

DECLARATION OF INTENT TO LIVE IN MARRIAGE IN THE POST-MODERN ERA

OŚWIADCZENIE WOLI W CELU WSPÓLNEGO POŻYCIA W MAŁŻEŃSTWIE W EPOCE PONOWOCZESNEJ

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Abstract

The Author points out that modern times, the so-called postmodern era, is characterized by a significant increase in the uncertainty of the behaviour model, a sense of vacillation between right and wrong, a sense of futility when trying to control chaos. A person increasingly entangled in a complex system of social connections will find herself exposed more and more to the situation where here autonomy will always have some impact on other participants. The network of power holds sway over people by influencing their minds, mainly but not exclusively through multimedia mass communication networks. The presented concepts, properly selected and hierarchical, not only provide an indispensable means of expression, but a pre-condition underlying the so-called worldview. Being hooked on the Web blurs the clarity of thought, judgements, opinions, preventing information gained online from being verified. Therefore, technology aims to increase control of people's thoughts, views, attitudes, judgements by influencing their realization, creating a model of the new human being. They shape the private worldviews of individual people. Thus, the source of power is the construction of meanings in people's minds. The way individuals think determines the fate of institutions, norms and values around which societies are organized. It should be noted that emotions dominate even the intellect. The networked society can no longer make a conscious and free declaration of intent, because individuals are subject to the viewing world that is presented online. Thus, they make a flawed declaration of intent because of the erroneous perception of the reality. In social life, an atrophy of the will is evident, along with responsibility for oneself, for others, which can be seen as an offshoot of the socialization of post-modern society, including narcissism, the pursuit of constant stimulation, consumption, the cult of youthful

immaturity, hedonism, the prolonged period of children's dependence on overprotective parents, which consequently leads to the formation in them of personalities incapable of effort, concentration, labour and sacrifice, in order to realize acts of will. Moral rules have lost their original impact, goodness is equated with benefit and moral norms are put on a par with rules of conduct that bring gains. A serious crisis of interpersonal relationships emerges, relationships are often devoid of positive emotions, emotional relationships, bonds, consequences and responsibility. This trend must be stopped, but first it must be well understood.

Keywords: declaration of intent, marriage, post-modern era, world view, values

Abstrakt

Autor wskazuje, że czasy współczesne, czyli tak zwana era ponowoczesna charakteryzuje się wyraźnym wzrostem niepewności wzoru zachowania, poczuciem chwiejności między dobrem i złem, poczuciem daremności wysiłków w opanowaniu chaosu. Osoba uwikłana coraz silniej w skomplikowany układ powiązań społecznych, coraz silniej od tych powiązań uzależniona, coraz częściej będzie narażona na to, że jej jakiegokolwiek przejawy autonomii z jej strony będą zawsze miały pewien refleks na sytuację innych uczestników. W sieci władzy jakiej się poddała sprawuje nad nią władzę wpływając na jej umysł przede wszystkim, choć nie wyłącznie, za pomocą multimedialnych sieci komunikacji masowej. To prezentowane pojęcia odpowiednio dobrane i zhierarchizowane nie tylko stanowią niezbędny środek wyrazu, lecz warunkują wstępnie, stojący u podstaw światopoglądu tak zwany obraz świata. Uzależnienie od sieci wyklucza swobodę myśli, ocen, opinii, nie pozwalając na weryfikację informacji uzyskanych w sieci. Technologia zmierza więc do coraz większego kontrolowania ludzkich myśli, poglądów, postaw, ocen wpływając na ich urzeczywistnianie, tworząc model nowego człowieka. To one kształtują prywatne światopoglądy poszczególnych ludzi. Tak więc źródłem władzy jest konstruowanie znaczeń w ludzkich umysłach. Sposób myślenia jednostkowych osób decyduje o losie instytucji, norm i wartości wokół których zorganizowane są społeczeństwa. Zauważyć należy, iż emocje zdominowały rozum a nawet intelekt. Społeczeństwo usieciowione w tym jednostkowe osoby nie potrafią już składać świadomego i swobodnego oświadczenia woli, bowiem podlegają i ulegają wpływom świata oglądu, który prezentowany jest przez sieć. Składa więc oświadczenie woli pod wpływem błędu co do otaczającej go rzeczywistości. W życiu społecznym widoczna jest atrofia woli, a wraz z nią odpowiedzialność za siebie, za innych, która może być ujmowana jako pochodna socjalizacji społeczeństwa ponowoczesnego, m.in. narcyzm, pogoń za ciągłą stymulacją, konsumpcja, kult młodzieńczej niedojrzałości, hedonizm, wydłużający się okres zależności dzieci od nadopieczonych rodziców, która w konsekwencji prowadzi do kształtowania u nich osobowości niezdolnych do wysiłku, skupienia, trudów i wyrzeczeń, w celu realizacji aktów

woli. Reguły moralne utraciły właściwy swój smak i sens, dobro utożsamiane jest z korzyścią a normy moralne z zasadami działania, których przestrzeganie przynosi jakiś pożytek. Ujawnia się poważny kryzys relacji międzyludzkich, relacje często są pozbawione pozytywnych emocji, związków uczuciowych, więzi, konsekwencji i odpowiedzialności. Temu zjawisku należy położyć kres, ale najpierw trzeba je dobrze zrozumieć.

Słowa kluczowe: oświadczenie woli, małżeństwo, epoka ponowoczesna, światopogląd, wartości

Introduction

Over the past few years, a number of important research topics have been addressed, which are also becoming useful for the modern science of family law as syntheses derived from empirical studies. Of note is the fact that in family law the personal, as well as moral socioeconomic and political elements play an important part. Diverse political and ideological trends, scientific and cultural theories are seeking to redefine marriage. Notably, contemporary societies are diversified culturally and ethically, but it should always be remembered that marriage is a legal union between a man and a woman, arising from their will which they manifest as equals for the purpose of a community of life, their mutual good, and for achieving goals of their family. It represents “social capital” grounded in mutual trust and reliability, solidarity, subjectivity, dialogue and responsibility, being there for some purpose. The issue of free will entails tangible consequences for our insight into ourselves, our relationships with others, and for our moral and legal practices. The assumption that we have free will informs many of our attitudes and judgements that we make on a daily basis. Contemporary theories of free will can be said to fall into two broad categories: those supporting the claim that humans possess free will and those who are sceptical about that. We might say that free will, as it is usually understood by modern philosophers, serves to control human action, which a special kind of moral responsibility entails. More specifically, it is power or an ability proper to subjects of action, which validly subjects them to reprimand and praise, punishment and reward. Such an understanding of free will as related to moral responsibility brings the philosophical and the legal dispute close to issues that are relatively concrete and undoubtedly relevant to our daily lives. To be sure, the celebration of marriage is the outcome of an agreement, the will of both prospective spouses,

expressed in the prescribed form and creating the legal relationship of marriage. In this article, I present some reflections outlined in the title. The text is the outcome of research that employs methods of analysis and critique of the literature using the process of mental cognition. The fundamental thing in the post-modern era is the declaration of intent.

