

**INTIMATE EMOTIONAL RELATIONS IN MODERN YOUTH
NARRATIONS. EROSION OF ETHOS OF CHRISTIAN LOVE AND
RELIGIOUS VALUES**

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Lidé byli vždy doprovázeni náklonností, důvěrou a láskou a v literatuře zabývající se tímto tématem je možné nalézt široké analýzy těchto pocitů. Moderní život přináší významné změny do formální, organizační, funkční, stejně jako emoční a afektivní sféry rodinného života. Ovlivnil jevy charakteristické pro postmoderní (individualismus, sekularizace, rozšíření médií, nadměrné poskytování informací, ekonomizace, pluralismus hodnot a životního stylu, mobilita, dočasnost) způsob myšlení, které odpovídajícím způsobem mění úvahy o formování vztahů a vytváření rodiny. Ve své práci bych se chtěla zaměřit na jevy, které lze považovat za alarmující z hlediska křesťanského étosu a světského pohledu (podle kterého jsou tradiční standardy hodné ochrany).

Klíčová slova: Hodnoty; citové vztahy; láska; náboženství

Attachment, trust and love have always accompanied people and in the literature concerning this subject one can find extensive analyses of these feelings. Independently of the scope of the analysis, the quality of a relationship between partners has a fundamental meaning for the soundness of the individuals who create the family and the constancy of the whole structure. Modern life has brought significant changes in the formal, organizational, functional, as well as emotional and affective sphere of family life. Influenced by phenomena characteristic for postmodernism (individualism, secularization, expansion of media, excessive delivery of information, economization, pluralism of values and life styles, mobility, temporariness) the way of thinking of forming a relationship and creating a family is changing accordingly. Scientific analysis and everyday life observation show that many young people believe that meeting other people, spending time together or even living together and starting sexual intercourse does not require strong emotional involvement or even more serious long-term obligations. So-called “dating” does not need to be the beginning of a long-term relationship which will lead to a wedding. On the contrary, a relationship is treated as temporary. Therefore it can hardly be assigned qualities such as strong mutual trust, a feeling of belonging and exclusivity which in the Christian ethos are immanent features of an intimate relationship between a man and a woman. Nowadays a decrease in the significance of engagement or marriage is observed. For centuries these relationships constituted a natural basis for creating a family union. The foundation and constancy of these relationships is neither conditioned nor supported by the system of the social control. They have become a private venture of two people caused by mutual love and attractiveness. These two motives have such a strong power that in fact no other evidence is necessary to authenticate the decision made by partners. When young people enter the adult world their idea of relationships is ambivalent. They treat it as an idealized romantic relationship and on the other hand they perceive it from the pragmatic point of view. The strong need of being in a satisfying relationship is confronted with a risk consciousness which endangers its quality and persistence. Therefore young people calculate possible profits and losses of a close relationship and its eventual dissolution. Paradoxically, a metaphysical feeling of love (which is described by the respondents as a fundamental and the most essential element of a relationship) may be explained within the rules of economic logic.

In my thesis I would like to concentrate on phenomena which may be considered alarming from the point of view of the Christian ethos and from the secular point of view (according to which the traditional standards are worthy of protection). It does not mean that the said disintegration of values concerns the whole population entering adulthood or so-called “young adults”. The phenomena is so common that it is not possible to ignore it and treat it as an ephemera or a temporary trend. Watching the innovation taking place in all spheres of life, one may notice that the family as an institution and a social group reacts to the changes that take place in a more extensive context. These changes are visible at the stage of defining the family union. The notion of family has extended lately. As defined by the Catholic Church, this natural social group is a sacramental relationship of a man and a woman together with born or adopted children.¹ However, as for the young people these are also partnerships which do not fit with the classical and religious definition of cohabitation (with or without children), homosexual relationships (with or without children), married couples in separation, reconstructed families after a divorce², intentional single-parenthood. The tolerance of these forms of partnership and family life, which were previously considered marginal, have grown recently. The rituals which accompanied matching in pairs for centuries have also changed. Although the sacrament of holy matrimony, despite the passage of time, has remained unchanged, the other related rituals have changed significantly. From the Catholic point of view an engagement was a ritual of transformation, as well as an introduction to the establishment of a marriage. Partners made a promise of their will to marry which was symbolized by an engagement ring. The engaged lived separately until the wedding. Nowadays the attitude towards this issue has changed. The so-called “entrance” to the marriage means accepted or tolerated pre-marital cohabitation. The blessing from parents used to be an essential element of the Catholic tradition. It is believed nowadays that disapproval is not an obstacle. This means that the authority of the parents, assigned by Catholic Church, has been undermined. This also involves separation of the family from their relatives, as the maintenance of such contacts does not determine one’s comfort, happiness and satisfaction.

