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World Youth Day in the face of the crisis of relations and ties

“Never before have feelings of ‘community’, ‘ties’, ‘compassion’, ‘caring’ and ‘courtesy’ been referred to so often and there has never been such a sharp division between women and men, between generations, between fellow citizens, co-workers and neighbors” – an American political scientist, Thomas Lee Pangle,¹ wrote in 1992. It seems that since that time a hunger for “ties,” a desire for “community” or need for “caring,” characteristic of the postmodern age, has not been satisfied properly and permanently. Could it be, then, that the World Youth Day, a socio-religious phenomenon on a global scale, constitutes an optimistic announcement of the reversal of this trend? If yes, how can we describe the crisis of “ties,” and what remedy does the Church propose in inviting young people from all over the world for a community meeting? This issue demands reflection and interpretation.

¹ T. L. Pangle, *Uszlachetnianie demokracji. Wyzwanie epoki postmodernistycznej*, tłum. M. Klimowicz, Kraków 1994, p. 113.

Values and standards are subject to far-reaching changes in structurally and functionally diversified societies. Philosophers and ethicists describe them as a cultural syndrome of lack of trust, chaos and destruction of normativity, moral crisis, relativism and permissiveness. They mention many other signs of anarchization of social life. Sociologists recognize rather elements of changeability in these trends, leading to weakness and atrophy of ties in society. They find reasons for this state of affairs both in primary and secondary groups, institutions and organizations, and in the same individuals.

A social group, especially the large one, ceased to be a central concept of sociology as its interests were moving towards the study of behavior and interaction, which were recognized as elementary for the social material. Attention was given to small collectivities, especially to what happens inside them. These “social microstructures” today constitute the common research field for sociology and social psychology.²

The following reflections are located at the border of what is individual and what is collective. The starting point constitutes an assumption that man is not merely a passive participant in public life, but “a shape of reality” takes its final form in his interior. As a consequence, in addition to “a growing awareness of a high degree of randomness in the creation of social orders,” a phenomenon of “an emergence of ‘critical’ individual consciousness,”³ is also characteristic of our age. In the case of the participants of World Youth Day this can be identified as interiorization and socialization of the experience of faith. Under such assumptions one can consider at first, to try to indicate the major symptoms of the contemporary crisis of relations and ties of an internal (subjective) nature, so as to subsequently point to a phenomenon of The World Youth Day as a proposal of the Church aiming to reconstruct them.

² See: B. Szacka, *Wprowadzenie do socjologii*, Warszawa 2003, pp. 184–185.

³ G. Angelini, *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, in: *La dottrina sociale della Chiesa*, a cura della Facoltà Teologica Interregionale, Milano 1989, p. 75.

2. Major symptoms of contemporary crisis of relations and ties

Sofia Vanni Rovighi highlights that society is a set of relations when summarizing different concepts of social life. “Relation, by which a human being is part of society, is a real relation, because being in community gives something more to an individual, something new, compared to what they would be if they lived alone. An individual living in society is richer in many ways, richer in many goods, which an individual living alone does not have,” she writes.⁴ However, the postmodern space, in which modern man functions, is characterized by a criticism of such a humanistic perspective, and moves away from interest in the human subject.⁵ This applies both to the social environment, and – to a large extent – the inner world of personality.

2.1. Alienation

Consequently, an individual senses the lack of a clear and coherent vision of social projects, commercialization of values, functionalization of reality, development of randomness progressing in every sphere of life, the reduction of religion to emotions or charitable activity.⁶ These are some of the elements that cause young generations to toss between rapid, collective use of life and desperate alienation in an increasingly incomprehensible – although already maximally simplified – reality.

Karol Wojtyła makes us realize that it should be treated as an anthropological problem and finds its essence in the fact that it constitutes the antithesis, denial and weakening of participation. It excludes “the possibility of experiencing another person as our second ‘self’.”⁷ Therefore,

⁴ S. V. Rovighi, *Elementi di filosofia*, vol. 3, Brescia 1995, pp. 237–238.

