequel to a tale of one woman's heroism*, "New York Post" Sunday, 05.02.1961, p. 5.

9 *Leokadia Mikołajków*, in: *Out of the inferno. Poles remember the Holocaust*, ed. R. C. Lukas, The University Press of Kentucky, Kentucky 1989.

3. The Mikołajków family

According to the studies of Zbigniew Szurek and other data,[10] Leokadia Mikołajków née Wawrzykowska (1906–2004), Aleksander Mikołajków (1901–1944), Leszek Mikołajków (1933–2024); Andrzej Mikołajków (1937–…) was a Polish family that saved Jews during World War II, all members of which were awarded the Righteous Among the Nations distinction—the married couple in 1980 and the sons in 1989. Leokadia and Aleksander Mikołajków arrived in Dębica in the former Kraków province (currently the Subcarpathian province) in 1930 and lived on Kościuszko street. Aleksander graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at the Jan Kazimierz University in Lviv and was a doctor at the Social Insurance Institution. Leokadia was a graduate of the Warsaw School of Nursing and worked in Dębica in her profession.[11] Both were active social activists of the Polish Red Cross and sworn members of the Home Army. Leokadia belonged to the sanitary section of the Women's Military Service.[12] Aleksander Mikołajków was killed during the liberation of the Dębica district by the Red Army on August 24, 1944. After the war, Leokadia raised her sons in Dębica. In the 1960s, she moved to Warsaw, where she died in 2004.

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[10] Z. Szurek, *Rodzina Mikołajkowów (próba biografii). Ofiarność, odwaga, poświęcenie*, Gryf Media Group Dębica 2013; Z. Szurek, *Rodzina Mikołajkowów. Ofiarność, odwaga, poświęcenie*, The District Branch of the Polish Red Cross in Dębica, Dębica 2018. See also the Ulma Family Museum of Poles Sawing Jews During World War II in Markowa, https://muzeumulmow.pl/pl/ratujacy/podkarpackie/mikolajkowie-leokadia-aleksander-andrzej-i-leszek/ (07.08.2024).

[11] The analysed sources contain a description of the Mikołajków couple. For example, in the article by M. Fern we read: "The Germans seized Dębica in 1939. There was immediate persecution of the Jews and of Polish intellectuals unsympathetic to Nazi objectives. Concentration camps were established, a ghetto created. Mikołajków, who was a State Health Insurance physician, felt disgraced by these developments. He had never been particularly drawn to Jews. He was not a crusader. But he had learned that injustice to one group is injustice to all" (M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 4).

[12] Z. Szurek, *Rodzina Mikołajkowów. Ofiarność, odwaga, poświęcenie*.

4. The Reich family

The Jewish, religious Reich family lived in Dębica at 22/24 Krakowska street.[13]

From the interview with L. Mikołajków in 1997, we learn that the Mikołajków and Reich families knew each other before the war. The youngest son of the Reichs, Efraim, was treated by Dr Mikołajków for anaemia. L. Mikołajków in his 1989 report states: "In 1940 a Jewish woman by the name of Reich came with her son, Froimek,[14] for an examination. She appealed to my husband to save her son from certain extermination. Froimek, who was physically weak, would probably have been shot by the Germans in several days on account of his unsatisfactory output at work. My husband and I decided to help Mrs. Reich and Froimek; he was registered at the Arbeitsampt as a messenger for the dispensary. From that moment, we helped the Reich family and other Jews many times with medicine and food."[15] According to L. Mikołajków's account from 1997, young, 14-year-old Efraim stayed in their house, playing with their sons and having decent living conditions. Every evening, however, he had to return to his family, to the ghetto. Years later, E. Reich reports that one day L. Mikołajków came to the ghetto with her son, bringing information about the upcoming liquidation of the ghetto and said that she would save him. However, he refused because he said that he and his family had decided that they would go everywhere together. Then, she gave him the key to the attic and told him to bring his whole family.[16] Efraim Reich hid in the Mikołajków estate, together with his parents, two sisters, brother, brother-in-law, three cousins, including one with a small child, uncle and aunt, a total of 13 people. All are referred to by E. Reich as the Reich family, and this was a closer and more distant family, whose members had different surnames.[17] More detailed information about the survivors is available on the website of The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, por. "The Mikolajkow family, working with Efraim, managed to get Efraim's parents, Chaskel and Roza, Efraim's brother, Samuel, his two sisters, Rachel and Hanna, Hanna's husband, Ruven Wolf, aunt

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13 *Out of the inferno: Poles remember the Holocaust*, ed. R. C. Lukas, The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington 1989, pp. 124–125.