The regulations concerning the fulfilment of marital and parental roles and the function of the family have been reconstructed. K. Wojtyła wrote in his monograph about love and responsibility that „mutual love constitutes the basis to create one „we” from two “I”³ in which everything is common. However, as was signalled in many publications, respondents confirm the thoughts signalled in many publications⁴. They confirm foregoing the idea of the family and marriage as a whole, multidimensional community, in which partners do not exaggeratedly assess the individual contribution (material⁵ and emotional⁶). It needs to be considered whether

¹ *Kompendium Katechizmu Kościoła Katolickiego*. Kielce: Jedność, 2005, pp 111–112.

² Literature on this subject have introduced a notion of „with many children” – a combination of a few families coming from divorces and marriages. WAWRZECKA, M.: *Rodzina w ego społeczeństwie – zanik czy przeobrażenie? In: Rodzina we współczesności*. Wrocław: Atut, 2009, p. 61.

³ WOJTYŁA, K.: *Miłość i odpowiedzialność*. Lublin: KUL, 1982, p. 79.

⁴ KWAK, A.: *Rodzina w dobie przemian. Małżeństwo i kohabitacja*. Warszawa, 2005; KAWULA, S.: *Kształty rodziny współczesnej*. Toruń, 2005; SLANY, K.: *Alternatywne formy życia małżeńsko-rodzinnego w ponowoczesnym świecie*. Kraków, 2002; BIEDROŃ, M.: *Funkcja opiekuńcza rodziny wielkomiejskiej*. Kraków, 2006; OKÓLSKI, M.: *Demografia. Podstawowe pojęcia, procesy i teorie w encyklopedycznym zarysie*. Warszawa, 2004.

⁵ Economic emancipation of some members of a family, including children, is visible not only in having separate bank accounts but also in keeping in secret their balance. Premarriage agreements are becoming more and more popular nowadays. These agreements are signed up because in case of a divorce they allow for recovery of financial and material contribution.

⁶ Marriages should aim at complete reunion and creating a togetherness on each level.

the relationship based on the rule “something for something” should be called love or rather a commercial agreement. The close relationship described in many Christian sources which means making a sacrifice of oneself for the good and happiness of a second person, a constant duration and disinterested care for the beloved makes young people only smile ironically. In their system of values sacrifice, foregoing one’s needs or heroism appear to be rather archaic myths, useless in modern civilization. Inability to devote oneself to the second person according to R. Sennett is a characteristic feature of a narcissistic personality. “Narcissus vaguely recognizes others needs, he is chronically bored with the search for immediate intimacy, he wants to be heard but does not want to listen”⁷. Therefore, are young people incapable of altruistic love? This view seems to be too pessimistic. Such declarations may occur as a consequence of the misinterpreted idea of egalitarianism and partnership in marriage and family. There is the possibility that the language of a public discourse which orders to “struggle for respect for ones rights”, “do not take upon oneself habitual duties” or even “defend ones freedom” causes that those approaches which are visible in many families are said to be decelerators of personal development by champions of the new morality. Living together may be the source of new beneficial experiences, knowing oneself, gaining new individual, social and cultural abilities, however, contact between partners may not be superficial and limited to exchanging communication with no deeper meaning. My respondents realize that creating closeness is a process which demands discovery of a second person and taking the risk of opening up to this person, letting the person into the deepest and most intimate parts of ones soul. Not everyone can do this, even if the person misses real closeness. Most often these people lack the courage to get to know somebody and let people know us because “mind you, we do not know how this knowledge about us and our weakness can be used”. This lack of trust and fear of closeness is the reason why young people are motivated by two contradictory mechanisms: need for closeness and need for freedom. They still do not have the feeling of fulfilment in any of them due to this split. A specific form of defending “independence” ensuring an inviolable private space is a couple called LAT (Living Apart Together). People treat themselves as partners and they are sometimes in a legalized marriage but they live separately, which is not a real family. Although it occurs erratically, it is worth mentioning that there are married couples with children who live in a big house (an apartment) divided into independent zones, arranged according to individual preferences. Architects or designers have to implement special projects which take into consideration the possibility of living in such separation. This model of marital existence could be called LTA (Living Together Apart). It is hard to call these relationships functional in the context of a Christian model of marriage and family. These phenomena should be treated as kind of adaptation strategies to the new reality, strategies which allow us to maintain a safe distance and a feeling (an illusion) that we are not lonely.