I.

The world is changing right before our eyes. A genuine mental revolution is in progress, and human frivolity regarding words is appalling. It is generally accepted that a declaration of intent communicates to another person (or persons) a desire to establish, abolish or change a certain relationship. According to the Civil Code,¹ the will of a person performing a legal act may be expressed by any behaviour of that person revealing her will sufficiently – even if this will is expressed in electronic form. A declaration of intent to be communicated to another person is considered made if the manner in which it is articulated allows that person to be acquainted with its content. A declaration of intent should be interpreted given the circumstances in which it was made, the rules of social intercourse and established customs, as well as the regulations contained in the legal norms of the code, for example the Family and Guardianship Code.² It should be examined what the consensual intention of the parties was and their purpose and perception of reality rather than relying on its literal meaning. The basic prerequisite for the successful conclusion of any marriage, regardless of its secular or religious form, is the unequivocally expressed and consensual intent of the prospective spouses to be bound by the nuptial knot. According to the legislator, if the secular procedure is applied, they should submit declarations that they are entering into marriage with each other, but if the religious form is followed, they should declare their intent to concurrently enter into a marriage governed by Polish law, Article 1 § 1-2 FGC. What matters is the content of the statements, not how they are expressed.

As the legal act of marriage is governed by personal law, the validity – or, perhaps, avoidance – of the legal effects triggered by a defective

¹ Act of 23 April 1964 – The Civil Code, Journal of Laws No. 16, item 93 as amended [hereinafter: CC].

² Act of 25 February 1964 – The Family and Guardianship Code, Journal of Laws No. 9, item 59 as amended [hereinafter: FGC].

declaration of intent of the prospective spouses is normalized differently than in the Civil Code. Article 17 FGC excludes the application of CC provisions on defects in declarations of intent. It is stipulated that a marriage can be annulled only for the reasons specified in the FGC. The conclusion of marriage is a legal act relating to the family. In the doctrine, the fact that Article 1 FGC uses the term “declaration,” not “declaration of intent,” was interpreted that this provision utilises a qualitatively different type of declaration, but it goes without saying that what is meant here is a declaration of intent. It is clear from the wording of Article 1 § 2 FGC that the legislator allows only simultaneous marriage celebration in both forms. Marriage is among the elements of a person’s civil status, and one of the civil status rights is the right to be considered the spouse of a specific person. The most prevalent opinion says that the conclusion of marriage belongs to the category of so-called family-law actions – that is, a special type of legal acts that produce effects under family law. Marriage celebration hinges on the submission of relevant declarations of intent by both prospective spouses, so it falls into the category of bilateral acts. In view of the obligatory participation of another subject – the head of the registry office or the clergyman³ before whom appropriate declarations are made – it can be reasoned that we are dealing here with specific civil-law events. The constituents of marriage are declarations of the prospective spouses and the participation of the head of the registry office or a cleric. A human being is the subject of free and conscious actions, the subject of deeds through which he fulfils himself – as the object of self-determination, which is a manifestation of human dignity. The fact that a human being is a person is also manifested in his ability to cooperate with others towards the common good. A declaration on entering into marriage can be made (a) typically in person, by virtue of Article 1 § 1-3 FGC; (b) exceptionally, by a proxy of one prospective spouse and in person by the other party, as stipulated in Article 6 FGC.

Through a declaration of intent, prospective spouses are joined by a personal community. The willingness to take responsibility for the marriage thus created is an inalienable challenge facing the persons entering into

³ Announcement of the Speaker of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of 9 November 2018 on the promulgation of the uniform text of the Act – The Law on Civil Status Records, Journal of Laws item 2224 as amended.

marriage. Founding a marriage on emotions – and often emotions – is not sufficient, because they are ephemeral. Love should be learnt and lived in freedom and responsibility. Only with their declaration of intent (the celebration of marriage) will the spouses embark on a common path, difficult but joyful – to preserve that first “yes” forever, making life together a beautiful adventure. The process of building interpersonal references is still a current challenge, and its success depends on respect for the rights of all people. As Agnieszka Belcer and Anna Wojnarowska note, the priority domain where this postulate is realised is marriage and the family founded on it, being the primary and natural environment for life and development [Belcer and Wojnarowska 2014, 76]. Human nature is relational and enables people to build personal bonds. In regard to the personal dimension, we should highlight that family life should be a source of personal (human) growth, both spiritually, mentally and physically. This “yes” comes true in culture, in an ordinary relationship, in the everyday effort of living together through shared responsibilities, mutual care for each other, mutual responsibility, solidarity, direct communication, dialogue and love. Opportunities to realize “yes” are within easy reach as they present themselves every day – all one needs is sensitivity, empathy, concern, dialogue. “Yes” is born in the face-to-face encounter. In this dialogue, three elements must come together: coexistence, competence, and commitment. Marriage cannot be seen through the prism of social bonds; it rests on attachment, togetherness and responsibility. This bond cannot become a contractual form of relationship, stemming from competitive and conflict anthropology of Thomas Hobbes, where contract presents an element that neutralizes the ever-dormant conflict. The sum of individual benefits alone cannot make up a good marriage, nor can it provide a protective cover against all misfortunes, worries or problems. Radical individualism is a germ that is the most difficult to defeat. In the age of fluid modernity, a declaration on entering into marriage is subject to various influences, not known before. Formal conditions of the effective conclusion of marriage do not protect against the failure to realise the declaration of intent. Information society, being post-modern, creates an illusory realm in which a virtual world is substituted for reality. Ubiquitous digital technology often brings the threat of addiction, isolation and increasing loss of touch with reality, impeding the development of authentic human relationships and responsibility. A person has no conception of being manipulated. Negative phenomena of mass culture

create a virtual community of beliefs and opinions, where legal opinions are shared among various participants in the process of understanding law. The content of these assessments largely depends on the nature of a particular person, especially her psychological needs and third parties construing law. In so doing, a person involved in interpreting the law is under the influence of power understood not only in ideological but also political terms. Rather often, discussions of autonomy inspire the conclusion that modern man, who understands the importance of autonomy as a particularly precious value in a technological and globalised world, is increasingly torn by contradictory, if not opposing, aspirations. While striving to secure a niche for himself, an information enclave, the maximum secrecy of his personal data, his privacy, man is at the same time more of an absorber, a consumer of knowledge and information about others. Everything becomes a kind of spectacle that can be followed, watched – life is under constant surveillance. If we were to talk about a person's declaration of intent, we would have to penetrate and understand the nature of contemporary man and his characteristics – to this end, we can avail ourselves of the results of research carried out by various specialists, such as behaviourists, psychoanalysts, humanists, or anthropologists.