14 Polish version of the name Efraim, diminutive. Leokadia Mikołajków also used the term Froim.

15 *Leokadia Mikołajków*, pp. 124–125.

16 Relacja Efraima Reicha, ocalonego wraz z całą rodziną w Polsce w czasie II wojny światowej, film, 1'52", https://zyciezazycie.pl/zyz/relacje/887,Efraim-Reich.html (21.08.2024).

17 M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 4; M. Fern Eckman, *Those were years not to forget…*", p. 5.

and uncle and their two daughters out of the Dębica ghetto, for a total of eleven family members […] In addition to the eleven members of the Reich family, the Mikolajkow family also hid two other Jews from the Dębica ghetto."[18] The biographical data analysed show that one of the people (an aunt) died while staying in the Mikołajków house, and a cousin died of tuberculosis a few months after liberation. After the Red Army entered, the family left Dębica, first for Rzeszów, then for Austria, and then for the United States and other countries. M. Fern writes that Efraim Reich became a rabbi in Brooklyn. As soon as he had financial resources, he supported the widow Leokadia Mikołajków and her sons. According to Ireneusz Socha, Reich died in 2018 and was buried in Jerusalem.[19]

5. The story of survival

The Mikołajków family house on Kościuszko Street was located in the immediate vicinity of the Dębica gestapo and the criminal police, a few dozen meters from the entrance to the ghetto. On the premises (in the attic, garage and basement behind the garage), a Polish family hid 13 people. Efraim Reich reports: "We were to remain under the doctor's protection for two years, until the Russians came in August 1944, I think it was."[20] During those two years, they stayed in this shelter twice for a few days, and in the final period of the war for 9 months. Doctor Aleksander Mikołajków and his wife tried to make the shelter offered to the Jews as safe as possible. To this end, the doctor, together with Efraim Reich and his father, dug a secret passage from the garage to the basement behind the garage: "The doctor had only one hour's sleep a night. We had to dig very quietly, with our hands, with tools, to make a passage under the garage. Then, at night we went from the attic to the basement, where the doctor thought we would be safer."[21] When the Germans requisitioned the garage for their motorcycles, the Reichs moved to the attic.

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18 *The Mikolajkow family,* https://jfr.org/rescuer-stories/mikolajkow-family/ (21.08.2024).

19 Biographical data indicate that E. Reich's grandfather, Dawid, was killed at the beginning of the war (interview with L. Mikołajków from 1997), and during the liquidation of the ghetto, his 19-year-old sister, cf. M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 4.

20 M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 4.

21 M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 4.

Living conditions in all these places (attic, garage, basement) were dramatically difficult, but, as it turned out, survival was possible. As it results from the account included in the film interview that L. Mikołajków gave in 1997 to a journalist Zofia Zaks, the Mikołajków family bought food with their own money for the Jews hiding.[22] The young sons of the Mikołajków family smuggled food and medicine into the Dębica ghetto. Due to their professional activities—social and caring—the Mikołajków family also had the opportunity to receive additional food (milk and bread), which they gave to the family in hiding.[23]

According to L. Mikołajków's account, published in a book edited by R. C. Lukas in 1989, the Reich family was also given shelter by Mr Kunysz, an eighty-year-old resident of Dębica.[24] Ireneusz Socha states that the Reich's last shelter was the wooden house of the Kunysz family on Garncarska street.

6. Negative conditions for providing shelter to the Reich family

For hiding Jews during World War II in Poland, death was a threat not only to the people who provided this help, but also to members of their families and people who could be associated with this activity.[25] The negative conditions for providing shelter to the Reich family include, first and foremost, the fact that the Mikołajków family's house was located next to the headquarters of the Gestapo and the criminal police. Their house was inhabited by two strangers (a maid and a tenant) who had not been informed about the hiding of Jews, but could have guessed it, and the Mikołajków family feared betrayal on their part. Feeding 13 additional people was covered not only from the heroic family's own financial resources, but, as I wrote above, the Mikołajków family received an additional

[22] "They never got tired. They never did it for money. There were other Jews hidden by Christians, but almost always financial remuneration was involved. But not with the doctor and his wife" (M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 5).

[23] "The doctor was granted extra rations by the Nazis. But as the war progressed the food shortages grew"(M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 5).

[24] *Leokadia Mikołajków*, p. 125.