Another interesting issue in the field of family science is the theory of competition which describes the rivalry between spouses about the position and authority within the family and in other social groups. It is worth mentioning that according to the Sapir-Worf thesis of language determination, language determines the things we see and the things we interpret, it creates our consciousness and system of values.⁸ When we use the language of fear and competence, we foster the myth of a struggle of two sexes and the necessity of being offensive or defensive. It should not be a surprise that some young people (and even adults) instead of openness and cooperation choose a neurotic defence against imaginative dangers. The language of

⁷ SENNET, R.: op. cit., p. 23.

⁸ MORREALE, S. P. – SPITZBERG, B. H. – BARGE, J. K.: *Komunikacja między ludźmi. Motywacja, wiedza i umiejętności*. Warszawa, 2007, p. 147.

confrontation may be one of the causes of the dislike of young people of close interpersonal relationships, marriage or family.

We are obliged nowadays to “invest in oneself”, to be educated, to have professional experience and contacts with people. Some scientists believe that the tendency to subordinate our plans to individual development and “seizing each opportunity” are (especially those in west Europe) so strong among young people that they are defined as the ego-society. U. Beck claims that members of the ego-society face a dilemma: self-development or living for others. He claims that it is impossible to combine these two forms. It is surprising that in the field of connotations it is claimed that self-development through living with other people is impossible. Self-development is closely related to egocentricity, egotism, egoism. It is not surprising that the characteristic features of the ego-society are: limitation to realization of ones needs and plans, no need for creating a community and solidarity, denial of values and tradition, growing number of divorces, decreasing number of marriages, growing level of sexual intercourses and children born to unmarried couples and dislike of children because they are seen as inconvenient, restrictive.⁹

One contemporary paradox is that in the system of values declared by young people, the family is high-ranked.¹⁰ At the same time, they express a strong feeling of distrust for this social institution. Young people postpone the decision for getting married and procreation. The social role of a husband, wife or a parent is no longer a natural, inseparable part of life for a great number of men and woman. These roles have become a personal choice and a creative interpretation. Marriage is no longer the way to raise social status. It is an intentional lifestyle. A hermeneutical interpretation of utterances of young people allows us to form the thesis that marriage is perceived as a biographical experiment, a space in which an individual “tests” one of the possible identities and may resign from it when she decides that this “version of me” is not the right one. The most important motives for marriage are: love, respect, emotional and sexual faithfulness, tolerance, successful sexual intercourse and mutual will to have children.¹¹ Entering a relationship in late age or living in an informal relationship may mean that it is hard to find a partner who would meet all requirements. Extraordinary expectations of marriage do not allow you to content yourself with this indifferent substitute entangled with the difficulties of everyday life. Young people tend to have an idealized vision of partnership with a person who “would be the same”, a person we think “we have known for many years, a person who thinks and feels the same, a person who has similar needs and preferences”. This sentences shows that people lack a relationship which does not make demands of them. There is no place for trying, mistakes, trials and errors, and waiting for another opportunity. An ideal partner has to be ideal so that living together would not demand adaptation. Respondents seem not to know that love is not a completed state, but a thing which needs to be worked on every day, when people face problems and obstacles together. Many respondents claim that “*short-term relationships are safer and more beneficial*”, and “*reasonable choice of a partner*” means aiming at fulfilling ones needs without consequences.¹² It should not be a surprise that young people prefer to meet as

⁹ WAWRZECKA, M.: op. cit., p. 60.

¹⁰ In researches lead by Biernat and Sobierajski a “happy family life” category is the most important thing among 14 other values chosen by respondents. However, “creating a family” comes in the 4th place. BIERNAT, T. – SOBIERAJSKI, P.: *Młodzież wobec małżeństwa i rodziny. Raport z badań*. Toruń: Wydawnictwo UMK, 2007, pp. 35–43.

¹¹ BIERNAT, T. – SOBIERAJSKI, P.: op. cit., p. 68.