II.

He who does not notice changes in the modern world has lost touch with reality – there is a genuine mental revolution under way. “This time is not just an era of change, but a time of changing eras,” says Pope Francis. The present iGEN generation is growing up with a smartphone in hand, surfing the Internet, hooked up to mobile devices and completely unprepared for adulthood. And what does this mean for all of us? The percentage of young people attending religious instruction is falling. In 2010, 93% of 17–19-year-olds declared attendance, but now the figure is down to 54%. Figures for religious practices among young people are dramatic. The number of respondents who declare belief in God has fallen from 94% to 84%, and the percentage of regular practitioners has shrunk from 70% to under 42% (data from the latest CBOS report). Religiousness is no longer inherited, and growing secularisation is affecting girls and young women the most heavily, a group that has hitherto passed on the faith to the next generation. Today's interest in spirituality is undermined by the lure of a consumerist

and shallow life and the attempts to turn meditation into an addition to an enjoyable and fun lifestyle.

We must be mindful of the situation where young people, who have been moulded by the post-modern era, often view the world through IT and mass media, especially the Internet. One speaks today of a fourth industrial revolution, which is essentially digital. Most importantly, it is characterised by the ubiquity of the Internet, ever smaller and more efficient sensors, artificial intelligence and machine learning. We live in the age of knowledge and information – the sources of new forms of power, which is very often anonymous. The changes in social and political life have been profoundly influenced by the ideology of postmodernism, especially the so-called Frankfurt School (Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas), which on the basis of the thought of Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci and Leon Trotsky founded neo-Marxism, otherwise known as the New Left [Kiereś 2000; Bartyzel and Dominiak 2006, 36ff.; Sareło 1998]. Also, worth considering is the philosophy and theory advanced by the “prophet of the 21st century”, Yuval Noah Harari, who is considered the Friedrich Nietzsche of the present times. He preaches a new philosophy, which constitutes a big reset grounded in eugenics and transhumanism as a religion. He contends that free will is nonsense because our will is to be transformed into algorithms with a view to controlling and monitoring other people. Fierce attacks have been launched at the new generation, involving the washing of children’s and young people’s brains. All values should be curtailed. Our goal, therefore, is to relinquish our consciousness and free will in order to destroy our civilization. The Bible should be dismissed. Young people, fascinated by technological innovations, such as AI, fall into the traps of which Harari says. He accords a divine dimension to humanity, saying that nanotechnology is the future.

In 2 Tim 3,4 we read: “But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never

able to come to a knowledge of the truth. [...] For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”⁴

A new society has emerged, which Peter Hahne describes as a pleasure society characterized by a widespread decline in authority and family life, a crisis of national and patriotic values, disregard for one’s own country, appallingly low standard of education, career pursuit, idleness and extreme consumerism [Hahne 2007].⁵ The existence of the so-called fun society (*Spassgesellschaft*) has led to a very dangerous consequence – the loss of seriousness. The culture of pleasure stands in the way of thinking about what is truly important in the life of every individual and society. The emergence of the *Spassgesellschaft* was due to the cultural revolution, which questioned the traditional system of values [Peeters 2010, 43ff.].

A new idea of the post-human has emerged, which is associated, among other things, with post-genderism, which is a social, political and cultural movement promoting the voluntary elimination of the social sexes. The idea of gender forms a unique philosophy of life, the embodiment of which is to be sought in the use of advanced biotechnology and assisted reproductive techniques. An increasingly common belief among modern people is the awareness that there exists a situation of insecurity – *insecuritas humana*. The risk society lives in fear of dangers: technological failures, disasters and accidents caused by the defectiveness of many devices and systems. Risk is understood as the opposite of chance, it is a measure of failure and its probability; it is also the taking of an action while the outcome cannot be predicted. Another form of risk is androgenic risk, which determines psychological, social or cultural factors. It is due to the abolition of traditional cultural models, the negation of previously learnt and adopted values, or the dilemma of will in regard to the sense of the decision being made [Wust 1995, 10ff.; Kiepas 1993; Habermas 2003; Fukuyama 2004]. The fact is that not only the coronavirus plagues our world. Hateful

⁴ Holy Bible, New International Version (Biblica, 2011). Available at www.biblegateway.com.

⁵ See Wielomski 2018; Harari 2020.

ideologies feeding on fear are spreading too: populism, nationalism, religious fundamentalism, fake news, conspiracy theories, and fears about the future. The contemporary crisis has rid us of the notion that we are in full control of the world, life, nature, and history. Today, we know how fragile our world is and the fact that this disaster can and probably will be followed by others. Yet we must learn to live in a world like this.

The impact of individualism as a personal life orientation value on national bonds is pointed out by Mattei Dogan. He believes that traditional values are being supplanted by new ones, with one dominating over the others – individualism. In doing so, he highlights that in today's society of anonymous crowds, a growing number of people place the individual at the top of the hierarchy of values – above the masses, classes, churches and nations. He goes on to say that individuals are increasingly inclined to believe that their own development and prosperity need not be achieved within the national community, but in spite of it or even openly against it [Dogan 1993, 191, as cited in Bokszański 2006, 172-73]. Most of these changes are ambivalent as they can involve both positive and negative elements: increased prosperity and productivity, but also growing inequality, exclusion and corruption; continuing appeals for work towards the common good, but also turning away from ethics; encouragement of global security, but also mounting aggression and violence. We are also seeing cultural, social and political changes, as well as religious ones showing up in fundamentalism and individualism, attacks on religious freedom, secularization, indifference, relativism, disillusionment, a relapse into totalitarianism, and cultural imperialism. No wonder we feel oppressed by it all. The post-modern era of the twenty-first century has transformed the criteria of good and evil. Only progress and emancipation are good [Delsol 2007, 25ff.]. Individuals make choices all the time, they change political and cultural orientations, and redefine their moral attitudes. Leszek Koczanowicz stresses that nowadays people define themselves relative to moral horizons; they can also move from one reference system to another, but they nonetheless need a system of categories that would enable them to describe and evaluate the world in which they live. On the other hand, total individualization is a threat that can manifest itself both through the immoderate strife for self-creation and the homogenization of society, where concepts of individual identity differentiation are lost due to membership in different communities [Koczanowicz 2005, 193]. As Mieczysław Płopa notes,

“in recent years family life has been undergoing certain changes of varying intensity in different countries: the fashion of family life is changing, the number of working women is increasing, the frequency of divorce and re-entry into new relationships (not necessarily marriage) is higher. Commitment to parenting is changing, the authority of elders in the family is diminishing [...], being a family member can therefore be understood differently” [Plopa 2015, 10ff.]. A declaration of intent made at the nuptials can be related to values, goals and life plans, a specific world view, which can often be unstable, insistent, or very radical. When making a decision, the person who is calculating the probability of achieving the goal and its value is subject to constructed cultural standards. The resultant obligations must be grounded in the power of will, which is ready to make this obligation put into practice, and in the good that will be safeguarded or even multiplied if this happens.

