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Family in Time of Modern Axiological and Normative Chaos

ABSTRACT

The reason for the changes taking place in the contemporary family and its new forms of life is the wide scale of changes in the surrounding reality and the modern axiological and normative chaos that encompasses almost all spaces of human life. In the following text, consideration will be given to how this chaos affects the perception of the importance of family ties, and thus the interpersonal relationships of members of the traditional family community and of such types of families as multi-families or alternative families. An attempt will be made to show how these transformations result in diversity in the various ranges of parental awareness and the pedagogical culture of many environments. Based on the literature of the subject, the text also aims to draw attention to the fact that these changes are especially perceived in the understanding of the essence of marriage and family and the ways in which they fulfil essential functions, especially pedagogical functions. When addressing this topic, one should also look at the sources of changes and their consequences. Dynamic changes that are taking place in the families require not only further research, but also new methodological approaches and cognitive strategies.

KEYWORDS

axiological and normative chaos, family community, family ties, family forms, family functions

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Introduction

Family has always been a subject of philosophical reflection and numerous human science studies (e.g. literature, history, philology, ethnography), as well as social sciences (sociology, psychology, pedagogy). It has also been the focus of theology, medicine, law, demography, economics and many other fields. Through their studies, both theoretical and empirical ones, these disciplines have developed their own areas of inquiry into family on different levels of detail, at the same time creating relatively autonomous sub-disciplines, which depending on the field or discipline represented, are given different names (sociology of family, psychology of family, pedagogy of family, theology of marriage and family, medicine of family, family and the like). Their output is usually of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary character, because the subject of studies they share is the family analysed in the aspect that is typical of the given science, taking into account the findings of the other disciplines. This makes certain scholars call for a holistic attitude to the results of research and call them *familiology*, a field combining the knowledge of family having its source in all sub-disciplines interested in the family. For the time being, one does not know whether this plan is likely to be implemented.

Family Pedagogy, which aspires to be one of the sub-disciplines of pedagogical sciences, is characterised by focussing on the educational and socialisation functions of the family. It does not mean, however, that they are not observed in other family sciences. Each of them adds to the definition of the term family in its own way, which it analyses in the context of questions posed by them and research problems, adopting its own, not infrequently specific and at the same time different methodologies.

Contemporary family – a community with changing bonds in terms of quality

Family is a term defined differently in individual sciences, including pedagogical sciences. For the purpose of this article it is assumed family is a special and unique social being a characteristic of which is

the common character of life of a specific group of individuals united by means of biological, emotional, cultural and economic ties on different levels. A traditional approach makes one regard marriage as a family foundation.¹ While marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman is the product of Roman legislation, Christianity connected the legal results of entering into marriage with the religious ceremony and considered it a sacrament, which has been in effect in the Roman Catholic Church to this day.

The valid definition of marriage, formally binding in the light of law, describes it as a voluntary and equal relationship between a woman and a man.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Poland of 1997, marriage is a “relationship between a woman and a man” (art. 18), who create the family community. To cite the view adopted by the Roman Catholic Church referring to the canonical law, the family is “based on marriage, in which the mutual gift of each other, man and woman, creates life environment in which a child may be born and develop his or her capabilities, becomes aware of their dignity and gets ready to pursue their own, unique destination.”²

At the same time research results available to the public, in particular in the field of social sciences, show the traditional model of marriage and family is not the only one possible in the contemporary world, and what is more, it is changing dynamically. In recent decades civilisation-cultural transformations have resulted in new forms and ways of functioning of marriages and families. It does not mean, though, they have not retained community forms, a characteristic of which are particularly important bonds affecting the relations between their subjects, definitely making them different from other social communities. Changes that are taking place result in

¹ Marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman is the product of Roman legislation. Christianity combined the legal consequences of entering into marriage with the religious ceremony and considered it a sacrament, in power in the Roman Catholic Church to this day, but not necessarily in other Christian Churches. It was only Napoleon Bonaparte that in his civil code of 1804 gave marriage secular character, accepted divorces and subjected marriage issues to general judiciary.

² John Paul II, Apostolic exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, Rome, 22 November 1981.

the different quality of marriage-family ties, the most important of which are worthy of note.

The experience and observation of the social life and a lot of research show that biological bonds are no longer the condition (*conditio sine qua non*) for the family to exist, although it is generally known procreation is one the crucial functions of every family, that is giving birth to children and satisfying the parental needs of a man and a woman, which forms a basis for entering into interpersonal bonds between individual members of the family community. At the same time one can easily observe the total number of marriages is decreasing, and young people – in particular with higher education and professional qualifications – tend to postpone the decision to enter into marriage and start a family, cohabitating couples, that is couples consciously resigning from a formal civil relationship or a religious marriage, become more common, and so do civil partnerships among homosexuals demanding the right to enter into a relationship on marriage principles and adopt children. Moreover, the problem of infertility, both of women and men, is observed on a large scale, single parenthood has become common, more children are born out of wedlock, the number of adoptions by single people is growing, there is a phenomenon of surrogate motherhood, the number of divorces, separations and annulments of marriage is increasing, the phenomenon of singles has also become more common.

The strength of emotional bonds is declining. It results from the transformation of traditional multi-generational families into “nuclear” families with the minimum number of people. The conviction that the family is no longer an indissoluble and lifelong relationship of spouses, based on love, trust and faithfulness, has become widespread. What is observed is also the loosening of emotional ties between family members manifested in the lack of identifiatory and expansive aspirations making one feel a member of the same community. Contemporary marriages and families are not free of acquiring and abandoning individual members, that is children, spouses, as well as parents and grandparents belonging to or ascribed to a given community. Very often even hardly important failures, wrangles, differences of opinion, professional failures, the lack of sexual satisfaction, a chronic somatic disease of any family member or a psychological oversensitivity confirm quite common convictions that marriage and

family do not have to last forever, eternally, if they do not guarantee the feeling of satisfaction or happiness. The contemporary family more and more loses the deep sense of togetherness, getting involved and being not only for oneself, but also for somebody else. Its members, especially spouses, feel exempted from an obligation to make efforts, to remedy or talk about their own problems, sorrows, failures or successes, especially when nobody from the family has contributed to them. This makes individual members of the family community feel illusory autonomy and is a reason for entering into new relationships. What happens first is the breakdown of emotional ties, then separation, divorce, and/or the annulment of marriage, and then another, or even repeated marriages or civil partnerships.