¹² R. Sennet proposes similar conclusions, and he writes that: “short-lived relationships are more beneficial than long-term relationships”, he defines the latter as “uneconomical and indiscreet.” Compare to SENNET, R.: *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in New Capitalism*. New York, 1998, p. 23.

strangers and part company with a stranger and limit emotional engagement to traditional slogans, superficial gestures and everyday courtesy. Taking this into account, it may be claimed that an intimate relationship is not a gift or a task to fulfill but goods which can be consumed. The “collecting” approach to relationships with the opposite sex results in some people declaring that they are not governed by needs but by desires or whims. Ferguson writes that these needs are “insincere and childish”, “moody and unstable”, that they “release the rule of pleasure from any restrictions”¹³. The rule of constant pleasure and hedonistic approach to life may cause some people to claim that a “permanent relationship kills love” and that “after a few months people are bored with each other”. Some people accept only relationships filled with emotions, eroticism, mutual fascination and intoxication which will not change, in which the temperature of feelings will remain at the highest level. It is hard for some people to accept that a relationship evolves continuously to become a mature, stable and responsible partnership in which the heat of passion may not be as strong as it used to be, but there is a conviction that we can rely on our partner in every situation. The ubiquitous (but unfortunately opinion-forming) media convinces people that relationships, like many other things, have to be the most intense, continuously fresh, exciting, free of boredom and routine. If the relationship starts to become boring, it is necessary to end it and find a new partner. It is strange that people are not encouraged to work on deteriorating relationships. Just like a broken device – it is easier to exchange it for a new one (a better one) than try to fix it. Z. Melosik sums up this tendency in words: “throughout the whole of the twentieth century the purchase of a sports car, nice perfume, diet drinks and new sandwiches was connected in commercials with successful love, and due to this fact love has become a product itself.”¹⁴ This may seem too pessimistic. A mercantile approach to love and relationships does not concern whole population of young people. This may be a very limited phenomenon. The growing number of divorces should interest those who appreciate stable relationships between partners/spouses. The quality of marriage is a priority for young people. Respondents claim that long unsatisfactory life with a partner is aimless and even harmful for a human being. As an example of a negative kind of marriage they point to their parents’ marriage. Respondents believe that a person has the right to enter a relationship when there are feelings, or end it up when there are no feelings at all.¹⁵ There is no moral necessity for staying in a relationship for the sake of children. Young people would rather give arguments for dissolution of a dysfunctional family than give arguments for living together and gain the experience and knowledge of how to face problems together. A great majority of young people accept the possibility of divorce.¹⁶ Catholic doctrine does not guarantee persistence of a relationship anymore and the sacramental “till death do us part” has become an artificial notion. “Temporarily irreversible” would be a more accurate notion describing marriage nowadays. Commitment “till death itself” has evolved into “an agreement defined by satisfaction”. Marriages are temporary from a pragmatic point of view, so they are defined. As a result they are prone to breakups as soon as one of the partners acknowledges that withdrawal would be

¹³ FERGUSON, H.: *Watching the World go Around: Atrium Culture and the Psychology of Shopping*. In: *Lifestyle shopping: The Subject of Consumption*. London: R. Shields, 1992, p. 31.

¹⁴ MELOSİK, Z.: *Kryzys męskości w kulturze współczesnej*. Kraków: Impuls, 2006, p. 16.

¹⁵ Canon law explains the dogma of inseparability of marriage in words: although the decision to get married depends on the two spouses, it contains an acceptance of creating a communion established by God, ruled by His rights, where He sets aims and is blessed with goods. Therefore this communion is not dependent on the will of the partners.” ŻURAWSKI, M.: *Kanoniczne prawo małżeńskie Kościoła Katolickiego*. Katowice: Wydawnictwo Księgarnia Św. Jaka, 1987, p. 41.

¹⁶ BIERNAT, T. – SOBIERAJSKI, P.: op. cit., pp. 70–74.

more beneficial than saving a relationship at any, unpredictable, price.¹⁷ People used to swear at the altar before God, a priest and witnesses, to be together “in good times and in bad times”. Nowadays it is only “in good times”. However, this condition is not certain because as we know “better is an enemy of good”. Paradoxically, acceptance of divorces causes fear of marriage, more precisely, fear of its dissolution. This approach is sometimes extremely anti-marital.¹⁸ The above realization supports the thesis that membership in the Catholic church is irrelevant to the values and axioms in life, that a great majority of these values are abstract ideas (so abstract that they are impossible to fulfill). These values have a decorative rather than regulative function. Jacobs claims that marriage and cohabitation are connected to two different concepts of love. “Romantic love, which lasts forever” is characteristic for marriages and “love which is important as long as it lasts”¹⁹ prevails in cohabitation.²⁰ Thanks to the above realization it is possible to explain the ambivalent approach to marriage. Young people believe in romantic love and want to experience it, but on the other hand they are sceptics because “*nobody can love like this nowadays*”. Young people are afraid of disappointment and the risk of pain caused by a divorce or an eventual loss of a beloved person. Love is highly ranked by young people, and due to this fact they “cannot have it” because the end of a relationship is extremely harmful and “leaves a scar for the whole life”²¹. It seems logical that people who are afraid of separation from a beloved person should be rather sceptical of cohabitation or a divorce. Actually, these two situations force partners to take care of a relationship, to ensure a high quality of life, preventing routine, not to make cardinal mistakes (cheating, violence, bad habits, lack of loyalty, reliability, care for a spouse). It can be slightly perversely stated that young people tend to believe that the quality and persistence of a relationship is dependent on the fear of its impermanence.