In the era of civilizational growth, the image of modern man has been disturbed, and as such causes problems. Today, distrust, apprehension, anxiety and even fear in contact with another person is due to uncertainty about the values the partner subscribes to – this stems from the relativistic differentiation of attitudes, leading to uncertainty. Now, individualism as a new form of the self-determination principle prevails; it is an element of the search for identity, since the creation of identity has the nature of will. In particular, the self-determination principle posits that the individual should have the right to the personal determination of his or her citizenship, transnational membership, autonomous choice of the name, to follow (or not) a religion, pursue a freely chosen career, and to choose gender [Bach-Golecka 2006, 56].

The era in which we live – postmodernity – is today characterized by a constant and strong emphasis on breaking any limitations that the community can force on individuals; for example, the influence of postmodernist concepts is apparent in Thomas M. Franck’s individualistic concept of the “empowered self” [Franck 1999].

Postmodern hybridization is not merely an intellectual interpretation of the modern state of the world, but a political and cultural concept and construct; more than that, it is also a technological, psychological, and perhaps a philosophical concept. Postmodernist hybridization should be viewed as a political demand of postmodern intellectuals [Rewers 2007, 8-9]. Culture and its evolution are understood today in an anti-fundamentalist

way – as a creative game rather than a project based on absolute points of reference. The human being immersed in this sort of culture is a seeker of truth, of the so-called better world. He does not own knowledge about the world and himself. There has emerged of a new make-up of social life, which is referred to as open society. It adopts a pluralism of beliefs, attitudes, religions, or sexual orientation. It does not accept any hierarchy of values but a set of core values. It should be noted that the postmodernist subject is void. It does not actualize or express itself, because there is nothing inside it to be manifested. It inherently has no nature, reason, essence, norms or values, but it calls for more external freedoms, which oppose its random actions. Postmodernism proclaims the transgression of the existing boundaries, circumscribed for the freedom of action by the state, morals, and law. The freedom of the fringe and social outcasts is a topical issue. Ihab Hassan distinguishes between the term ‘postmodernism,’ which applies to artistic and literary phenomena, from ‘postmodernity,’ which refers to social and political phenomena [Hassan 1982]. Postmodernism reaches for play forms expressing wishes, disintegrating, displaced or indeterminate – for fragmentation, rupture, and the will to destroy. It can be clearly seen, as Jean-François Lyotard notes, that Hassan’s methodology addresses themes such as: planetisation, transhumanisation, technological augmentation of the conscious, the centrality of media, history as a happening, immanence of discussion, distinctness from the historical avant-garde, play, disintegration, displacement, self-destruction, fragmentation, or epistemological alteration. They have been absorbed by philosophical postmodernism, but also by its more recent varieties, from the sociology of media to the sociology of globalization and cyberpunk philosophy [Lyotard 2014]. Ultimately, this methodology is embraced by official proponents of fictions and new fashionable behaviours; it is codified in three simplified dogmas of relativism: “it seems to me,” “I like it,” “It suits me.” Postmodernism is figurative and constructs reality as post-Kantian fictions. What we call reality is something that belongs to our conceptual schemata, is pure interpretation, hence an opinion. Nicola Abbagnano pointed out that the postmodern paradigm delegitimizes knowledge and negates the objectivity of knowledge and truth in the name of the right to selfish will. In his view, postmodernism stems from the division of many disparate disciplines such as: Strauss’s cultural anthropology, pansexualism and Kinsey’s reports, Marxism, evolutionism, nihilism, Freud’s psychology, Lyotard’s reflections, Comte’s

humanist-religious ideology, constructivism, Derrida's and Deleuze's deconstructionism, Marxist feminism, and last but not least, Anglo-Americanism, French poststructuralism and Foucault's pansexualism. For postmodernism, the scientific and technological knowledge that takes form in the computer culture clearly manifests itself in language, lifestyle, and mentality. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself; it is produced to be sold, exchanged, consumed as a means of power for the mastery of information [Abbagnano 1998, 7-8].

Postmodernism aims to undermine the Christian claim to the truth. Therefore, we need to gain the ability and competences to receive, discern the signs of the times and engage in dialogue with their times and, at the same time, be able to speak the language of today's people to understand and reach out to them. The strong link between ethos and religion has been severed. Natural law has been relegated to the subculture of Christian circles, so that outside them discussing it makes no sense. Christians who defend certain values because of their faith, however, often become marginalized and ignored. This general trend towards *a priori* dismissal of Christians' words as inappropriate discriminates against religious people and also, in a sense, cripples social dialogue. Many analysts of modern civilization speak of two attempts at possessing people. The first is despotism associated with totalitarian ideologies – communism and fascism. The other subjugates man to radical versions of biotechnology based on materialism – genetic engineering, cloning, neuroscience, and eugenics. The latter tries to reduce the human person to a transitory element of cosmic evolution, conjuring up fantastic visions of the future. Young people, in particular, are consumed by this vision. Attempts to forcefully implant science and technology in the human sphere of intentionality, morality, cognition, and decision-making, as well as the prospect of better control over oneself in self-determination, leads to the undermining of human freedom. When applying an organic-naturalistic reduction of man [Possenti 2017, 63-65], Zygmunt Bauman writes: “Here we are: inhabitants of an era of confusion and discord, an era in which anything – almost anything – can happen, while at the same time nothing – or nearly nothing – can be undertaken with the conviction and certainty that it can be carried through; an era whose effects chase their causes, causes try to follow their effects, and the effect of those is minimal and shrinking more and more in this regard; an era, apparently, of proven measures, whose utility is being squandered or