What undergoes transformation are marriage and family cultural ties with a variety of underlying factors and determinants. Although the social background, education and the age of spouses no longer play so important a role as many decades before, we are aware that social norms, moral norms, tradition and ways of interpersonal communication are the factors which strengthen the cultural ties in the family. They regulate its daily functioning. All these elements, which are brought to the marriage-family life, are a sort of burden brought from the family background. They are not infrequently the subject of dispute and affect the climate and atmosphere of family life. This also, or maybe even above all, concerns “mixed” marriages, the number of which has started to grow as a result of the European integration and globalisation processes. Different lifestyles brought by spouses from their background families, unless they do transform into a style at least accepted by both parties, usually, sooner or later, become a problem, sometimes the one that cannot be solved. What may happen then is a threat of the real breakdown of ties with individual family members.

One of numerous indicators of cultural bonds in the family is this community’s attitude to religion and religious practices connected with it. In the contemporary landscape of European culture there is a growing expectation of greater religious freedom and tolerance, which is shown in the selective selection and observance of religious dictates and prohibitions. Family communities justify the selection and being guided by Christian values to a considerably lesser degree, regarding them simply as universal values constituting the source of

the legal regulations of civic existence and coexistence. Religiousness as an element of cultural ties in the family not always plays the uniting role in this community. Improperly understood and manifested religiousness leads to concealed or open indifference and even hostility towards faith itself, and especially its forms and ways of practicing. As a result of omnipresent secularising processes religion no longer plays its former role in the field of maintaining and strengthening family bonds. The issue of faith becomes a more and more intimate and personal dimension of spiritual life³ of every man, as well as of every member of the family community. These communities restrict themselves to organising religious initiation through the baptism or First Communion of minor children. Adolescents not infrequently treat the sacrament of confirmation as a symbol of their parting with the religious community.

A threat to religious ties is an incapability of filling the personal space with the values accepted by all family members. Every successive generation is more and more directed by a diversified hierarchy of values, develops its own systems and invests them with new meanings. Cultural ties which once kept the family together seem to be more and more ostensible, as they are characterised by far-reaching superficiality.

Contemporary families experience changes as to economic, or even commercial ties keeping them together. What increases is the mutual material independence of spouses, when they both have their own sources of earning an income. It decreases in case one or both parents do not have a steady job. Then the existence of one spouse depends on the other. The quality of economic ties undergoes changes when the maintenance obligations or the necessity to provide funds to adult but economically dependent children are not respected by one of the parents. It may also happen that adult and materially independent children do not support their parents financially for different reasons, although they are morally and legally obliged to do it, especially when it is required.

³ By spiritual life, that is the spirituality of human I mean a specific relation with God and environment, expressed by unique features and forms of activity.

Different, especially basic family ties should be regarded as factors conditioning the stability and permanence of the community of people making up the family. The family ties interpenetrate, complement, and also partly or completely exclude each other, influencing its condition.

To sum up, it should be stated that there are numerous bonds within a family, but their strength and significance are becoming more and more problematic. It does not matter whether the spouses/parents enter into a civil or sacramental marriage or build a community without a formal relationship. Despite the fact that civilisation and cultural transformations are accompanied by growing axionormative chaos,⁴ as a result of which family bonds change in terms of quality, the characteristic features of this community remain invariably: the authentic sense of being a member of a specific family, active participation in the family's daily life and full awareness of being co-responsible for this community.

The authentic family community is not a unit created to fulfil set tasks. It is neither of service, nor consumer character. It is a subject, creative by all accounts, capable of sacrificing oneself mutually and selflessly for the sake of good, determined by properly understood and realised bonds. The changing quality of family ties affects the quality of its daily life, fulfilling obligations and duties ascribed to the roles performed by its members. The limited, partial, or complete lack of bonds constitutes an obstacle in building up a fundamental community. In the case of the low level of self-awareness of the roles played by different members of this community, the family is threatened by dysfunctionality – if not full, then at least partial, although it may happen it is only temporary. To counteract this process personal relations in the family should be based on mutual love, trust, honesty, respect and understanding of weaker points of all its subjects.

⁴ By axionormative chaos I mean confusion, disorder and breaking norms, the source of which is the world of universally accepted values.

Sources of transformations taking place in the traditional family and their consequences

Multi-faced globalisation processes, spatial and social mobility of contemporary people, omnipresent multiculturalism and secularising processes lead to constant and systematic transformations which take place within the traditional family in the consciousness, social, moral-ethic and economic dimensions. They also result in the greater disappearance of the traditional division into male and female roles which determined the forms of family life, invariability of orders in the structure and hierarchy of values as well as obligations and duties ascribed to individual family members.