Biernat and Sobierajski have questioned a few hundred young Poles from different cities. 50% of respondents declares the will to live in an informal relationship as a trial run before they make a decision on marriage. This form of living together may be called marriage-lite. The recommendations of the Church concerning sexual abstinence and the right to live together only after marriage were not treated seriously by any of the respondents²². Young people believe that mutual love (sometimes even sympathy or sexual attraction) is a satisfactory reason for cohabitation and living together before marriage. Living together and sexual intercourse before the wedding is not a taboo burdened with any restrictions.²³ Biernat and Sobierajski claim that “a trial marriage” verifies the readiness for marriage. It may also be a trial of risk reduction. The fear of abortive marriage manifested by youth seems to exclude the risk of a possible abortive “trial marriage”. Sexual experiences and children which may be born in such relationships are not insignificant for an identity to function.”²⁴

¹⁷ BAUMAN, Z.: *Płynna nowoczesność*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006, p. 253.

¹⁸ SANDERS, H.: *Cohabitation – an obstacle or an obeisance to marriage*. “INTAMS Review”, 2007, nr 13.

¹⁹ Giddens describes a relationship based on this feeling as “clear relation”. GIDDENS, A.: *Przemiany intymności. Seksualność, miłość i erotyzm we współczesnych społeczeństwach*. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo PWN, 2006, pp. 186–187.

²⁰ SANDERS, H.: op. cit., p. 26.

²¹ One woman said: “My lifestyle does not allow me to have a permanent relationship, I do not want to hurt anybody, make him believe in anything, this would be cruel.”

²² Sexual chastity in Catholic religion „brings us to real love” and allows us to open up for experiencing closeness in nonsexual experiences. BIJAK, B.: *Pouczenie duszpasterskie dla przygotowujących się do sakramentu małżeństwa*. Warszawa, 1973, p. 20.

²³ BIERNAT, T. – SOBIERAJSKI, P.: op. cit., pp 111–112; KRZYSZTOFIK – GOGOL, E.: *Religijność młodzieży akademickiej a ich postawy wobec związków uczuciowych*. In: “Kocha się raz?”. Miłość w relacjach partnerskich i rodzinnych. Toruń, 2009, p. 104.

²⁴ Ibid.

In the Christian tradition the procreative function plays a great role in the hierarchy of values in marriage and in family. Children constitute a confirmation of matrimonial love, intensify the bond in a family. Some definitions state that offspring gives the right to name a group of people a family. In accordance with religion, children are the evidence of God's blessing.²⁵ As the approach to the procreative function of the family has changed, its fulfilment does not require authorization by marriage itself. Besides, latest research shows that the value of parenthood competes with other values. Couples believe nowadays that professional development, education, social life, travelling or other passions and hobbies are very important. The number of childless marriages is on a constant increase (DINK type of marriage – Double Income No Kids). Financial security and the possibility of self-development is an essential condition for a successful life, and children are an obstacle in this case. Many young people state that they decide to have children after considering the financial situation. Obviously, ensuring the material basis essential for the functioning of the family (accommodation in particular) allows the fulfilment of most needs of the family members. It is worth mentioning though that a good financial situation is an essential condition for the accommodation of needs, but it does not guarantee high-quality interpersonal relationships. These relationships may be overestimated, which may result from the consumer approach and difficulties in foregoing individual (maybe even egoistic) aspirations. Respondents' opinions exemplify the social stereotype which they also use offhand. An abundance of goods and efficient marketing propel aspiration for purchasing other "objects of desire" and the realization of hedonistic needs. People find illusionary fulfilment, autonomy and freedom in goods²⁶. It turns out that the myth of an affluent life, as the basis of the functioning of a family and the condition of satisfaction is higher than the religious myth which connects happiness with a deep and close relationships in the family. It is essential because, "involuntary emotional reactions" determined by a myth or a stereotype imply a certain approach and decisions and assure their constancy. When people concentrate on a cliché, they lose the chance to experience the thing which enriches an individual and develops its personality. The fulfilment of the procreative function of the family is strictly related to their view of contraception. In this issue young people seem to be unanimous. Despite all the criticized and condemned attempts of the Catholic Church to limit this sphere of life, respondents widely accept other methods of planning a family. What is more, more of them define natural methods of contraception as anachronistic, useless and even dangerous and depriving sexual intercourse of pleasure. One of my interlocutors says: *"I believe in God and I go to Church, but I do not understand clergymen who claim that contraception is morally damaging, who persuade people to have many children when nowadays population growth is negative and so many people are unemployed. How could these families live, will these children find employment when they grow up? Do clergymen believe in an economic miracle?"* Very seldom young people believe that procreation is natural and should not be regulated or be subject to speculation. Secularization of motherhood and fatherhood results in the fact that having children are no longer treated as a moral obligation to fulfill in the name of God, motherland or nation. On the contrary, this issue has become completely private and dependent on personal preferences and implemented basically at one's own responsibility²⁷. Fertility and procreative