[25] "On Monday morning, the rabbi says, we were told that big signs had appeared on the streets. 'Anyone who does not denounce Jews will be killed'. One such sign was put on the house where we were hiding. "The doctor told me he felt threatened. I told him I saw it was hopeless and I didn't want him to die because of us. I said we were lost anyway. But he said: 'No. I'll always put my own life in danger to save decent, innocent people'"(M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 4).

ration of milk and bread because of the social and care activities they conducted. This food was delivered by people who were aware that Jews were being hidden in the house and could have given them away. However, this did not happen. The Polish blue police also knew about the hiding of Jews in the Mikołajków house. E. Reich, in his report from 1961, said that three months before the liberation, a Polish policeman came to the Mikołajków family to warn them that it was already known that Jews were being hidden in their house. He added that because the Mikołajków family was very well-liked, no one had yet given them away. "But the police begged the doctor to get rid of us. He said he would think it over. He talked to his wife that night. He said he was sure we would be killed if he told us to leave. And so the next day he told the police that he would share whatever happened to us. 'They are going to stay here' he told his wife. «I will not let them go»."[26]

The negative conditions in this case also include the fact that the Mikołajków family had two small sons and a niece who was being raised by the couple. Saving people from outside one's family in a situation that posed a threat to the lives of the closest people, including children, must raise serious dilemmas. In an interview from 1997, L. Mikołajków relates that from the windows of her house she saw a murdered girl and Efraim's murdered grandfather, Dawid, and she saw the bodies of murdered Jews being taken to Wolica. The Mikołajków family knew that Jews were being taken to certain death to the camp in Bełżec, murdered in the cemetery in Dębica, in the ghetto, in Pustków and on the streets of Dębica. The inevitable fear in such inhuman circumstances was the negative conditioning. The report from 1961 included a telling dialogue: "During those years of the occupation, with 13 Jews finding sanctuary under her roof, had she been afraid?" "Who wouldn't be afraid?" Leokadia Mikolajkow countered. 'I was afraid for them—and for myself. I didn't want to die.'"[27] Doctor A. Mikołajków did not hide his fear either because he was aware of the death they were facing at the hands of the Germans.[28]

[26] M. Fern Eckman, *"Those were years not to forget…"*, p. 5.
[27] M. Fern Eckman, *"Those were years not to forget…"*, p. 5.
[28] See footnote no. 26.

7. Positive conditions for the Mikołajków family to provide shelter to the Reich family

However, the positive conditions outweighed the negative ones and contributed to the fact that the Jewish Reich family was saved. These conditions allow us to understand how it was possible that in such tragic conditions of war occupation, under the watchful eye of the Gestapo and the criminal police, a large Jewish family was saved by a family with small children, living in the company of people who could give them away. At the beginning, it is worth mentioning that the Mikołajków family, due to their medical professions, helped other people and it was an obvious and natural act for them. L. Mikołajków said: "I am a nurse. […] All my life I helped people. So when this thing happened, I functioned automatically. I could not back out. In the end, I am a nurse. I studied at the Warsaw Nursing School. I graduated in 1928. The director was an American, Helen L. Bridge. Perhaps you will mention her name. She might read it. I was then Wawrzykowska, not yet Mikolajkow. I would like Miss Brigde to know, if she is still alive, that we practiced always the ethics she taught us."[29]

During the war, the heroic couple provided medical assistance not only in the Polish Red Cross, and later in the Central Welfare Council, in the Health Fund they ran, to which Jews belonged, in the ghetto, but they also helped partisans, being sworn members of the Home Army. As L. Mikołajków reports in an interview from 1997, wounded partisans were hidden on their property in Dębica, and the Mikołajków family provided them with medical assistance. It should also be emphasized that the Mikołajków couple shared the same ideals, and because of this, they could jointly provide help to all who needed it. They were consistent in their activities, they made no exceptions. They honoured values greater than themselves; the meaning of their lives was to help others. Efraim Reich also points out that the Mikołajków couple was guided in their behaviour by Christian ideals: "The patience and the kindness of the Catholic couple sheltering them was, the rabbi says, "saint-like." "All this time" he explains, "the doctor or his wife would bring food to us, at midnight, at two in the morning, whenever they thought it would be safe."[30] E. Reich and his family invited L. Mikołajków to the United States, where, as he says in 1997, she visited three times. During one of the stays, the survivor asked her about the motivations

[29] M. Fern Eckman, *"Those were years not to forget…"*, p. 5.
[30] M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 5.

for her heroic behaviour and reported: "I was a youth of 15 when I saw her last. Now I am 34 and a father. I understand more. I realize even more what she did. I asked her what gave her the courage to endanger two children. She told me she remembered the Bible. She remembered that Abraham asked God if he save Sodom if He could find 50 good people there. And that finally God agreed to save the city if He found only 10 good people. She said it looked so dark for all Europe. She felt it was her duty to save the dignity of human beings—so that there would be a little opening left for life."[31]

It is also worth emphasizing the humanitarian, positive attitude of the Mikołajków family towards the people they were hiding from, whom they helped without charging any fees or expecting any remuneration. They treated them with respect, like their guests, caring not only for their health but also for their mental well-being. L. Mikołajków convinced this orthodox family to also eat non-kosher food to improve their health. E. Reich says: "Throughout the entire period of our hiding, we did not hear a word of complaint from those who rescued us, complaints that things were hard."[32] In a situation of direct threat to the lives of both families, mutual kindness, which was born before the war, is an important positive condition. Also noteworthy is the fact that the Mikołajków family took care to create a safe shelter for the rescued people and to find another hiding place in a situation of increased threat from the Germans.