Contemporary families live at the time of considerable confusion and a sense of being lost in the entire surrounding world. They live in the world of manifold, new and not completely defined needs. What comes to the fore more and more are individual needs of different people in the family. The main expectations of contemporary women and men are: optimum education, satisfactory occupation, in which one can confirm their qualifications and competences, a career regarded as a personal success, material independence, pursuing one's own passions and interests, taking care of one's looks, health and physical fitness and the like. What can also be included – unfortunately more often regarded as secondary – are: maternity and expectations concerning entering into a marriage or partnership union. This means that young people get married more rarely, and marriages of several years' standing get divorced more often. In Poland, almost every third married couple breaks up. Social-aid programmes for families do not lead to demographic effects, but only affect the living standards of large families. According to data from Statistics Poland (GUS), fewer children are born. The total fertility rate, that is the average number of children that would be born to a woman over a lifetime, successively decreases.⁵ The traditionally understood procreative function is supplanted by treating the sexual life only as the fundamental sex drive and biological need allegedly regarded as the most important factor of the development and life of every person. This need determines cultural trends and mental changes giving the sexual life

⁵ Based on the data provided by Statistics Poland (GUS) from 2017.

definite priorities. These include: the imposition of boundless erotic emotionality, frailty and narcissistic tendencies, increased pornography and the commercialisation of the human body. An enormous influence on the transformations of contemporary families is exerted also by the findings of science, in particular sexology, which makes a division into five sexual orientations: heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, autoeroticism and asexuality.⁶

What is born in contemporary families instead of children are dilemmas concerning these issues, such as the following questions: what do spouses and parents have in common with their children and what do they differ in? How can we show positive feelings to each other and how to prevent their opposites, contradictions? What should we demand of ourselves and other family members? Should one remain in a subjectively negatively assessed family bond or rather leave it and demand a divorce, separation, or go away far enough not to have one's freedom restricted, the freedom that does away with responsibility for one's family, parents, siblings? Is it better to live on one's own or in a group?

Contemporary families become dysfunctional more and more often because of the following: marital unfaithfulness; alcoholism and drug addiction of one or both parents, but also of their children; psychic oversensitivity or the lack of such; parents' overworking as a result of excessive exploitation of their potential and incorrect organisation of paid work or the lack of such, a consequence of which is the lack of material means and it prevents or largely limits grown-up siblings from standing on their own feet naturally; the phenomenon of parents' educational incapability increases.

A cause and at the same time result of the dysfunctionality of the contemporary traditional family is the growing axionormative chaos in the global world, which leads to the transformations in terms of living standards unknown earlier. Dysfunctionality encompasses all areas of family ties: biological, emotional, cultural and economic. And although here they are described and analysed separately, in family life they react with one another, that is interpenetrate one another on a daily basis. In other words, it can be said they overlap each

⁶ Paedophilia is not treated as sexual orientation, but as disease, the same as zoophilia, gerontophilia and necrophilia.

other either completely or only partially. Some of them may cause an effect in other people, and the opposite. It is not possible to create a holistic and only model of these relations as every family shows the existence of bonds uniting them or their lack in its own unique way.

We are not able to define the term *dysfunctional family* explicitly, to make it a concept recognised by all scholars. For the purpose of this article it may be assumed that the dysfunctional family is a community characterised by distorted interpersonal communication focussing on maintaining the internal system of relations instead of on the development of the family members; a community which overuses physical and mental violence; a community that controls the compliance of the behaviours of its members with the binding principles and standards of the social life either too much or does not control it at all, and it develops habits, only for its own use and for the purpose of its incorrect functioning. This situation is a result and consequence of such processes as:

- demoralisation, which is manifested in the decline of morality, dissipation, the lack of discipline in the family community;
- moral relativism, which means that ethical values (good and evil) and norms and assessments connected with them are only of subjective and relative character;
- ethical nihilism, which expresses the rejection by the family community of the generally accepted norms, principles, values of social, religious, aesthetic and national character;
- depravation, which should be understood as straying from the right and narrow, from the right moral and social track, permanently, which makes it a pathological family.

The above phenomena and processes trigger reflection, at the heart of which lie four fundamental ranges of questions of axiological, psychological, economic and cultural character. Below there are their examples, which definitely do not exhaust all the detailed issues:

The axiological range:

- (1) What place does the family hold in the personal, individual hierarchy of values of the people making up this community?
- (2) Is the family community the only generally accepted and well perceived form of man's life in the society in the consciousness of the family community members?

- (3) What is the attitude of the members of the traditional family community to other, different forms of people's common life?

The psychological range:

- (1) Why are positive emotional states uniting individual subjects of this community a condition of the correct functioning of the family?
- (2) What is the manifestation of love, faithfulness and honesty in relations between members of the family community, and what does it come down to?
- (3) What other factors – apart from the ones already mentioned – may influence/influence emotional states, motives of behaviour and conduct of family's individual members in the inter-subjective family space?

The economic range:

- (1) To what extent the more and more diversified living conditions of individual families decide about the quality of their lives?
- (2) What role does the “have or be” principle play in the everyday life of the family community?
- (3) What are the effects of the family community's material-economic and social status on the keeping of the bonds between its members?

The cultural range:

- (1) Is the cultivation of the traditional models of family life a sufficient protection from the axionormative chaos observed in the world?
- (2) To what extent the level of parents' educational awareness and pedagogic culture represented by specific family communities affect their transformations, which may, but do not have to, cause the loss of the previous significance playing an important role in the life of every man?
- (3) Is the family losing its function of the “nest of virtues” which it should equip its offspring with?

Looking for answers to the above and other similar questions is justified by the assumption that the traditional, centuries-old model of the family is no longer stable and inviolable. Under the influence of multiple civilisation and cultural changes which Europe is undergoing at present, and so is the global world, which are the consequences of various factors, of both subjective and objective nature, the family is no longer a monolith. The more important factors in this respect include the explosion of democracy, in particular the liberal one, which contributes also to the state's changed attitude to marriage and family. Civil liberties now also include the issues and different views on the marital and family life. What is strengthening is the conviction that human autonomy cannot be violated, that every person has the right to the unhindered intimate, personal, private life, which is the characteristic feature of marriage and family. The idea of democracy and freedom is not always correctly interpreted and understood, especially with reference to the traditional family community, which has always been regarded as the most important natural environment of man. The effect of these aspirations are the emerging new, and at the same time different forms of family life, the beneficiaries of which are not only spouses, but also their children.