²⁵ God's declaration to Abraham: "I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore." (Book of Genesis 22, 17–18) may explain why the lack of offspring was viewed in the past as a curse.

²⁶ BAUMAN, Z.: *Wolność*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Fundacja Stefana Batorego, 1995, p. 92.

²⁷ Despite the alarm concerning negative population growth there is no important, key, systematic social and political solution, which would promote, protect and support families with many children. Charitable actions have a contrary

abilities are not highly ranked in the axiomatic system of a modern human. Acceptance for families with many children is decreasing. The stereotype of a family with many children is poverty and social pathologies. The approach to pregnancy is also interesting. Young women describe it as a “period of limited freedom” because they need to take care of the child’s health and welfare, it is a state of “decreased efficiency” during which a woman has to be prepared for some unusual mental and physical behaviours and “has to say goodbye to freedom and her figure”. Pregnancy is not treated as a blessing from God but as a some kind of illness which limits freedom. Taking the considered issue into account, there is one interesting type of narration which concentrated on contraceptives as a prevention against pregnancy with an “inappropriate person”. Respondents claim that some of them are eager to make love with a person they do not want to share their future with, or with a person who is attractive or handsome. M. Evans describes this situation: “A man does not need to confirm his love to a woman and a woman does not expect love in return for sex”²⁸ This approach should be considered as a complete instrumentalization of the body and depersonalization of a human. It may be stated that young people not only deprive the intimate act of the secrecy, but they also reduce its status to a merely physical fulfilment. Young people are able to talk about their personal sexual experiences without constraint (with the same partner), comparing “achievements” in that field, confessing to changing partners, or entering dating web pages (performing cyber-sex), public declarations of openness for new experiences and searching for someone who would satisfy needs and curiosity (for example group sex, sadomasochistic sex, sex in unusual places). Some respondents frankly admitted that only “after sex” do they decide if it is worth to continue an acquaintance. Such behaviours may give evidence that for some people sexual relations are necessary and it cannot be put off until we find a perfect life partner. Sexual intercourse does not have to be connected with feelings because it is only a test, a trial. The author of *Postmodern eroticism* writes that “It is not about integrating sex into a system and connecting it to our own emotionality, family or social situation, but about concern for sexuality itself”²⁹ It is educational though that most of my respondents regard sexuality as a confirmation of a mutual bond and closeness, a source of satisfaction, a communicational tool between partners. Young people tend to set high requirements for a sex life. It is no longer a “marital obligation”. It is a life space which needs to and should be formed. It is advised that a person should broaden their knowledge and improve abilities concerning this area. “The cultural status of sexual function and individuals’ expectations are changing (...), sexual function has become an autonomous sphere of experience ruled by the logic of pleasure”³⁰ The strict standard of sexual chastity before marriage has clearly weakened and it is even jeered at in some circles.³¹ Sexual behaviours of very young people are commonly accepted. Tabloids for youth (which are commonly read by children) are full of instructions on how to seduce the opposite sex or describe various sexual techniques which lead to erotic pleasure. The Internet is full of various erotic advertisements directed at different age and social groups. The sexual sphere has been “cleared of” any obligations and responsibilities. Now a desire to make love is a sufficient reason. A growing number of sexual partners has been recorded around the world. Z. Bauman³²

effect. In the social stereotype, families with many children are regular clients in social security centres, thus they are “consumers” of our taxes.

²⁸ GIDDENS, A.: op. cit., p. 167.

²⁹ KLIMCZYK, W.: *Erotyzm ponowoczesny*. Kraków, 2008, p. 190.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Many magazines describes virginity as an illness which needs to be cured.