The Mikołajków family, who hid such a large Jewish family, did not live in a social vacuum. They created a support network, through which feeding such a large group of people under the conditions of Nazi occupation and universal hunger was possible. According to L. Mikołajków's account from 1997, this support network was made up of: a private baker, who, like her, was in the Home Army and delivered 13 loaves of bread a week, a man referred to as a "grandfather" who delivered food, and his wife. They were most likely the Kunysz family, who gave the Reichs shelter towards the end of the occupation; Mrs. Chmielowa, who sold the Reichs' belongings and thus helped them; the milkman, from whom L. Mikołajków received milk because of his social and caregiving activities. The Mikołajków family had friendly, supportive relationships with people, and none of the people who helped them betrayed them, despite the direct threat to their lives. It is also necessary to emphasize the positive conditions resulting from

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31 M. Fern Eckman, *"Those were years not to forget…"*, p. 5.
32 Relacja Efraima Reicha, https://zyciezazycie.pl/zyz/relacje/887,Efraim-Reich.html (07.08.2024).

the attitude and behaviour of the Reich family. In his report from 1960, E. Reich recalls that while in hiding, they suffered from hunger, lack of light, and were overcome by negative feelings, but they had a strong desire to survive.[33] In an interview from 1997, L. Mikołajków emphasizes that the Reichs were an orthodox family and that they gained strength from studying sacred religious texts. "We had, I think, the will not die, not to die until liberation, not to die in such humiliation. My father, a rabbi and a student of the Bible and the Talmud studied with us. He wanted us to forget the hunger and the fear. It was very hard for us. There was a lot of friction. We would get angry, yes. But we had to control these feelings. My father always straightened things out. There was no way of getting out, we thought. Logically, there was no way. But the will to live was so strong that we thought, maybe, maybe we will make it. Sometimes we talked. But many times the talking went out of us. I was in the world of thinking."[34]

They had a strong desire to regain freedom, as E. Reich says, "We had wanted only to live for the day we became free. We did not care if we died then. We wanted to be free. That was what mattered."[35]

Notably, the discipline and mental resilience of the people in hiding, including a small child who was only 3 years old when arriving at the Reichs' house. During the months of hiding on the Mikołajków property, they did not reveal the location of their hiding place. The ties of kinship and affinity that bound them, the kindness and support they showed each other, were of no small importance in this case.

8. Summary

This article presents the story of the Jewish Reich family hiding during World War II with the Mikołajków family on Kościuszko street in Dębica. For this purpose, biographical accounts and previous studies on the subject were used. The article provides some answers to the questions formulated in the research problem: What were the negative and positive conditions for the help provided to the Reich family by the Mikołajków family?

33 M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 4-M 5.
34 M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 5.
35 M. Fern, *Thirteen guests in the attic*, M 4.

The negative conditions accompanying the actions taken were psychological in nature: overwhelming feelings of fear and anxiety about one's own children, about oneself and about the people being hidden; and situational: the immediate vicinity of the Gestapo and the criminal police, the presence of strangers in the house (the maid and the tenant) who could have suspicions about the couple's activities and betray them, the insufficiency of providing help to such a large group of people being hidden despite spending their own financial resources, the necessity to use the help of other people, which created the risk of betrayal, the awareness that the blue police knew about the Jews being hidden in their house and could give them up.

The positive conditions that determined that the Mikołajków family saved the Reich family are of an ideological nature: the Mikołajków family's medical professions and practice in helping others, the religious motivation for the help provided;[36] personal: the Mikołajków family was not only selfless, but also responsible in terms of their actions, providing safe hiding places and creating a support network for the actions they undertook; and relational: the orthodox Reich family and the Christian Mikołajków family knew each other and built friendly relations before the war, and the bond that connected them was still being built during the tragic, terrifying time of the Holocaust that threatened both of them.

Biographical documents on the Mikołajków and Reich families, who experienced brutality and cruelty from the German invader, contain statements by participants in tragic events that are evidence of disagreement with evil and violence, and actions showing that internal freedom and human dignity find expression even in extreme, borderline situations, when the individual fate of a threatened person is at stake.[37]

[36] "With deliberation, always aware of the danger, the Mikolajkows had risked their own lives and the lives of their two small sons «to show there were decent people left who valued human life and human dignity»" (M. Fern, *"Those were years not to forget…"*, p. 5).