The changeability of the forms of marital life and family communities

The contemporary axionormative chaos, which influences the life of the whole human communities, such as the nation, state, local environment and the like, affects also individual persons and small communities such as a family they are members of. This factor not only weakens or loosens interpersonal bonds, but not infrequently it also thwarts them. In the present times these bonds are not longer regarded as values which should be nurtured and treated as something worth of the effort, hardship or even personal commitment to their protection. In the contemporary family they are becoming more a consumer good, which is subject to individual assessment, rather than something important or most important even. Therefore one may enter into any relations in terms of quality, build up marital relationships or civil partnerships without any obligations to the

other person. In these relationships one may feel exempted from an obligation to be with each other for better and for worse, in wealth and poverty, in health and illness. Entering into marital relationships or informal partnership unions, one does not have to resign from personal benefits, look for compromise or sacrifice oneself to the relationship which no longer meets one's expectations. This situation gives man a feeling of personal, individual, unhindered freedom, but at the same time it involves specific threats.⁷ The fascination and following trends of continuous acquisition and exchange of not only material goods, but also the adoption of new or rejection of established values, views and lifestyles make it possible to see them as the power of creating new conditions of being. Therefore the contemporary family – as never before – is not free of acquiring and abandoning individual persons, that is spouses, children, parents, and even grandparents being members of this community or being assigned to it. Minor failures, disputes, differences of opinion, failures at work, no sexual satisfaction, a hard material situation or achieving a spectacular individual success, a chronic somatic or mental disease, offspring's inborn or acquired disability and mental oversensitivity confirm the views that marriage and family do not have to last forever, especially that they do not guarantee the feeling of personal happiness. It may even be said that the contemporary family more often and with greater determination is losing the ability to experience something deeply, get involved and be, so to speak, for itself, but above all for the members of the family community. Its members, especially spouses, more and more often feel exempted from the "obligation" to try hard, make an effort, repair or share their problems, sorrows, failures or experienced successes, especially when they have a feeling that none of the family members contributed directly to achieving them. This results in a sense of illusory autonomy, which allows to enter into new marital relationships or civil partnerships. This state of affairs precedes the breakdown of emotional bonds, separation, divorce and/or annulment of sacrament marriage, and then entering into a new relationship or relationships. Interpersonal relations undergo considerable transformations and are subject to different threats. What is growing is the number of broken, single-parent families and informal

⁷ Cf. Z. Bauman, *Płynna nowoczesność*, Kraków 2006, p. 253.

relationships. Sexual life seems to be separated from the intimate sphere of the emotional life.⁸ These are the signs of showing no respect to the former social, moral, ethical and religious norms, which leads to the collapse of life in the traditional family community. Such situations are the manifestations of the axionormative chaos reaching ever-widening circles, as well as the deepening of it. There is an attempt at regulating this trend by means of creating new legal standards, aiming to legalise these situations.

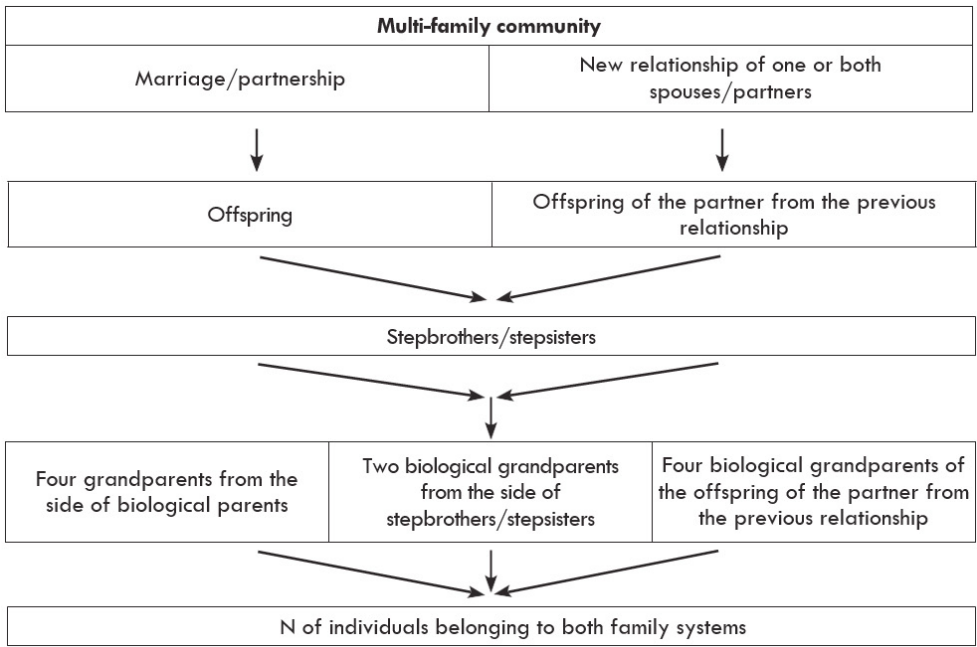
This approach creates favourable conditions for the efforts made to sanction new forms of the community life, which significantly differ from the model of the traditional family. They generally assume two possible forms described as the *multi-family community* and the *alternative family*.

The multi-family community is sometimes also called the “accor-dion (patchwork) family” taking into account its peculiar personal stretchability and special structure based on different connections and relations between people making it up. In other words, it may be said that it is a family extended with new people. These are the individuals replacing the husband or wife, father or mother in the former relationship, their offspring from the previous relationships, stepbrothers and stepsisters, the biological mother or father of whom are the people entering into the new family relation, and other “additional” relatives and in-laws, who, as a consequence of changes taking place in a given family, appear in the new community.

Multi-family communities not infrequently face pedagogical problems becoming clearer and clearer in everyday life compared to traditional family communities. Their source are: upbringing objectives and aspirations vaguely defined by “reconstructed” marriages, evading responsibility for the adopted children, the lack of mutual trust regarding methods of upbringing interactions used by “new” and “additional” community members, overprotectiveness towards biological offspring, routine upbringing activities devoid of empathy towards adopted offspring, a sense of strangeness in the reconstructed family, and many other.