³² BAUMAN, Z.: *Dwa szkice o moralności ponowoczesnej*. Warszawa, 1994.

has characterized the negative phenomena connected to the sexual aspects of life and said that: since “sex moved from the family to the street”, a human being treats this natural need as “collecting impressions” and thus he is reduced to a consumer in this domain too. Sexuality deprived of the secret, excluded from the sacred area, is treated recreationally, as an attractive way of spending spare time. It may be observed that the limits of accepted and permitted behaviours have reached dangerous boundaries. People are accustomed to some topics because of their constant public presence (sex “without obligations”, marital betrayals, sex with random partners treated as an antidote for boredom in a permanent relationship, sexual perversions and others). The media sanctions the „normality” of various controversial behaviours, or at least are suspicious of their “abnormality”.³³ “The limit of social imagination has widened lately”³⁴ Unfortunately, there are too many negative examples of consequences of the sexual revolution. The assumption of the revolution was to cast off the yoke of philistine morality, duplicity and hypocrisy, regime of genital sexuality and, instead the effect of revolution was the opposite to what had been expected. “Rationalization”, “attributing a scientific character” and referring to “authorities” have to explain and validate previously unacceptable behaviours. The analyzed narrations have shown that sexual exclusiveness is a matter of bilateral agreement adapted to postmodernist instrumental rationalism. Catholicism orders a married couple to be faithful unconditionally, whereas young people treat this value as discursive. In many narrations betrayal is defined not as a sexual relationship with other person, moreover they introduce many diversified factors such as: approval of a spouse, physical or mental betrayal, (if sex was deprived of emotional engagement, it is not treated as a betrayal), the reason for betrayal, betrayal on the Internet and others. Ciczowska – Giedziun proves that gender affects the notion of betrayal. Women consider a close emotional relationship with another woman as a betrayal. Spending time with another woman and taking care of her is considered as a betrayal even if there was no sex. Men regard physical sexual relationship as a betrayal. This difference in approach to betrayal may be a result of the range of different aspects of relationship. Women find emotional exclusiveness the most important whereas men believe that sexual exclusiveness is vital.³⁵ Some people even believe in double moral standards for man and women, and they try to belittle betrayal explaining that men have supposedly a naturally inborn inability to be in a monogamous relationship.

Parenthood in the view of religious beliefs is also connected with the approach of youth to abortion. The research of Biernat and Sobierajski has shown that 58% of respondents accept abortion in particular situations, 4 % accept it because of financial situation and 6 % advocate an unlimited right to abortion.³⁶ People who demand the right to remove the foetus usually refer to the medical division of early stages of pregnancy and an embryo, who is not regarded as a human being, and later stages in which foetus develops “human” features. Another common argument for abortion is freedom of choice and decision making (especially women) if the child has to be born. In Christian dogma each human life is unconditional and has a sacred value, and abortion is completely unacceptable and treated as murder. Meanwhile, young Catholics repudiate this imperative.

³³ An extreme example of permissiveness is the NAMBLA organization formed in 1978 and MARTIJN formed in 1982. These groups want to abolish the prohibition on intimate contacts between men and underage boys, providing that these contacts are consensual. KLIMCZYK, W.: op. cit., p. 161.

³⁴ KLIMCZYK, W.: op. cit., p. 144.

³⁵ CICZOWSKA – GIEDZIUN, M.: *(Nie)wierność w relacjach partnerskich i związkach uczuciowych*. In: “Kocha się raz?”, op. cit., pp. 297–305.

³⁶ BIERNAT, T. – SOBIERAJSKI, P.: op. cit., p. 114.

Taking the building and maintenance of a close relationship into account, it is surprising that young people tend to believe that the appearance of a partner is meaningful. Very often the beauty of a future partner (in a short-term or long-term relationship) is a deciding factor for young people. They also pay attention to clothes or gadgets which may be a testament to someone's wealth (although, in this case it is a testament to the parents' wealth). Beauty is a very important factor in the first stage of acquaintance, and it is a necessary condition of transferring to the next stage of intimacy. It needs to be emphasized that physical attractiveness is subjective, therefore, a partner is attractive when his appearance is a source of pleasant experiences, and it does not correspond to the one promoted by the media, which is oftentimes unreal. It is surprising that young people believe that fashionable clothes and gadgets make amends for some defects in appearance. It may be sarcastically said that J. Baudrillard was right when he said that: "a consumer civilization learns that purchasing, owning and using are tools which can provide high social prestige"³⁷ or at least popularity with the opposite sex. Physical attractiveness or, as W. Klimczyk says, the aesthetic effectiveness of a body,³⁸ is meaningful in all phases of a relationship because it influences sexual satisfaction. Partners may end up in a relationship when one of them does not fulfil the aesthetic standards of the second partner. There again, according to the postulates of Catholic religion, when we love someone, we should discover the person, not only by their physical attractiveness, but also by spiritual values.³⁹ Making appearance a fetish strays from the criteria of human values acknowledged by the Christian religion, according to which the body, which is the „nest” of the soul, belongs to the profane area, and should be subjected to the soul, which is the sacred area. The division into the sphere of the sacred and profane has a hierarchical power where the first is ranked higher than the latter. The Catholic religion imposes respect for the human body and says it is a gift from God, and any interference is an irrelevant behaviour in the view of contemporary civilization. Body shaping, creating it according to current standards, is now becoming an obligation for each individual⁴⁰ because in a word where: "first impression" is important it becomes a tool necessary to achieve success in life.