⁵ See: F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham N.C. 1991 (after: G. Ritzer, *Klasyczna teoria socjologiczna*, tłum. H. Jankowska, Poznań 2004, p. 64).

⁶ See: K. Lehmann, *Die Situation des Dialogs zwischen Glaube und Kultur in Mitteleuropa*, in: *Europa – zadanie chrześcijańskie. Księga pamiątkowa z okazji 65. rocznicy urodzin księdza profesora Helmuta Jurosa*, red. A. Dylus, Warszawa 1998, p. 299.

⁷ See: K. Wojtyła, *Uczestnictwo czy alienacja*, in: K. Wojtyła, „Osoba i czyn” oraz inne studia antropologiczne, Lublin 2000, p. 453.

the essence of alienation is (partial) deprivation of one's opportunity to fulfill oneself in a basic interpersonal relation caused by external factors (structures) or by an attitude adopted by this person.⁸ Marian Machinek, synthetically discussing some of the factors of alienation, states that they can be summarized by the following terms: "disembodied man i.e. the loss of one's body," "*homo oeconomicus* i.e. the anthill mentality," "esoteric man, i.e. the loss of divine You."⁹

In the past, some ideological currents, such as Marxism, searched for a way to solve the problem of alienation by advocating social justice. They claimed that "instead of contributing through individual works of charity to maintaining the status quo, we need to build a just social order in which all receive their share of the world's goods and no longer have to depend on charity."¹⁰ Such vision, however, has more in common with the world of utopia than with an actual reality.

2.2. Loneliness

Class conflict has, in fact, been imperceptibly replaced by the struggle for personal domination in the "competition." This manifests itself in the breaking of social ties in the "rat race."¹¹ Veblen's "leisure class" is here to stay and became a desired lifestyle even at the price of giving up higher spiritual and cultural aspirations, or long-lasting interpersonal relationships.¹² The multi-sourced inability to discover the truth about oneself and the world affected one's ethical, social and political choices, leaving man in an emotional vacuum, ethical loneliness and – as a consequence – in deepening social loneliness.

⁸ K. Wojtyła, *Uczestnictwo czy alienacja...*, p. 412.

⁹ M. Machinek, *Alienacje współczesnego człowieka*, in: *Spór o człowieka – spór o przyszłość świata. Od bł. Jana XXIII do Jana Pawła II*, red. J. Nagórny, J. Gocko, Lublin 2004, pp. 19–36.

¹⁰ Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, 27, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html (08.07.2016).

¹¹ See K. Chojnacki, *Sussidiarietà e società: percorsi di nuova coesione sociale. Pars dissertationis ad lauream in Facultate Scientiarum Socialium apud Pontificiam Universitatem S. Thomae in Urbe*, Frusino 1999, p. 49.

¹² Cf. T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, transl. J. Frenzel-Zagórska, Warszawa 2008.

The feeling of loneliness is associated with a perpetual competition with which we deal while taking part in all sorts of “markets,” “votings” or “competitions.” Winners are admired, applauded, they become idols, but losers have to leave the stage to retire to their “hermitages,” “hiding places” and “isolation units.” This fact creates a new type of man: a fearful and lonely individual. Their loneliness can have an emotional, social and/or existential form.¹³

This diagnosis is confirmed by Benedict XVI when he writes: “One of the deepest forms of poverty a person can experience is isolation. If we look closely at other kinds of poverty, including material forms, we see that they are born from isolation, from not being loved or from difficulties in being able to love. Poverty is often produced by a rejection of God’s love, by man’s basic and tragic tendency to close in on themselves, thinking themselves to be self-sufficient, or merely an insignificant and ephemeral fact, a ‘stranger’ in a random universe.”¹⁴

Attilio Danese adds that the cause/effect of this state of affairs is the growing gap between the subjective world of human relationships and the objective world of social institutions.¹⁵