⁸ Cf. P. Sztompka, “Świat potrzebuje wizji,” *Alma Mater. Miesięcznik UJ* 2002, no. 44.

Diagram 1. Personal relations in a non-traditional multi-family community



Source: Compiled by the author.

Diagram 1 shows multi-fold personal interactions observed within a multi-family community. This family becomes a group which assumes the form of a certain social system consisting of a larger number of people who establish specific relations, expressed in fulfilling roles towards each other, not always clearly defined ones. The multi-family community attempts to construct not infrequently its own system of values and decides on norms regulating the behaviour of individuals in the matters of primary and secondary significance for their community, in which parents and children, relatives and in-laws usually have double roles and hold specific positions within the family’s internal structure.

The multi-family community quite naturally grows with new members: the offspring born out of the new relationship, the offspring and their biological mother or father of the partner, as well as their parents and siblings, so “additional” grandmothers and grandfathers, uncles and aunts, and their offspring are added to the family.

What becomes a problem in the multi-family community expanded with extra people is the phenomenon of alexithymia, that is an inability to describe emotions or to communicate with the new members of the group. Entering or not entering into relations with individual members of the extended family community results in the fact that many people ascribed to it are not able to realise and understand the causes of their emotional states which are the consequences of the new situation. This may concern not only adults, but above all children and teenagers that are members of the multi-family community. And although alexithymia may also be the problem of the people growing in traditional families, especially dysfunctional and pathologic families, it must be assumed that it may be more perceptible in multi-family communities. Members of the multi-family community duplicate their roles regarding individual subjects. For example: the child/offspring in the multi-family community has/have their biological mother, but the current wife/partner of their biological father tries to take on the role of the quasi-mother. The same concerns fathers, grandparents and other members of the same community. In this complicated situation the child/offspring is/are not always ready to develop genuine interpersonal bonds with these people and their family quasi-roles. It also happens that for example the wife of the biological father and husband of the biological mother of the child, or other members of the multi-family community, do not have to or do not want to take on a new role, not defined clearly, towards the child. Such situations may trigger different emotional sensations the child is not aware of and the source of which they are not able to specify. They are expressed with the following: fear, cry, pounding of the heart, anxiety, excitability that cannot be explained and other similar reactions. They show the child is not able to recognise what he or she feels, to control these emotions, he or she is unemphatic, that is he or she does not distinguish the sensations and feelings of the people from the multi-family community. The functioning of children with the alexithymia syndrome is frequently quite much distorted, although they are sometimes able to conceal it. In general, they feel bad by themselves and it may happen that they escape into the unreal world, which is facilitated by a variety of substances and addictions, which leads to pathological behaviours.

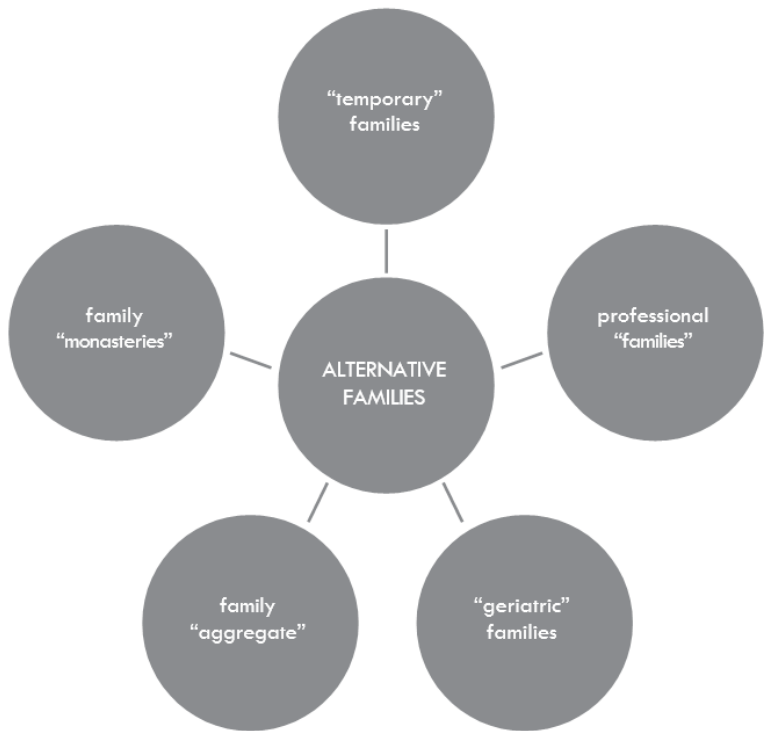
Multi-family communities are characterised by certain diversity, which becomes clear in various forms gaining more and more social, legal and even canonical acceptance. It is exemplified by the so-called family communes, which emerged based on the law on the legalisation of group marriages adopted by the Danish Parliament. Another example is a group established by the Ecumenical Institute, USA, consisting of 250 adults and children living in a community running one general household, following religious practices together and bringing up their children together. Yet another example of the multi-family community is the so-called Life Fraternity, which has ecumenical character. They operate with the consent of the local bishop within the area of the Roman-Catholic Church parish appointed by him.⁹ All Life Fraternities have been members of the world Chemin Neuf community since the early 1970s. These communities, there are several hundred of, operate within 50 countries and gather around 2,000 adults, excluding their children.

Growing tendencies regarding the emergence of different forms of life of multi-family communities are a certain signal evidencing some changes taking place in the forms of the contemporary family life. Changes concerning the contemporary forms of marital and family life have been noticed by Alvin Toffler, who called them alternative families to distinguish them from traditional family communities.¹⁰ *His division of alternative families also takes into account multi-family communities, discussed earlier.*

⁹ The first Life Fraternity was established in Lyon (1971) by Card. Albert Decourtay, who endorsed it as the so-called public association of the faithful.

¹⁰ Cf. A. Toffler, *Szok przyszłości*, trans. W. Osiatyński, Poznań 1998.