exhausted at an increasingly fast pace, while the search for something that could replace them can rarely be taken beyond the planning and presentation stages – which brings achievements that are equally impressive” [Bauman 2018, 259]. It is an era of persistent crises and, more recently, a COVID-19 pandemic, when war narrative was introduced. Modern has a slightly different notion of freedom. The concept of freedom has become a peculiar incantation – it is the only value that is universally relevant, as emphasised by Bauman. But it is worth noting that freedom today has become mired in paradoxes that we do not seem to notice at first. The subject of freedom, especially if interpreted internally, is brought up too rarely. The number of unreflecting people is rising. Bauman says that for people involved in the local reality by a twist of fate rather than by choice the loosening and disintegration of community ties and the forced individualization of people’s lives predict a completely different situation and suggests very different strategies of conduct [Idem 2000, 119]. The former seriousness and modernist forms no longer have a place in the currently prevailing consumerist and information-focused world view. In particular, there is no place for the old bourgeois virtues such as diligence, reliability, economy, discipline and self-restraint. Along with the growing fragmentation of life and culture, the constantly emphasised sense of stability and security is waning. It is argued that postmodern times are full of risks. The social and economic transformations are not accepted without reflection. At the same time, postmodernism entails a strong dissent against technologisation, unification, rationalisation, civilisational totalisation, the metropolitan lifestyle and consumer mentality [Żardecka 2006, 354]. Leszek Nowak notes that postmodernism finds a space for the human being, but it forms part of a hierarchy, the superior places occupied by structures [Nowak 1993, 45], and the interpersonal is ontologically primary in relation to the human. Therefore, firstly, our attention is captured by postmodernist philosophers’ interest in the interpersonal, what exists not in man, but what he produces in contact with the surroundings, and therefore with other people. Secondly, it can be argued that in postmodernism fully endorses the idea of abolishing the concept of subject in its traditional interpretation, which is the cornerstone of anthropocentric philosophy to date. An individual observed from a postmodernist perspective becomes unique, with individual traits, terms, and characteristics. Postmodernity accords the highest status to the person, but this person is the self, not anyone else.

Man has duties, first and foremost, in respect of himself, not others – he owes allegiance to himself, not to something or someone. Submission to external standards of behaviour is false, and restraining one's emotions and controlling one's reactions is hypocrisy. Modern times, or the so-called postmodern era, are characterized by a significant increase in the uncertainty of the behavioural model, the wavering difference between right and wrong, a sense of futility of efforts to control chaos. The connection between our actions and their long-term results is becoming blurred [Wiśniewski 1996, 78]. Postmodernism calls for stripping moral life of ethics and all authority figures. At the same time, one of its fundamental claims concerns the possibility of knowing the truth in general, and therefore about man and the essence of his moral life [Sareło 1996, 63]. Postmodernist philosophers proclaim that the gap between the inner and external morality be removed. Plopa contends that “the changeable nature of contemporary families and the recognition of the need for family systems to employ strategies for coping with stress engendered also by cultural and economic transformations make it necessary to present knowledge demonstrating certain regularities concerning the creation of functional and dysfunctional family systems and subsystems [...]. All family systems, irrespective of their size, must establish both their identity, as a whole, and the identity of each family member; they must clearly define the borderline between the family and the outside world and between individual members within the limits of the family. They must define strategies for managing the home, material resources, including financial ones, stress management strategies, and methods of conflict resolution. They must establish an emotional atmosphere that promotes the well-being of each family member. Of importance are the patterns of interaction that the family establishes in order to constructively manage the basic tasks in the face of the inevitable changes it is experiencing” [Plopa 2015, 11ff.]. Facts, phenomena, as well as sociocultural, economic, scientific and religious processes, all present a great unknown. We live in a dynamically changing reality, afflicted by various conflicts and wars. Axiologically, the following are alarming: insensitivity to values, ignorance of their nature and the part they play in individual and social life, a move away from them, undermining their significance, and failure to realize one's own but proper hierarchy of values resulting from their objective order. This reference to values leaves people lost, especially young ones, in the world of values. Axiological disorientation and social exclusion

bring about a diminished sense of self-worth and identity, jeopardising social life and civic activity of the younger generation in particular. As Joanna Wyleżałek notes, axiological confusion is due to the factors that constitute postmodern society. She points out that the features of postmodern society are: the key importance of information, the privileged status of intellectual technologies, the development of computer and communication technologies, the informatization of social life, the dynamic development of the fourth (finance and insurance) and the fifth (education) sector of the economy, the parallel existence of the real and virtual worlds [Wyleżałek 2010].

Bauman wrote that the entry of digital technology into the daily life of the major and rapidly expanding sector of the human population seems to be just another new chapter in the history of technology; and yet its virtually universal availability and completely “de-territorialized” mobility, without the need to synchronize with our body movements (which has become for most of us, as a result, an integral and fixed extension of the body – a feature that has never been possible or even contemplated with other technological devices) has resulted in a complete redefinition of the range of options available to us and the emergence of a plethora of new ways of responding to old types of stimuli, previously impracticable but now viable – together with gaining the ability to generate numerous, entirely new stimuli to which we have never been exposed, and creating an outlet for impulses and actions not tried and tested before. According to the inverted logic of instrumental rationality – “I want to know what this device can be used for” and “I will do it because this device can do it” – new opportunities, possibilities and prospects lead to changes in the assessment of how relatively attractive specific patterns of behaviour on offer are, which in turn leads to revolutionary changes in the assessment of the likelihood of choosing specific patterns of behaviour that might be favoured over others. Bauman notes that the new media facilitate and thus promote choosing an attitude of cultural omnivorousness to the same extent that they facilitate an attitude of rigorous but whimsical selectivity in gathering information, building networks, and communication – and these three functions are the most popular applications of these media [Bauman 2018, 145-46].

Krzysztof Zanussi notices that the civilisation of today is threatened by a spiritual void in which there is nothing to die for (die for a smartphone?) [Zanussi 2021]. No doubt there is a difference between a traditional

society and a modern one. It has already been specified that modernity is a transition from a society of fate to a society of choice [Piwowarski 2000, 176]. Michel Foucault presents a position associated with the transgression of the subject, stating that modernity, or rather the attitude of modernity, is an attempt at a novel treatment of the present. The present must be subjected to constant criticism. Permanent criticism is to elicit an answer to the essential and central questions always found in its centre: who am I? Who am I at any given time, under specific circumstances? It is a continually practised ontology of the present and analytics of truth. This is the emerging problem of truth, the subject of truth and inventing oneself as a newly constituted moral subject [Foucault 1990, 46].