[37] Valuable additions and corrections to this article were made by Zbigniew Szurek and Ireneusz Socha, for which I would like to thank them very much.

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Reports

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The activities of the Roman Catholic Church Archdiocese of Lviv in the area of pastoral, psychological and social support for victims of the war in Ukraine

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Abstract

The full-scale war in Ukraine, which began on February 24, 2022, has brought pain and grief into the lives of Ukrainians and caused an outburst—indeed, an explosion—of needs that have affected every sphere of human life. The Christian view of the human person is integral, seeing the person as a whole being—spiritual, psychological, and physical—created out of love, for love, and for communion with God and other people. The traumatic experience of war has brought suffering and dissonance into each of these dimensions of human existence—the loss of meaning and values, including spiritual ones; the experience of extreme stress and psychological disorders; the loss of one's homeland, parental home, health, and even life itself. The Roman Catholic Church in Ukraine, faithful to its vocation to serve through love, seeks to respond to and address the needs of those who suffer—on the spiritual, social, psychological, and humanitarian levels. This article presents and describes a specific fragment of such ministry and support—service to the human person in a concrete space and by concrete people.

Keywords

war in Ukraine, spiritual, psychological, and physical needs, value of health, extreme stress, psychological disorders, support, Center Assistance

1. Introduction

The war, that has been going on since 2014, escalating with the full-scale invasion on February 24, 2022, has permanently changed the lives of Ukrainians, bringing pain, suffering, and loss. Values, attitudes, worldview, faith—war becomes a kind of measure of these concepts. Constant suffering and death prompt reflection on humanity and the value of human life. Every day, the number of people who feel the impact of war on their spiritual and mental state continues to grow.

As early as 2016, Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki, Metropolitan of Lviv, established a team of clergy and lay people to help individuals with psychological problems and addictions. At the beginning of the full-scale war in 2022, the Archdiocese of Lviv, on behalf of the metropolitan, established a humanitarian aid crisis management team,[1] which included a psychological and psychotherapeutic assistance center established at the general pastoral department.[2]

On March 17, 2025, the Father Heinrich (Paul) Mosing Center for Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Support was solemnly opened and consecrated in Lviv. The consecration of the Center, located at 30 Vynnychenko Street in the building of the former Carmelite convent and seminary of the Lviv Archdiocese, which was partially returned to the Church, was performed by Archbishop Mieczysław Mokrzycki, Metropolitan of Lviv. The event was also attended by Auxiliary Bishop Jan Sobilo of the Kharkiv-Zaporizhia Diocese, clergy of the Lviv Deanery, members of the Ukrainian Parliament, representatives of regional and city authorities, Consul of the Republic of Poland in Lviv, Krzysztof Lukianowicz, educators, doctors, and psychotherapists from partner programs.[3] Father Oleg Salamon, a psychologist and psychotherapist, has been appointed head of the Center for Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Support.

An important aspect of our work and ministry (the Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Assistance Center of the Archdiocese of Lviv of the Roman Catholic Church named after Rev. Professor Henryk (Paul) Mosing) has

1 *Антикризовий штаб гуманітарної допомоги*, https://www.rkc.lviv.ua/news_view-Antukruzovuj_shtab_gumanitarnoi_dopomogu-ua (14.10.2025).

2 *Центр психологічної та терапевтичної підтримки*, https://www.rkc.lviv.ua/news_view-Centr_psuxologichnoi_ta_terapevtuchnoi_pidtrumku-ua (14.10.2025).

3 *У Львові відкрили Центр ім. о. Генріха Мосінга*, https://www.rkc.lviv.ua/news_view-U_Lvovi_vidkrulu_Centr_im__o__Genrixa_Mosinga-ua (14.10.2025).

been and continues to be spiritual, psychological, and psychotherapeutic support for adults and children who have experienced pain and traumatic suffering and are in need of help (soldiers, veterans, their families, refugees, children, people with special needs).

Our work with people in need involves psychological, psychotherapeutic, and social support, as well as spiritual guidance. This is achieved through individual therapy for trauma, loss, panic attacks, and depressive disorders, as well as through group therapy and support groups. An important part of our ministry is teaching and providing psychological first aid (crisis intervention) when working with refugees and people in acute stress.

We see the fulfillment of our mission of helping others in the creation and leadership of support teams (clergy, psychologists, psychotherapists, doctors, social workers, volunteers). Another area of our work is supervisory and educational support (training, seminars, conferences) for psychologists, psychotherapists, teachers, speech therapists, volunteers, as well as priests in their work and ministry. We strive to be helpful not only to the Lviv community but also to the whole of Ukraine.