Diagram 2. Types of alternative families



Source: Compiled by the author.

Toffler includes the so-called “temporary” marriages in alternative families. The use of the word “temporary” signifies their impermanence, whereas the existence of the traditional family is conditioned by the marriage entered into by a man and a woman who mutually oblige themselves, under oath, to be together eternally. The “temporary” marriage is sometimes also referred to as the “trial” marriage. This relationship usually fulfils all or most marital functions, including the reproductive one. It may also happen the offspring from this relationship encourage their parents to get married. In the contemporary world, permeated by the axionormative chaos, there are many reasons for not getting married. John Paul II in his exhortation *Familiaris consortio* lists and justifies them as follows,

Some people consider themselves almost forced into a free union by difficult economic, cultural or religious situations, on the grounds that,

if they contracted a regular marriage, they would be exposed to some form of harm, would lose economic advantages, would be discriminated against, etc. In other cases, however, one encounters people who scorn, rebel against or reject society, the institution of the family and the social and political order, or who are solely seeking pleasure. Then there are those who are driven to such situations by extreme ignorance or poverty, sometimes by a conditioning due to situations of real injustice, or by a certain psychological immaturity that makes them uncertain or afraid to enter into a stable and definitive union. In some countries, traditional customs presume that the true and proper marriage will take place only after a period of cohabitation and the birth of the first child.¹¹

“Foster families” are communities which, with the consent of the family courts, take upon themselves the care of the abandoned, orphaned children or children whose biological parents have been deprived of parental rights, until the time they become adults, reach mental and social maturity, as well as become materially independent. In Poland such foster families are called “substitute” families. The role of minders is sometimes entrusted to the closest relatives of the child (grandparents, aunt and uncle, at times older siblings), but also childless married couples or couples having their own offspring. These families are supervised by the state, local self-government bodies and public benefit organisations. Their tasks include offering financial and pedagogical support. The situation of children brought up in such families can vary due to the fact that the preliminary evaluation of the possibility of their taking care of the children is not always proper, objective and optimal. The consequence of these families’ dysfunctions is depriving them of the possibility to continue taking care of the children entrusted to them. The fate of children in foster families is not infrequently hard, and it sometimes does not contribute to their proper development. The awareness of being deprived of their own parents, total or partial contact with them, leads to the loss of the sense of their identity, which is reflected in their mental and social life, also after becoming independent. Foster families tend to be often criticised for rearing inefficiency, sometimes for committing offences and at times even crimes towards the children entrusted to

¹¹ Jan Paweł II, *Adbortacja apostolska Familiaris consortio*, op. cit., no. 81 [John Paul II Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio*, English translation available at http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_19811122_familiaris-consortio.html].

them. In such situations the reaction of the institutions appointed to supervise foster families must be immediate and effective. Despite this imperfection, the foster family is a community whose aim is to save these children from partial or total homelessness. Taking care of the children always requires supporting them and solving existential, emotional and social problems.

The “foster family” is a community which requires special attention, kindness and understanding from the contemporary society. The society needs to make every effort to enable it to fulfil its function aiming to alleviate or even repair the consequences of the axionormative chaos experienced by everyone.

In his typology of alternative families Toffler mentions “geriatric families.” According to him, these are the communities consisting of elderly parents with lonely adult offspring. The number of such families constantly grows. On the one hand, it is caused by the fact the average life span of the elderly is getting longer as a result of medical progress, its dynamically developing technology and pharmaceutical sciences and the reduced statutory retirement age. On the other hand, the generation entering adult life extends the time of gaining education by studying more than one faculty at the same time, acquiring professional skills, seeking a well-paid job requiring more and more commitment. Economic dependence does not allow young people to live on their own, they think about collecting enough material means to ensure themselves, as they think, a good starting point to establish their own family.

These are of course only a few reasons for the existence of this type of families. Others include e.g. young people’s desire to live by their parents’ side and at their expense. This is what makes young adults individuals that are not responsible for themselves or for their parents growing old. Despite their community character, in geriatric families there is a growing phenomenon of feeling lonely among its members. It is facilitated by the lack of genuine ties between parents and young adults. This bond has a weaker psychological base, as it is shaped by a mercenary attitude, that is an attitude taking into account certain benefits which may be mutually abused. The feeling of solitude (also loneliness) can also be experienced by members of traditional families and multi-family communities, as well as by members of families living in any of the alternative relationships. Solitude is a category which

may be used to describe the psychological conditions of contemporary children, teenagers, adults and the elderly. They feel lonely when a natural bond with other members of the family community is replaced internally by the lack of intimate contact with the nearest and dearest. Despite living in a community, the person left alone does not feel satisfaction with this fact, as he or she cannot count on the fulfilment of the need of personal safety or recognition. This concerns both adult children and their parents, they stay in the family community with. Relations between them become more formalised in terms of quality and quantity rather than positively emotional. Elderly parents feel responsible for offering support to their adult children, who become more and more helpless, at the same time losing the capability of understanding the essence of their own life. The feeling of loneliness is not chosen by the members of the community in a conscious and intentional way, but it is experienced by them in relations with the nearest and dearest, and is sometimes deeply internalised. As a rule, in “geriatric families” adult children choose a solitary life in a short or long run, and consequently contribute to an increase in the number of singles in the society.

“Family aggregates” are the communities created by divorced parents with new partners and their common children and offspring from earlier marital/partnership relationships. This type of families is almost coincident with the “multi-family community.” By contrast, the “family commune” is a community consisting of a larger number of families living in their own marital relationships that have a similar attitude to the surrounding reality, the same lifestyle and aspirations to fulfil common goals. According to Toffler, “family monasteries” are larger community groups, which not necessarily have, but may be of religious character. They also include those called “family communes.” Taking all this into account, one may regard the two terms as close in meaning, but not synonymous. Multi-family communities, such as Life Fraternities are also examples of them, but they – as already mentioned – are definitely of religious character. These communities focus on the deepening of faith and experiencing it on a daily basis. A clergyman lives with them. He makes sure their religious needs are satisfied, and he also takes care of their spiritual development.