2.3. Narcissism

Joseph Ratzinger postulated that if there is no social proximity transforming into real communion, then only egoism, injustice and apathy might bloom. They bear the fruits of what Pierre Rosanvallon calls the “triple utopia of liberalism:”¹⁶ human relationships are reduced to economic, legal and individual relations.¹⁷ The effects can be observed in the attitude, which Christopher Lasch describes as the “postmodern

¹³ See: R. Podgórski, *Alienacja jako zjawisko socjologiczne*, http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/F/FA/rp_antropolog3.html (18.05.2016).

¹⁴ Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* of the Supreme Pontiff Benedict XVI, 53, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html (08.07.2016).

¹⁵ See: A. Danese, *Il modulo personalista: unità – diversità per l’unità federale dei popoli europei*, “Melita Theologica” 39 (2) (1988), p. 142.

¹⁶ P. Rosanvallon, *Le capitalisme utopique. Histoire de l’idée de marché*, Paris 1999, pp. VII–X.

¹⁷ See C. Gambescia, *Le société injuste*, “Catholica” 2003 nr 3, pp. 12–23.

collective narcissism” and “demanding individualism.”¹⁸ He explains: “Narcissism manifests itself with the fact that man is troubled with anxiety, but not with a sense of guilt. People detest competition, but experience it; are afraid of death, but they reject life; they worship interpersonal relationships in a small group of friends, the more intense, the more they do not to understand political actions and solutions. They devote themselves enthusiastically to what might be called ‘ideology of simplified personal development,’ which, optimistic at first glance, deep inside shows a deep disappointment towards the world and lack of hope. Exposing themselves the way they are constitutes a new faith of those who believe in nothing and nobody.”¹⁹

Małgorzata Jacyno also draws attention to correspondence between the “culture of individualism” and the disappearance of social relations: “Narcissism is in fact – she writes – about avoiding experience of oneself and an incomplete contact with oneself makes it impossible to establish relationships with others. Avoidance of experiencing of one’s ‘inner world’ leads directly to avoidance of experiencing the external world... Avoidance of both the internal and external world creates final experience of emptiness and witheredness.”²⁰ Therefore, the essence of postmodern narcissism appears to be an absorbance of an individual with their own identity, so that they lose the boundaries between themselves and the external world. A narcissistic individual perceives external events through the prism of their own needs and desires; they are only interested in “what this means to me.” Narcissism is the opposite of devotion, which is necessary to maintain intimate ties.²¹

These attitudes comprise a mentality called *l’io minimo*, i.e. focused on survival in an alienating age of too many rapid changes.²² It combines a demanding attitude with a disposition of not attaining goals, which

¹⁸ See A. Giddens, *Modernity and Self-identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, tłum. A. Szulżycka, Warszawa 2010, p. 234.

¹⁹ Ch. Lasch, *La cultura del narcisismo. L’individuo in fuga dal sociale in un’età di disillusioni collettive*, trad. M. Bocconcelli, Milano 1981, p. 65.

²⁰ M. Jacyno, *Kultura indywidualizmu*, Warszawa 2007, pp. 202–203.

²¹ See R. Sennett, *Upadek człowieka publicznego*, tłum. H. Jankowska, Warszawa 2009.

²² See Ch. Lasch, *L’io minimo. La mentalità della sopravvivenza in un’epoca di turbamenti*, trad. L. Cornalba, Milano 1996.

exceed the personal horizon of man. This is a mentality that demands conditions to survive without any personal contribution. It even involves making unethical choices. This is due to the fact that ethics becomes subordinated to a narcissistic view of the world, while ethical action requires a perception of “the whole picture,” and relationships which develop in a wider space than the “minimum I,” to which modern man no longer aspires.