2. Supervisory and educational activities

Since the beginning of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, our center has organized approximately 1,000 hours of supervision for professionals working in Ukraine and with Ukrainians outside the country. Supervision has been and continues to be provided by domestic and foreign experts (Poland, Germany, Great Britain, Denmark, Belgium, etc.) as part of their support.

One of the first to offer his professional assistance was Jacek Lelonkiewicz from Łódź (Poland), a trainer and supervisor working at Brief Solution Focused Therapy (BSFT) at the Short-Term Therapy Center,[4] as well as his colleagues from the European Brief Therapy Association (EBTA), Anna-Maria Wolf from Denmark and Geert Lefever from Belgium (BSFT—EBTA).[5] In May 2022, John Wheeler, Solution Focused Trainer, Supervisor and Consultant from England, conducted Solution Focused Supervision workshops. In 2022–2024, John Henden, a well-known BSFT trainer and psychotherapist, collaborated with our

4 Centrum Terapii Krótkoterminowej w Łodzi, https://www.centrumtk.com (15.10.2025).
5 European Brief Therapy Association, https://www.ebta.eu/whoweare/ (15.10.2025).

Center to conduct two workshops, "Possible Severe Trauma Recovery" in Lviv (50 participants) and Kyiv (45 participants), as well as "Suicide Prevention" in Lviv (50 participants).[6] In 2024, Jacek Lelonkiewicz conducted a workshop entitled "Working with Loss in the BSFT Paradigm" for 50 participants in Lviv.

Since 2017, we have been cooperating with the Concept of Integrative Methods (KIM Institute) represented by its director Reinhild Zenk from Germany and her team: Kerstin Juschkat-Schafhaupt, Stefanie Katz, Sebastian Gärtig, Petra Karger, Tanja Makarchuk, and especially Olga Olijnyk, who is responsible for cooperation with Ukraine on behalf of the KIM Institute.[7] Over the course of eight years, the Institute has managed to organize and implement training for six groups of KIM consultants (100 people), supervisors (14), and trainers. Many additional workshops for the professional development of our specialists have also been held.[8] Supervision was organized and conducted for training participants and specialists working at KIM.

We also received special professional assistance from our colleagues at Trauma AID Germany, in the person of its chairman, Frank Hofmann from Germany, who is the initiator, inspirer, and organizer of the educational project on trauma therapy "Psychosocial Trauma Support (TPSS+)." The cooperation with each member of his team was also very important: Dr. Ute Sodemann, Dr. Peter Bumke, Miriam Goel, Barbara Mayer, Gaby Fischer, Andrea Berger, and Birte Himstedt.[9] From 2017 to the present, Trauma AID Germany has organized workshops for working with children who have experienced trauma in Lviv and Kyiv. In cooperation with the John Paul II Foundation in Lviv and our Center, TPSS+ trauma therapy training was conducted for psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers, and educators. Between 2021 and 2024, approximately 100 participants from all over Ukraine completed the training. We also have 16 local supervisors and two trainers. At the beginning of the full-scale war and to this day, we have received supervisory and human support. Starting in 2024,

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6 *Ukraina: coraz więcej osób potrzebuje psychologicznego wsparcia*, https://www.vaticannews.va/pl/kosciol/news/2024-02/ukraina-co-raz-wiecej-osob-potrzebuje-psychologicznego-wsparcia.html (15.10.2025).

7 Das Konzept Integrativer Methodik, https://www.konzept-integrativer-methodik.de (15.10.2025).

8 *KIM-Seminare für die Ukraine*, https://www.konzept-integrativer-methodik.de/seminare-ukraine (15.10.2025).

9 TraumaAid Germany. Psychotraumatologische Ausbildung. Weltweit, https://www.traumaaid.de (15.10.2025).

I am implementing a TPSS+ teaching project for kindergarten administrators and hospital staff in the city of Mykolayiv.[10]

I would like to mention the educational (training of crisis interventionists), therapeutic, and supervisory cooperation of our Center with Hubert Czupał and his team from the ACT Academy, a school of contextual therapy in Poznan.[11] The workshop and supervision meetings with Dr. Jakub Bartoszewski from Konin (Therapy of Possibilities) and many others have always been inspiring.