To sum up, it may be said that apart from the traditional family model, which is still leading and most common, new family models

appear more and more often in the social space. Some of them try to keep the most important elements of the traditional family life, but these manifest in other, different dimensions, and even forms. They appear as a consequence of civilisation and cultural changes, which affect changes in the mentality of a human being, his or her vision of the contemporary world, their own place and the role they can play in the unpredictable reality. As already mentioned, changes involving departing from the traditional family model and the creation of favourable conditions for the emergence of new models are caused by the contemporary axionormative chaos. It is a consequence of various crises the world and people experience, multidirectional transformation processes, social integration and disintegration processes and globalisation processes. All these affect the vision of marriage and forms of family life. Therefore the question about the future of the family tends to be asked more loudly. According to Ferdinand Lundberg, the contemporary family is “dying out.” William Wolf believes that soon the only function of the family will be rearing children in the period reduced to a minimum. According to Irvin Grinberg, people overwhelmed by changes and shocks inevitably brought by new times are going to seek stability and certainty in the family, they are going to get married to gain stability.¹²

Without exception each of the contemporary family types is by nature responsible for creating the process of upbringing, the main aim of which is the formation of the new generation. Its quality and effectiveness depend on the educators’ conviction about the necessity to refer to socially acknowledged norms, standards and rules of behaviour adopted to optimize upbringing action. At the same time in contemporary families, affected by the effects of the axionormative chaos, many of them do not function in the consciousness of people responsible for upbringing. Janusz Mastalski has distinguished as many as nine groups of neglected formative paradigms of the young

¹² Cf. A.M. de Tchorzewski, “Rodzina w kontekście współczesnych problemów egzystencjalnych i pedagogicznych,” in: *Z dziejów polskiej kultury i oświaty od średniowiecza do początków XX wieku*, ed. K. Jakubiak, T. Maliszewski, Kraków 2010, pp. 431–442.

generation, which form an essential basis for the real process of education from the perspective of pedagogical sciences.¹³

Table 1. Neglected formative paradigms of the young generation

Paradigms	
Teleological	The basis for upbringing in the family community is the awareness of the objectives pursued by all its members.
Of Limited Trust	The effectiveness of upbringing in the family community depends of the level of mutual trust, which can neither be too little or too much.
Of Controlled Independence	For the sake of the proper upbringing of offspring the family community resigns from overprotectiveness for the purpose of the discreet implementation of the self-educational process.
Of Individual Approach	The family community takes into account the potential possibilities of every offspring and adjusts both its aims and upbringing methods to his/her personal predispositions.
Detoxicant	The family community's duty is to optimise the conditions serving and guaranteeing the integral development of offspring.
Upbringing with Presence	The family relation is obliged to shape interpersonal relations on its mutual physical presence and spiritual being.
Destereotypical	The family community opposes the omnipresent stereotypes of perceiving a human being and the reality surrounding him or her, appreciating everything that constitutes unquestioned values.
Ecological	The family community should constitute a syntonc environment, which understands feelings, desires and reactions of all its subjects, thanks to which it is easier for them to establish contact with people from outside.
Spiritual	The family community aims to create conditions for the development of spirituality of adolescents.

Source: Drawn up by the author based on: J. Mastalski, "Zaniedbane paradygmaty formacyjne nastolatka," *Studia Paedagogica Ignatiana* 2017, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 103–118.

Making use of the concept of neglected paradigms of the formation of teenagers developed by Rev. Janusz Mastalski, an outstanding specialist in the field of family pedagogy, one may make an attempt at describing the contents and scopes as well the significance and role of pedagogic functions that the families living at the time of the axionormative chaos have to face now.

¹³ Cf. J. Mastalski, "Zaniedbane paradygmaty formacyjne nastolatka," *Studia Paedagogica Ignatiana* 2017, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 103–118.

The pedagogical functions of the family at the time of the axionormative chaos

Regardless of the fact whether it is the case of the traditional family community, the community modernised by contemporary transformations, or alternative families, it should always be perceived as an environment in which offspring unconditionally hold a significant place. As a result, each of the aforementioned family types has to fulfil one of the most important functions, namely the pedagogical ones. They have been described in literature, especially sociological literature, in a quite detailed way, but they have traditionally been related to the model of traditional families. In the times of the axionormative chaos, accompanied by an increase in the number of multi-family communities and alternative families, they so to speak need a new analysis. The obligatory pedagogical functions of all the aforementioned types of families and traditional family communities should include: the nursing-care, socialization-upbringing and educational-cultural function.

The nursing-care function encompasses all parents' obligations to satisfy the basic needs of every child. These are the needs which can be referred to as the existential ones, keeping offspring alive biologically, and the ones supporting and aiding the natural growth of offspring. They concern the nursing of the child's body and maintaining family closeness by showing tenderness and love, which provide offspring with the sense of security. The question arises: can the contemporary adult society, taking part, in different ways, in the life filled with financial difficulties, internal conflicts of moral nature, experiencing frustrations because of numerous individual/personal failures, stressed, not able to cope with fulfilling their social roles, not infrequently professionally "stale" and not ready for responsible parenthood, such as juvenile mothers, fulfil its obligations and duties concerning its own offspring and offspring entrusted to it in accordance with the social expectations? It is so often that babies are abandoned immediately after their birth, neglected, physically maltreated and even sexually abused. It is so often that parents building up new family communities forget about the obligation to continue to take care or provide separate maintenance to kids from the former marriages/civil partnerships. Such attitudes are the result of

the contemporary omnipresent axionormative chaos, in which there is less place and time for the daily control of behaviours and conduct. This chaos disrupts the internal mechanism of their assessment, which is one's conscience, that is "the specifically human ability to assess one's own activities by referring to ethical concepts of good and evil and the accepted hierarchy of values."¹⁴ The axionormative chaos leads to the degeneration of the contemporary man's conscience which becomes insensitive, "dormant," and even incapacitated by dehumanising stimuli, which possess it, often even against one's wish.