When answering the question who we are, Charles Taylor observes that, first, we need to determine our choices, commitments, identification; then, we have to abide by them faithfully; also, in our reflection on orientations and actions, we have to specify what is and what is not important to us. Identity is not determined by an ordinary aggregate of facts but by highly evaluative choices. Reflection enables us to build our world and the autonomy of the subject – “the constant effort to understand ourselves also concerns our future, whether we are going in the right direction. The answer ‘yes’ or ‘no,’ although given at different times in our lives and from different vantage points (the story of our own lives – how we became who we are – also includes a notion of the future and the question of absolute good. We cannot do without orientation toward good, although our notions of good change over time; it informs our entire understanding of ourselves” [Taylor 2012, 93]. Undoubtedly, some periods and situations may be conducive to the development of moral sensitivity and others may hinder it. It is worse if we are dealing with an unreflective person. As Robert Pilat notes, “the object of reflection is here not so much the content, form or the way our mental processes happen, but the fact that they take place and that they are mine – this sort of reflection captures a characteristic of the person thinking or experiencing, who reveals himself in this” [Pilat 2013]. Reflection makes it possible to discern the difference between a thing, others and oneself. It also lies at the root of our speaking of people [Spaemann 2001, 20].

III.

Young people are more and more present in a networked society. It creates “a new model of social functioning, where reference groups become participatory groups via a computer network. This situation, which is completely new in social life and associated with the rapid information flow and the possibility of moving fast in space, has both positive and negative ramifications” [Wyleżałek 2010, 71]. The author highlights a very important aspect of the negative influence exerted by postmodern society, which is social susceptibility to influences. Now, literature is familiar with the concept of “IT world view,” first used in a book by Witold Marciszewski and Paweł Stacewicz [Marciszewski and Stacewicz 2011].⁶ As they put it, if a particular person identifies certain values (e.g., Christian ones) as his own and strongly believes in a certain vision of the world (e.g., that the world was created by God and remains dependent on Him), then he undoubtedly nurtures a certain world view. The key role is played by the word ‘nurtures’. A world view is nurtured because the views it comprises have an extremely strong impact on one’s life. They act like a signpost or compass, showing the right course of action [ibid., 223], but they also affect the subject’s inner freedom and will in making choices. Each world view requires a specific method, a set of concepts and some language to express its views. These concepts, properly selected and prioritised, not only constitute an essential means of expression, but they condition the so-called picture of the world underlying the world view. As the authors note, the conceptual apparatus that is proper to the information world view (enabling one to have a “world picture”) would not be sufficiently persuasive and influential if there were no highly developed IT consciousness in the modern world. This awareness has a technological dimension related to knowledge of IT and the ability to use its products, but also an extra-technological dimension related to the awareness that IT concepts and models can be used effectively to describe non-technical phenomena (e.g. the development of organisms, human mental activity or economic processes). It is precisely this second dimension that favours the creation of an information world view [ibid., 211-15]. In the information society of today there is a trend towards describing more and more phenomena in IT categories. The human mind is

⁶ See also Stacewicz 2015, 11-24; Idem 2016.

likened to an information-processing system (e.g. by cognitive scientists), the abilities and development of living organisms are explained by the properties of the DNA code (which is a physical form of data storage) and sometimes the entire universe is likened to a giant computer (as physicists do, among others). Things like this are increasingly helping the information world picture become ingrained in our culture – a picture of the world grounded in information. Its constituent parts are such concepts as information and data, algorithm and program, computability, and incalculability [ibid., 220]. Based on literature review, the validity of an optimistic or pessimistic version of the information world view remains an open-ended question. At this stage, nevertheless, the impact on humans on the picture of the world presented in this medium and the decisions they make cannot be underestimated.

We are aware that the decision-making process consists of experience, comprehension of reality, practical sense of grasping things, critical reflection and evaluative judgement, all related to decision-making. New concepts have become widespread, paradigms, norms, values, lifestyles, educational methods, governing methods, all being various manifestations of a new ethic that has won the hearts of the general population. Social media platforms and algorithms shape consciousness, mentality, attitudes in people of the 21st century. The global cultural revolution is the spread of a new ethics worldwide based on myths and the deteologisation, depersonalisation, despiritualisation, deformation and pansexualisation. The case is extremely complicated as we are dealing with a serious social disease: the crisis of reality. It is when we discover that the concepts used so far no longer properly describe the world, because it is evolving faster than the language we use every day. Many ask how to live in an era when the distinction between truth and lie for ever larger numbers of people has less and less significance. This weighs on their political, social, and life choices and their meaning of life. Prolonged fear makes it possible to manipulate man, and fear is triggered by negative emotions. Emotions have dominated reason and even intellect – when intellect does not go hand in hand with reason, it enters into an alliance with emotions and passions that blind the eyes and engender various ideologies. Ideologies, in turn, are blind – we experience this in dealing with others, other experience, other life perspectives and other cultures. It seems that the emerging crisis of the present times lies primarily in the fact that moral rules have lost

their proper meaning, good is equated with benefit, and moral norms with rules of conduct, which bring a benefit of some kind when obeyed. Modernity is informed by a devalued understanding of the human person and the value of life, which is associated with the general crisis of existential values of the earthly existence of man. One observes the atrophy of will, and with it comes responsibility for oneself, for others – it can be interpreted as secondary to the socialization of postmodern society. It is characterized, among other things, by narcissism, the cult of youthful immaturity, hedonism, the pursuit of constant stimulation, consumption, children's prolonged dependence on their overprotective parents, which leads to the formation of personalities that are unable to concentrate, make an effort, bear hardship and make sacrifice, pursue goals, and do acts of will. We are confirmed in the belief that contemporary civilisational and cultural changes bring alarming, destructive forms of understanding and valuing marriage and the family. The world driven by progress, with its threats and fallen authorities has a bearing on family and social life. The present calls for a new mindset, compelling us to discern challenges and threats and create new regulations, social relations that are based on the personal understanding of man, a new reading of responsibility. The rationality and freedom of man is now turning into cognitive relativism and rash freedom of conduct leading to dangerous outcomes. There has been a profound crisis in interpersonal relationships, which are often purged of positive emotions, emotional links, bonds, consequences and responsibility. This must stop, but first we must understand this phenomenon well.