Since 2023, our center has been cooperating with the organizations "The Kolping Case in Ukraine" and "Wings-of-hope" from Germany in the KResT trauma therapy project for 30 psychologists and educators from Ukraine. The team includes Lutz Ulrich Besser, Julia Borchardt, Martina Bock, and other specialists.[12]

3. Areas of work for the Center's for Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Assistance of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Lviv named after Rev. Professor Henryk (Paul) Mosing—employees and volunteers

We see our work and ministry as helping and supporting people affected by war, suffering, and pain. We offer individual and group psychotherapy, spiritual guidance, and work with people with special needs and addictions. Our team consists of clergy and lay people who are qualified specialists in various therapeutic modalities (EMDR, ACT, KIM therapy, TPSS+, Gestalt therapy, art therapy, crisis intervention, and others) and volunteers: Fr. Oleg Salamon, Fr. Mikołaj Biskup, Julia Jurkiv, Roksolana Pryzvanska, Lilia Drobit, Oksana Rybak, Tetyana Nimetz, Sofia Kuflovska, Oleg Longin, and others. Another thing we do is provide supervision to our specialists and volunteers, as well as to people from other support centers: rehabilitation and resource centers, organizations that are also involved in psychosocial, spiritual, and psychotherapeutic support. We help to form and train first aid and crisis intervention teams in parishes, communities, and

10 *Projekt Ukraine*, https://www.traumaaid.de/projects/ukraine/ (15.10.2025).

11 Akademia ACT. Szkoła Psychoterapii Kontekstualnych, https://akademiaact.com (15.10.2025).

12 *Ukraine strengthening trauma specialists in times of war*, https://wings-of-hope.de/en/countries/ukraine/#toc_Professional_Training_for_Trauma_Specialists (15.10.2025).

military chaplaincies. As a support center established by the Archdiocese of Lviv, we carry out our activities in various locations in Ukraine. At the moment, we are cooperating with the Diocese of Kamianets-Podilskyi with the Christian Rescue Service, the Diocese of Kyiv, the Chaplaincy Ministry at the Conference of Roman Catholic Bishops of Ukraine, the John Paul II Foundations in Lviv and Khmelnytskyi, the “Ademantei” Foundation, and others. We have organized and trained 8 groups (approximately 180 people) of clergy and laity in first psychological aid and crisis intervention from 2022 to 2025, who today help and support people suffering from traumatic experiences and the pain of loss. The course consists of 7 modules—2 full days (140 hours). In the program developed by our Center, participants acquire crisis intervention skills, namely: first psychological aid (RAPID), crisis intervention in ACT therapy, the basics of Somatic Experiencing—A Body-Oriented Approach to Healing Trauma (P. A. Levine) and TRE (Tension & Trauma Releasing Exercises—D. Berceli), basic skills in Psychosensomotor Therapy (Pat Ogden), “Tryzub” stress management course of Thomas Piko, the BASIC Ph program, working with grief and loss, working with military personnel, veterans, and their families, and the basics of group work and working with children.

An important part of our ministry is working with military personnel, veterans, and their families through spiritual, psychological, and physical rehabilitation. Retreats (prayer with the Word of God, confession, Eucharist), family camps, individual and family therapy, support groups. A special experience for our staff and volunteers has been leading support groups for mothers and wives who have lost their sons or husbands in the war. We have seen how important it is to help women who are experiencing loss (2 or even 3 years of pain) in an integral way that touches all areas of their lives: spiritual, social, and psychological.

Another area of our ministry is working with people with special needs and their families. We conduct individual and group corrective classes, provide therapeutic care for families, and offer educational and supervisory support for specialists.

Today, our Center has about 45 employees and volunteers who, through their work and various projects and initiatives, serve people in need of help and support due to the pain and suffering caused by war.

4. Conclusions

The activities of the Center for Spiritual, Psychosocial, and Psychotherapeutic Assistance of the Lviv Archdiocese of the Roman Catholic Church named after Father Professor Henryk (Paul) Mosing provide a vivid example of integral service to people, combining spiritual care, psychological support, psychotherapy, supervision, and education. In the context of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the Center has become a space where faith and science, spirituality and psychotherapy, mercy and professionalism interact for the healing of people in all dimensions of their being. Working with military personnel, veterans, their families, children, people with special needs, as well as supporting specialists and volunteers demonstrates a systematic, multi-level approach to assistance. Thanks to cooperation with international partners—the KIM Institute (Germany), Trauma Aid Germany, ACT Academy (Poland), European Association for Brief Therapy (EBTA), and other organizations—the Center is creating a network of professional supervision, educational programs, and therapeutic initiatives covering various parts of Ukraine. Thus, the Center's activities reflect the Church's vocation to serve people in suffering—through love, solidarity, and professional competence, contributing to the holistic restoration of the person in their spiritual, mental, and social dimensions.