The socialization-upbringing function comes down to introducing offspring into the real, not virtual, social reality, based on social and moral norms, as well as traditions accepted by the closest environment or the society in a broad sense of the word. Every family community, regardless of its type, is obliged to control the natural expansive aspirations of its offspring, which is done by the clear realisation of upbringing aims and tasks and the selection of methods and means to achieve it. Expansive aspirations are rooted in every man, both genetically and as a result of cognitive mechanisms, which increase during adolescence. They concern growing up in intellectual, emotional, biological and social terms. Hence children and teenagers' aspirations to achieve a variety of competence, demanding the acknowledgement of their rights as well as the rights due to adults. There appears a desire to dominate, a sense of independence, increased aggression towards peers, rebellion shown to parents and adults. These are the manifestations of behaviours confirming increased activity in the participation in something important in life and an attempt at counteracting boredom, passivity and apathy. They are also the foundation of discovering oneself and the sense of one's life. Discovering oneself and the sense of one's life is disrupted by a low level of parents' educational consciousness, and above all the lack of subtle and even intuitive control provided by them over the daily organisation of children and teenagers' lives. This gap is filled with information provided by the media and latest digital technology devices. Although they are indispensable in the process of collecting information about the world, they not infrequently lead to the

¹⁴ A.E. Gała, *Uwarunkowania wychowawcze dojrzałej moralności*, Lublin 1992, p. 25.

situation that adolescents start to live in the virtual world, therefore not always real, that is true picture of the world. They are not always on the side of rearing processes, and what is worse they may significantly contribute to the deformation of the young man's psyche. The content transmitted by them is not verified by parents of low pedagogical culture. The socialisation-upbringing function imposes on parents a duty to expose the picture of the unreal world, to show threats it poses, contributing to an attempt at dominating the intellectual, moral, spiritual and aesthetic dimension of every adolescent.

The educational-cultural function covers parental attitudes and actions aiming to provide offspring with the knowledge and skills necessary to live in the family community and local, national and international communities, or in various organisations gathering people. The basis for this function is interpersonal communication taking place between adults and adolescents, genuine, daily intergenerational dialogue determined by cognitive needs of contemporary family communities. It is the parents obligation to recognise their children's needs to satisfy their thirst for knowledge of the world, the possibility to understand it and assimilate it subjectively. This function also concerns delicate sensing and handing over moral, religious and aesthetic values, which bring every man closer to the desire to achieve inner harmony and discover ethical ideals, a need to participate in transcendental experiences and sensitivity to beauty, with a view to ennobling every individual. Is the family community, in particular the multi-family community or the alternative one, able to fulfil this function in the tangled chaos of the contemporary world in an optimal way? Is the level of the educational consciousness and pedagogical culture of these families satisfactory enough to watch over the ethical, religious and aesthetic development of their offspring? It is not about the effective manipulation of upbringing techniques, which are characterised by the liberal or autocratic style of influencing children and teenagers, protecting and toughening them to the negative effects of the omnipresent axionormative chaos, which leaves its mark on the development of offspring and the daily life of every family. It is about the quality maturity of parents who also experience the negative effects of the changes taking place in all the spheres of person's everyday life.

The understanding of the significance of the family's pedagogical functions, respecting their role and being guided by them in all family communities, is the way optimising the supporting of offspring in getting mature. Supporting is a long-lasting, dynamic and continuous support by contrast with the support which is understood as a single situational act. Pedagogical functions should be ascribed certain intentionality enabling parents to orient offspring to independence in taking up existential problems and solving tasks resulting from them. The correct fulfilling of pedagogical functions in every family minimises the threats caused by the contemporary axionormative chaos, and it contributes to the shaping of the self-awareness of adolescents, that is it triggers reflection on oneself, ability to get to know oneself as a subject making up one's own picture of the world they live in. The properly fulfilled pedagogical functions of the family help offspring discover the essence of one's life.

Conclusion

The family has been the focus of attention among all civilised societies, for whom it has always been of incalculable value. This phenomenon has been examined by both philosophers and theologians, and it has been the subject of cognition for specific fields of learning. Each of them analyses the family in a different aspect, which shows the significance, importance and role of the family in the life of every human being. Bygone historical epochs confirm the changeability of family characteristics. And although contemporary disciplines, in particular the humanistic and social ones, already have an extensive knowledge of them, discerning the dynamics of this changeability, they constantly come across new problems and formulate questions concerning their ontological and epistemological dimension. Dynamic changes, which take place in the family's life, need not only further examination, but also new methodological approaches and cognitive strategies. It is certainly no longer valid to say that the family is "over-studied," that we know everything about it and that science is not able to add anything to the description and explanation of the complexities of family life.

The more and more common phenomenon of new, often not the same forms of family life, different from the picture of the traditional

family communities, makes one examine them more deeply by getting to know their properties, results and consequences. Every new form of the life of the family community is not only rooted in the provenance of its members, in particular parents, but it also contains phylogenetic resources formed and accepted by successive generations.

For every family community *conditio sine qua non* are multiple ties and relations taking place between members of this community from its beginning. These ties cover the biological, emotional, cultural and economic dimensions. They form the foundation of family life and personal relations of its members. Their weakening, partial or complete breaking off, favours demoralisation, moral relativism, ethical nihilism and depravation, as a result of which families become dysfunctional, and not infrequently pathological.

Regardless of the forms of life of family communities, what is worthy of special attention are offspring. Therefore every family is obliged to fulfil basic pedagogical functions. Their significance cannot be overestimated, as they should guarantee the possibly optimal process of the growth of children and teenagers until they achieve many-sided maturity and eliminate the consequences of the negative effects of the contemporary axionormative chaos.

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