2.4. Experience of risk

Ricardo Petrella writes about the contemporary “gospel of competitiveness,” the new Ten Commandments of modern man, which contains “orders”: “you shall not resist globalization,” “you shall not stop following technical innovations,” “you shall liberalize trade completely,” “you shall privatize everything that can be privatized” and “you shall be competitive: always better than others, always in great shape, always victorious.”²³ However, not many people turn to the anthropological, cultural and theological roots of this confusion of modern man.²⁴

In such a world social ties loosen. They comprise of, as described by Stanisław Ossowski: a certain objective ground for interpersonal relations (e.g. origin, territory), defined material relations between people (exchange of certain values, goods, mutual satisfaction of needs) and an emerging sense of connection of an individual with other people (mutual cognitive-emotional relationship based on a sense of community and a manifestation of this connection in attitudes and behavior). When there is such an understanding of social ties, an implicit demand appears so that this tie achieve a status of moral bond, i.e. a special relationship of responsibility including the individual’s trust, loyalty and solidarity

²³ See: R. Petrella, *Le bien commun. Éloge de la solidarité*, Bruxelles 1996, pp. 44–49.

²⁴ On the sources of contemporary confusion – see: L. Roos, *Das Vermächtnis Johannes Paulus II. für die Zukunft Europas*, in: *Europa christlich Gestalten. Hoffnung und Angst der Menschen in Europa als Herausforderung für die Soziallehre der Kirche. Festschrift für Prof. Dr. Lothar Roos zum Abschluss seines Wirkens an der Schlesischen Universität*, hrgs. von H. Krzysteczko, Katowice 2005, pp. 11–24.

towards other members of the “us” category. Only then such an understood social tie becomes a permanent element of social reality.²⁵

Meanwhile, modern personality evolved into a set of features that indicate an increasing role of the “experience of risk.” A Munich sociologist, Ulrich Beck, noted that preventing, minimizing and channeling of risk (e.g. the risk of nuclear catastrophe, risk of the stock market crash, risk of a job loss) are problems of “current modernity.”²⁶ Also Anthony Giddens states that “risk” – apart from “lack of trust,” “opacity” and “globalization” – is a distinctive feature of “late modernity.”²⁷ This leads to: “stronger sensitivity to risks and dangers resulting from the reduction of a role of defense mechanisms and magical and religious rationalizations,” “more widespread awareness of risks” resulting from increasing level of education, as well as “more and more belated awareness of imperfection of knowledge experts” and repeated errors in the functioning of “abstract systems.”²⁸

By adding to the above “globalization” and “lack of trust” we come to a feature of “opacity,” understood as the uncertain and liquid nature of social life in the conditions of late modernity. Only a radical opposition to these trends carried out by societies-communities gives hope of overcoming the troubling aspects of late modernity.

2.5. Loss of ties

One of the symptoms of a process of loosening social ties is a focus on the acquisition and consumption of goods, which is gaining not only utilitarian but also symbolic meaning (“conspicuous consumption”).²⁹ It clearly shows a “gradual decay of regulating function of moral criteria, co-occurring with concentration of attention on satisfying material needs

²⁵ Cf. J. Szymczyk, *Fenomen więzi społecznej w ujęciu Stanisława Ossowskiego*, “Zeszyty Naukowe KUL” 51 (2008) nr 1, pp. 19–33.

²⁶ Cf. U. Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, transl. S. Cieśla, Warszawa 2002.

²⁷ See: A. Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge 1990 after: P. Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change*, transl. J. Konieczny, Kraków 2005, p. 90.

²⁸ After: P. Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change...*, pp. 90–93.