The principle of autonomy of will and freedom of contract in modern law is now becoming a less adequate instrument, that is, a criterion for legal evaluation and description of reality and trends. A defective picture of the world determines the object of inner will; in this way, inner will accepts the object as the apparent good. As early as 2001, Marc Prensky stated that today's school students are no longer the people for whom the current educational system was created, because they are the first generation ever to grow up surrounded by modern technology. Computers, game consoles, mobile phones have no secrets for them and are an integral part of their lives, and thus have completely changed the way their minds process information. Prensky emphasises that our students' brains most likely differ physically from ours, which is due precisely to the subordination of their lives to modern technology, through which (or perhaps thanks to which)

their thought processes have changed [Prensky 2001]. Unlike us, the older generation (digital immigrants), who had to learn how to use computers in everyday life, 21st-century students are digital natives who treat the world of computers, smartphones and the Internet as their natural habitat. Differences among digital immigrants – and among digital natives, too – can be seen very clearly: digital natives have no problem working with text displayed even on a small screen; they look for information on the Internet, preferring image and sound to text; they expect quick results, they process information in parallel, they prefer learning by experimenting and *ad hoc* education; they do not read instructions, using trial and error instead; they are very attached to the mobile devices they own, they cannot imagine living without them; they use all available functions of the Internet, their computers, smartphones, etc. They use multiple functions in parallel creatively and imaginatively (so-called media convergence); they use modern language, they communicate without obligations thanks to technology, they show a preference for small talk about non-essential things [Hojnacki 2006, 23-27; Prensky 2001]. Computational thinking, mass and electronic media are highlighted to play a hugely important role in our everyday life. A dynamically developing society, professional and social life based on the ability to understand and process information are forcing us to master, at least at a basic level, the ability to use communication technologies and expand our media literacy. School has put special emphasis on the use of diversified methods of teaching, coding, related to content that is of interest to children and young people (microcomputer robots, popular game and cartoon characters, etc.). Seeing such far-reaching changes, we cannot pretend that focus on learning to program is merely a fad. The era of innocence, romance, tenderness, and responsibility for the partner is over. The 21st-century generation functions in a radically different way than digital immigrants. Having an information-driven picture of the world, many young people have trouble making prudent and responsible decisions, as they manifest a reduced ability to think logically, a unique and inappropriate assessment and interpretation of reality, elevated egocentrism, selfishness, inability to make decisions in the face of constantly accumulated doubts, and, more often than not, lower moral standards. In fact, the issue of factors contributing to the lowering or suppression of evaluative discernment is an open problem. It seems that the title of marriage nullity has not been sufficiently diagnosed in this post-modern time. Many authors [Góralski 1989, 69-75;

Góralski and Dzierżon 2001, 147; Góralski 2013, 55-81; Idem 2018; Idem 2019, 49-67; Żurowski 1985, 3-14] introduce the concept of evaluative discernment and discuss its constitutive elements (sufficient intellectual cognition, critical-evaluative capacity, inner freedom). Wojciech Góralski states that theology and canon law should therefore respond to the challenges of methodological and content renewal, emphatically prescribed by the conciliar and post-conciliar events, and necessitated by the conflict with contemporary culture. Cardinal G. Müller, the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, advances a noteworthy opinion – namely, that the mentality of modern people of the post-modern era is rather in contrast to the Christian notion of marriage, especially when respect for indissolubility and openness to life are in question. He also pointed out that many Christians remain influenced by such a cultural system and touted values, which is why marriages in modern times are probably much more likely to be invalid than they were in the past, as the will to marry in conformity with the Catholic doctrine of marriage is lacking; besides, adherence to the life context of the faith is very limited [Müller 2013]. It appears that this process is on the rise, unfortunately; it is due to the immaturity of post-modern people and their relativism, who are unreflecting and hedonistic. It is because there is social anomie and trends towards individualisation and atrophy of the will. Being receptive to all cultural influences can make one extremely vulnerable to manipulative techniques and advertising. A person who has not stable system of values, norms and behavioural patterns is likely to accept whatever can grasp his attention. The operation of the strategy of mutual adaptation of codes, the coherence between action and a broader justification of a specific action can be shattered (so-called lifestyle disintegration). Actions of the person, although indicative of individual traits, do not spring from a consciously lived purpose of action, motives, and a plan. Such a person does not have a permanent self-identity; she has traits that characterise an unreflecting personality [Burszta 1998, 158]. In reality, an attempt to align new codes with old ones may end up in an internal contradiction, an identity fissure, for, as Ralph Linton noted, the adoption of the cultural component is superficial and external [Linton 1975, 261ff.].

Granted, information society is bound to develop further, but does it guarantee the holistic, integral development of the person? Man has a better insight into the laws of nature but understands less of laws governing

human life. As a result, it becomes possible that the most popular media promote lifestyles that lead to a crisis of social ties and values, betrayal and violence, suffering and despair, but at the same time these very media report indignantly that now there are more events provoking certain phenomena [ibid., 71-72]. At this point, it is worth recalling the thought of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, which notes that the preponderance of acting and having over being (cf. 360) gives rise to serious forms of human alienation. This sort of attitude does not stem from scientific and technological research, but from the scientific and technocratic ideology (462), whose rein on people is tightening.⁷ Thus, many members of postmodern society are yielding to the impact of IT. Many of us are not sufficiently aware of the influence of this technology on the health, psychology and social functioning of entire families, especially children and adolescents. Web algorithms are unrelenting, with customised information appearing on smartphone screens. TikTok, in particular, is leading the way with short, fast-changing information. A recent NASK⁸ study shows that one in five school students reports being exposed to online violence. Its most widespread forms are name-calling, ridicule, or humiliation. The phenomenon of intimidation and blackmail is encountered by about 13% of them. In contrast, nearly 11% of teenagers reported someone trying to impersonate them in the virtual world. Depression is also on the rise among children and particularly high school girls, who are especially exposed to the destructive influences of the cyberworld. Children and young people's involvement in drugs initially fills emotional void, offers a deceptive substitute for unsatisfied parental love, as well as relationships and the building of social autonomy – which until 30 years ago were fostered in mutual contacts. Paradoxically, social network administrators are more likely to track and block content that provides food for thought and teaches free choices than content that destroys morality, sensitivity, and free will. Addiction follows from avoiding a difficult reality and it springs from craving for valuable relationships, for being oneself – for the possibility of conduct that agrees with

⁷ Pontifical Council for Iustitia et Pax, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/justpeace/documents/rc_pc_justpeace_doc_20060526_compendio-dott-soc_en.html [accessed: 24.09.2023].

⁸ Naukowa i Akademicka Sieć Komputerowa – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy in Warsaw – supervised by the Chancellor of the Prime Minister.

oneself. Addiction is a substitute for the good life. In the case of children and adolescents, the reason for addiction is the absence of parents.