An analysis of respondents' utterances concerning intimate interpersonal relations has shown that taking values acknowledged by the Catholic religion into account, it may be noticed that people are gradually deviating from standards which for many centuries stated strategies for creating a relationship and specified typical and indispensable feelings. The narratives of young people clearly show that for many of them relationships with the opposite sex do not need any justification or religious axioms. These opinions and approaches are, as I assume, a result of the progressing secularization of modern societies and so-called privatization of religion, consisting of transforming it into an individual project "adjusted" according to individual needs and preferences.⁴¹ Maybe such an individualized, and therefore a flexible attitude to the faith, which does not approve infringement of axioms, makes respondents neither feel uncomfortable, nor notice the discrepancy in their declaration of belonging to the Catholic church and living against its principles. Questioning or rejecting the rules which implied certain obligations and ensured

³⁷ BAUDRILLARD, J.: *Spółczesność konsumpcyjna. Jego mity i struktury*. Warszawa: Sic!, 2006, p. 85.

³⁸ KLIMCZYK, W.: op. cit., pp. 97–98.

³⁹ WOJTYŁA, K.: *Miłość i odpowiedzialność. Studium etyczne*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 1960.

⁴⁰ It is interesting that in the world where pluralism is present in every sphere of life, when the body's aesthetic is taken into account, a total model based on the logic of youth, firmness and vigour is valid. "The more bodies are attracted to a body, the more attractive the body is" KLIMCZYK, W.: op. cit., p. 107.

⁴¹ GROTOWSKA, S.: *Religijność subiektywna. Studium socjologiczne na podstawie wywiadów narracyjnych*. Kraków: Nomos, 1999.

their fulfilment makes the attitude of the young people to marriage and family ambiguous. They, at the same time, rank it highly amongst axiomatic norms, and are afraid of commitment, as they doubt the permanence of relationships and probability of meeting a person who would satisfy their idealized requirements. The formation of the awareness of the respondents is, in my opinion, strongly influenced by stereotypes belittling intimate relationships, reducing them to a source of pleasure, fulfilling individual needs and requiring them to make judgements according to financial criteria. Therefore it is difficult for some people to make an effort of mutual work on a relationship, overcome difficulties and problems, which are inseparable elements of living together. The imperative of self-development, self-realization and seizing each opportunity puts the emphasis on release from any limitations which could disturb it. Unfortunately, one of such obstacles could be devotion to another person and the necessity to take someone into consideration when it comes to making lifetime decisions. It should not be surprising though that many young people would prefer treating their relationships as superficial and temporary. Many people from various working groups value the attitude of the young people negatively, they condemn it and call egoism, cynicism, emotional disability or narcissism. In my opinion, the most pertinent conclusion of the disputes on this subject are the words of Bourdieu: "those who deplore cynicism among contemporary people should connect this issue to the social and economic conditions which favour and demand it"⁴² and, using these words, should start a process of "character repair".

Shrnutí

Intimní citové vztahy ve vyprávění moderní mládeže. Eroze etosu křesťanské lásky a náboženských hodnot

Analýza výroků respondentů o intimních mezilidských vztazích ukázala, že berou v úvahu hodnoty uznávané katolickým náboženstvím. Lze si všimnout, že lidé se postupně odchylojí od norem, které po mnoho staletí uváděly strategie vytváření vztahu a typické a nepostradatelné pocity. Vyprávění mladých lidí jasně ukazují, že pro mnohé z nich vztahy s opačným pohlavím nepotřebují žádné odůvodnění nebo náboženské axiomy. Tyto názory a přístupy jsou, jak předpokládám, důsledkem postupující sekularizace moderní společnosti a tzv. privatizace náboženství, spočívající v transformaci do individuálního projektu "upraveného" podle individuálních potřeb a priorit.

⁴² BAUMAN, Z.: *Plynná nowoczesność*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2006, p. 251.