²⁹ On other aspects of modernity – see: P. Sztompka, *The Sociology of Social Change...*, pp. 82–85.

of an individual so that individual and collective hedonism becomes a cultural dominant. The erosion of moral values combined with the appreciation of material goods causes permissiveness at a level of action and greed at a level of motivation.” Zbigniew Brzeziński calls this process “permissive cornucopia” (from Latin *cornu copiae* – horn of plenty).³⁰

Among the reasons for this trend Jeffrey A. Mirus lists: the mental consequences of the division of the world and aspirations to have an advantage over others; succumbing to temptation of pride and desire to have meaning, which would confirm having advantage over others, as well as succumbing to ideologies and attempts to totally control these behaviors and values which affect the shape of social life.³¹ These factors lead, often unconsciously, to a personal belief in the necessary and invincible domination of the world, in which – as stated by Ueli Mäder – the following rule omnipotently: individualism, pluralism, globalization, polarization, bureaucratization, consumerism, and ultimately, omnipresent existential uncertainty.³²

3. Prospects for the reconstruction of relations

It seems that the processes outlined above manifesting both at a collective and individual level, are, to a large extent, a result of a deep and well-established gap, or an interrupted relationship between the ultimate meaning of human existence, and the culture of everyday life, between “the sacred” and “the profane,” or in other words: a wrong or non-existent relationship between “how” and “why?”³³

³⁰ See: Brzeziński, *Bezład. Polityka światowa na progu XXI wieku*, tłum. K. Murawska, Warszawa 1995, p. 64.

³¹ See: J. Mirus, *UN, EU, World Court, Supreme Court: Subsidiarity, Anyone?* (22.11.2004), CatholicCulture.org (<http://www.catholicculture.org/commentary/articles.cfm?id=38>).

³² Cf. U. Mäder, *Subsidiarität und Solidarität*, Bern–Berlin–Bruxelles–Frankfurt a. M.–New York–Oxford–Wien 2000, pp. 41–82. A theological-moral look at some of these phenomena is discussed by A. Drożdż, *Kościół wobec konsumizmu*, in: *Wyzwania moralne przełomu tysiącleci*, red. J. Nagórny, A. Derdziuk, Lublin 1999, pp. 111–139.

³³ See: G. Dalla Torre, *Città sul monte. Contributo ad una teoria canonistica sulle relazioni fra Chiesa e Comunità politica*, Roma 1996, p. 174.

Ideologues of postmodern age attracted by the virtue of wondering, apostles of the “culture of apotheosis of despair” show that a relation between everyday culture, the Christian spirituality and symbolism in the conditions of modernity is impossible, and the relation of everyday hustle and bustle to the ultimate goal of life is unnecessary. It seems that it is necessary to re-construct themes of this interrupted relationship between social consciousness and the Christian consciousness, which is the essence of contemporary personal and community problems.³⁴ World Youth Day is to fulfill an extremely important task constituting in a space of recovery of an awareness of the importance of social friendship (*amicitia socialis*) and the attitude of “dialogue of gifts.”

The Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) notes prophetically, in a demanding tone that: “For the bonds which unite the faithful are mightier than anything dividing them. Hence, let there be unity in what is necessary; freedom in what is unsettled, and charity in any case.”³⁵ This principle, applied in practice, indicates that “the Church seems to learn as Czesław Bartnik puts it – that there will be no universal or eschatological unity without positive achievements in the field of building of different fragmentary unities: family, city, nation.”³⁶ We should add faith communities too.

If that does not happen, then the words of Zygmunt Bauman will come true that “after the era of ‘great engagement’, the times of ‘great disengagement’ have arrived. The times of high speed and acceleration, shrinking terms of commitment, of ‘flexibility’, downsizing and outsourcing. The times of staying together only ‘until further notice’ and as long (never longer) as ‘satisfaction lasts.’”³⁷ However, in contrast to Christian *communio* – as the British sociologist states – “There is a price to be paid for the privilege of “being in community”... The price is paid in the currency of freedom.”³⁸

³⁴ Cf. P. Donati, *Pensiero sociale cristiano e società post-moderna*, Roma 1997.

³⁵ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral constitution *Gaudium et Spes*, 92.

³⁶ Cz. St. Bartnik, *Nauka społeczno-polityczna Kościoła*, Lublin 2008, p. 304.