Statistics say that one in three marriages falls apart. Psychologists who are involved in helping young people at school, but also in individual therapy, emphasize that the problem of technology addiction is often very complex, and solving it often requires changing the lives of the entire family. The world we live in is referred to as post-modern or as an information society, a risk society with specific conceptual apparatus. Its application allows one to determine and explore the picture of the world. Negative phenomena of mass culture shape the virtual community of beliefs and opinions. Social theories and social movements give rise to new values and goals that transform social institutions in a way that they can represent these values by creating new norms governing social life. Programmers wield power in the web community; they can program every major network on which human life depends (government, parliament, military and security structures, finance, media, scientific and technological institutions, religious life, and the like). Networked society, Internet society, risk society, mass individualized communication all provide a technological platform. The Internet and wireless communications are central to contemporary networked social movements [Castells 2007; Idem 2013, 153-60].

Most modern political ideologies, underlying systems like liberalism, socialism, and communism descend from utopia. The power of utopia lies in the fact that it takes real shape in people's minds, inspires their dreams, galvanizes them into action, and elicits their reactions. Through their practices, networked social movements are promoting a new utopia in the midst of the network society culture: the utopia of autonomy of subjects vis-à-vis social institutions. Digital social networks provide an opportunity for open discussion and coordination of activities aimed at influencing one another. By getting involved in the cultural production of mass media and the construction of autonomous, horizontal communication networks, people of the information age are building a new life programme out of their suffering, fears, dreams and hopes. They build their projects, sharing their own experiences with others – by undermining the well-ingrained communication practices, breaking into the media and conveying their own message. The Internet, like all technologies, embodies material culture; it is a privileged platform for the social construction of autonomy. Unceasing changes in communication technology in the digital age extend the reach

of communication media to all areas of social life in a network that is both global and local, both general and customised according to ever-changing models. In our society, which we call a network society, power is multidimensional and is organized around networks, programmed for every area of human life in a way that suits the interests and values of powerful actors [Piekutowski and Zybertowicz 2022, 177]. Power networks exercise their authority by influencing people's minds primarily (though not exclusively) through multimedia networks of mass communication. Communication networks are thus the primary sources of power in society. A networked society can no longer make a conscious and free declaration of intent, for it is subject to and influenced by the picture of the world presented online. It makes a declaration of intent in error as to the surrounding reality. Network addiction precludes freedom of thought, judgement or opinion, without verifying information obtained online. Technology is heading towards greater control of people's thoughts, views, judgements by influencing their realisation, creating a model of the new man and shaping the private world views of individual people. Knowledge stems from the creation of meanings in the human mind. The way people think determines the fate of the institutions, norms and values around which societies are organized. The syndrome of the ill-mannered person emerges, as technological growth is not paralleled by personal development, and responsible conduct, values and a well-formed conscience are becoming rarer. No wonder, then, that the lives of many Christians differ little from those of non-believers. It happens nowadays that the baptism of converted persons is not as spectacular as the conversion of the baptised. The concept of marriage is most often characterized by wishful and imaginative elements, and the whole situation is evaluated from the present perspective, not the future. Also, there comes the problem of maturity for marriage; the issue is even more complicated because growing mature is not a fully integrated process. If we assume that an external measure of maturity can be achievements in a specific field, this need not imply maturity in others. Indeed, inherent in mature decision-making is the ability to make choices and evaluation of the object of choice. The essence of responsibility is keeping one's obligations that come with the role one fulfils. Today, nearly everyone speaks of values. There is a plethora of references to values in UN documents, EU treaties or government declarations. However, behind the declared values there is actually a counteractualist ethic, which renders the substance of these values relative

– depending on conditions, place, and time. Declarations of human dignity go hand in hand with permissive legislation that endorses abortion, euthanasia, ethically questionable biomedical practices and genetic experiments, privileging same-sex unions, transhumanism. If we accept that the only source of the moral norm is human will, both individual and collective, then any obligation becomes meaningless. Why would a responsible person respect the freedom of another if her freedom is as important as the latter's? A different matter is a positive vision of state secularism accompanied by the observable tendency towards eliminating religion from the public forum and the danger of vertical and horizontal inflation of human rights.

Conclusion

There has been a transition from modernity to postmodernity. No institution has resisted the new paradigms. The cultural tsunami has shaken man's thinking, lifestyle and behaviour not only in Europe and America, but also in other parts of the world. This complex and complicated picture of the world has serious ramifications. We are seeing a collision of man with cybertechnology, which heavily impacts his life and functioning in the real world. The modern world appears as a constantly changing reality, since the proliferation of technology has contributed to the emergence of a culture of immediacy, based on chronocentrism, where time is a compelling and essential quantity, relevant to the perceived utility of a particular technology. Whatever is slow and requires patience should be accelerated or eliminated, because it is a waste of time. Many people have lost the ability for autonomous cognitive reflection.

The goal of digital communication is to show everything, and everyone becomes a target for watchful eyes that assess, lay bare and make widely known, often anonymously. Respect for others is crumbling down completely. The reduction of the distance in human relations, when wrongly interpreted, often leads to diminished or no respect for the inalienable value of human dignity and as a result to the instrumental treatment of a person. The human person, when divested of privacy, is viewed by more powerful, toxic people as a tool for achieving their own goals. Individualism has become a form of self-determination in the search for identity. Modern man understands freedom differently by avoiding responsibility. The tight link between ethos and religion has been broken, and natural law has been

relegated to the subculture of Christian circles. Postmodernism encourages the purging of moral life of ethics and any authority figures by negating truth, creating diverse meanings of concepts. There happens a redefinition of previously used concepts that allow the articulation of constituent elements of postmodernism, creating an IT consciousness, which in turn favours an information-based world view by creating a particular picture of the world. The latter, it follows, influences our attitudes, will, relationships, actions, ties, and values. Thus, a new model of man is being built by shaping the personal worldviews of individual people. This is the so-called networked mind. Nurturing one's own concept of the family, which puts the person and her dignity at the centre (this dignity is never reduced to a thing or technological product), does not depersonalise the person; it is the challenge of our time. Prospective spouses have to be guided by an integral vision of the human being that accommodates all dimensions of a person's existence, subordinating the material and instinctive dimensions to the internal and spiritual ones, seeking a fuller humanity for all members of the community. Marriage then becomes the beginning of common responsibility, community activities, and the formation of interpersonal relationships in the family. Through a declaration of intent, prospective spouses are joined by a personal communion. The willingness to take responsibility for the marriage thus created is a remarkable challenge facing the persons entering into marriage. Founding a marriage on feelings – and often emotions – does not suffice, because they are ephemeral. Love should be learnt and lived in freedom and responsibility, best if within the bosom of one's family. Only then the declaration of intent – the marriage – will be the beginning of a common yet difficult path – to keep that first “yes” forever, making life together a beautiful adventure. The process of building interpersonal references still poses a challenge, and its success depends on respect for the rights of all people.

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