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Reviews

The Person and the Challenges Volume 15 (2025) Number 2, pp. 353–355
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"Targum Neofiti 1—Księga Liczb. Tekst aramejski—przekład. Aparat krytyczny—przypisy", vol. 4, transl. and ed. by Anna Kuśmirek, Wydawnictwo Archidiecezji Lubelskiej Gaudium, Lublin 2025, 542 pp. (Biblia Aramejska)

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This publication is the next stage in the implementation of a broader project initiated by Rev. Prof. Mirosław S. Wróbel, PhD, from the Institute of Biblical Studies at the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin in Lublin, which began in 2014 and aims to publish a multi-volume series of the Aramaic Bible in Polish, including the Targums to the Pentateuch (Targum Neofiti 1, Targum Pseudo-Jonathan, Targum Onkelos), the Targums to the Prophets and the Targums to the Writings.

Targumic texts were very popular in the times of Jesus and the apostles. On the one hand, they were a paraphrase and explanation of the texts of the Hebrew Bible and a commentary on them, and on the other hand, they were a source of inspiration for Jesus and the authors of the New Testament. Much of the content contained in the rich Jewish traditions of the intertestamental period and later Christian traditions can be better understood in the light of the Targumic message. In the times of Jesus, when Aramaic was commonly used in everyday speech, including in synagogues, schools and families, religious content was explained and commented on through colorful and lively Targumic traditions.

Although Targumic texts often depart from the original Hebrew texts, they stem, like the New Testament, from the same source: faith in the revelation of God to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Studying them reveals a new way of understanding the Bible. Furthermore, their content inspires deeper biblical, archaeological, historical, paleographic, philological, and theological studies.

Targum Neofiti 1 on the Book of Numbers, the fourth volume of the project entitled The Aramaic Bible, fits this list perfectly. Its translation, along with critical apparatus and footnotes clarifying more complex issues, was prepared by Dr. Anna Kuśmirek, a professor at Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. The translation was made from the edition edited by Alejandro Díez Macho: *Neophyti 1. Targum Palestinese. MS de la Biblioteca Vaticana, vol. 4, Números*, Madrid 1974. Targum Neofiti 1 to the Book of Numbers completes the five-volume work of the Aramaic Bible, preceded by volume 0 by Rev. Prof. Mirosław S. Wróbel, entitled "Introduction to the Aramaic Bible," which serves as an explanation and introduction to the Targumic literature. Together with the previously published volumes of Genesis, Exodus (translated by Rev. Prof. Mirosław S. Wróbel), the Book of Leviticus (translated by Rev. Prof. Antoni Tronina) and the Book of Deuteronomy (Rev. Prof. Marek Parchem), the publication forms the entire Pentateuch, or Torah—the most important text in Judaism. The entire work is the first translation of the Torah according to Tagum Neofiti 1 into Polish.

Codex Neofiti 1 was discovered in the Vatican Library in 1949 and belongs to the group of Aramaic translations of the Pentateuch known as the "Palestinian Targums of the Pentateuch." The Aramaic text it contains dates to the 1st-2nd-century AD, making it a valuable source for biblical studies. It is written in a Galilean dialect, similar to that spoken by Jesus. Making this codex available in Poland (and in Polish) allows an understanding of the Jewish interpretation of the Holy Scriptures at the end of the Old Testament period and the beginning of the New Testament, then what Judaism was and developed during this period, and also plays a significant role in research on the language of Jesus, the Apostles, and the emerging Christianity.

A great advantage of Targum Neofiti 1 to the Book of Numbers is that it combines the highest scientific standards with an accessible form. The texts are arranged synoptically: on the left-hand side is the Targum text in Aramaic, and on the right-hand side is the Polish translation. Of particular importance to the skilled reader is the inclusion in the critical apparatus of alternative versions of the text from other manuscripts, versions and biblical translations, including explanations based on apocryphal writings and rabbinical literature. The footnotes also provide a direct opportunity, without referring to the Hebrew Bible (Masoretic text), to compare important, interesting, different or already interpreted phrases and terms translated from the Hebrew Bible in the Targum. Even less experienced readers, even without knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic, will find translations or explanations in Polish in the footnotes. Volume 4 of the Aramaic Bible is not only a translation, but a complete critical study containing an introduction explaining the specificity of Targum Neofiti 1 to the Book of Numbers.

The Book of Numbers, interpreted in Targumic terms, reveals connections with other books of the Pentateuch. It alludes to promises and curses from Genesis. It continues the cultic regulations from Leviticus. It foreshadows themes developed in Deuteronomy.

In view of the above, this publication should be of interest to biblical scholars and theologians seeking sources for academic research, students of theology and Jewish studies exploring ancient interpretations of biblical texts, clergy wishing to enrich their understanding of the Holy Scriptures, as well as Bible enthusiasts interested in the oldest commentaries on the texts contained therein.

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