³⁷ Z. Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, transl. J. Margański, Kraków 2008, p. 57.

³⁸ Z. Bauman, *Community...*, p. 10.

3.1. *Socialitas*

However, is it practically possible that such community societies exist? Under what conditions might social relations be transformed in a net of social ties characteristic of community-communion?

The commonly accepted definition of society is that it is a stable and moral unity of a greater number of individuals who aspire to the same goal.³⁹ Community society is – according to Józef Majka – the main and necessary means of human improvement. Its development is fully compatible with the development and improvement of man in the triple dynamics of: cooperation since society comes into existence through collective and complementary action; the political system since society has to constantly improve in terms of forms of this cooperation, and culture since more and more perfect human values must appear in social life.⁴⁰

Since the mid-1970s, the so-called “civil society” was perceived as meeting such conditions of human improvement. This term is used to denote public structures, which provide the possibility of acting in a meaningful context, by various – in term of size and functions – associations allowing social ties to tie up and providing a sense of belonging, which does not enter into political institutions domain. It seems that the World Youth Day performs such a function too.

3.2. *Society of relationships*

Since the dawn of sociology its representatives appealed to the notion of social relation and they described its forms and dynamics. In 1908, Georg Simmel wrote: “Interpersonal social ties tie up, untie and tie up again in an eternal, pulsating stream, which binds an individual even when they belong to an organization in the strict sense. The fact that people look at each other, are jealous of each other, write letters to each other, eat dinner, that irrespective of specific aims they turn to each other with sympathy or antipathy, that gratitude for a selfless deed is a beginning of

³⁹ See: S. V. Rovighi, *Elementi di filosofia...*, p. 237.

⁴⁰ Cf. J. Majka, *Filozofia społeczna*, Warszawa 1982, p. 287.

an unbreakable long-lasting bond, that one man asks another the way, that people dress up and decorate because of others – all these relationships between one individual and another, temporary or permanent, conscious or unconscious, trivial or significant [...] bind us constantly with each other. We find here a mutual interaction of elements which are a cause of durability and flexibility, color and value, expressive, yet mysterious life of society.”⁴¹

However, sociologists rarely treated a relation as a key to the reading of social phenomena. For a long time it was considered only as part of broader theories. In such partial recognition, relational theory, next to the formalist theory of social interaction of the mentioned Georg Simmel, became part of Marxist theories, Weber’s theory of compensation, or the phenomenological theory of Alfred Schütz⁴² and Talcott Parsons’s functionalist theory.⁴³ All those attempts, taken in the past, to define social relation did not present it as the essence of social life in terms of structural and symbolic meaning, but recognized it only for its socio-psychological aspects.

3.3. A society of ties

The term “social tie” usually refers to a group. The quality of ties has an impact on a group’s integration. An integrated group (coherent, compact, coordinated) means that it comprises certain “forces of compactness,” i.e. social ties. Integration is a result of the existence of these ties; it is a certain state of their existence. However, integration of a group is easier to observe than a tie.⁴⁴ Therefore, in conventional sociology there dominates a tendency to treat social ties as a constitutive factor in the threefold meaning: psychosocial, structural and twofold.⁴⁵

41 G. Simmel, *The Stranger*, in: G. Simmel, *Socjologia*, tłum. M. Łukasiewicz, Warszawa 1975, p. 12.

42 Cf. A. Schütz, *Potoczne i naukowe interpretacje ludzkiego działania*, tłum. D. Lachowska, in: *Kryzys i schizma. Antyścientystyczne tendencje w socjologii współczesnej*, red. E. Mokrzycki, t. 1, Warszawa 1984.

43 Cf. T. Parsons, *Struktura społeczna a osobowość*, tłum. M. Tabin, Warszawa 1969.

44 Cf. W. Jacher, *Więź społeczna w teorii i praktyce*, Katowice 1987, pp. 27–28.

45 On the basis of: J. Turowski, *Socjologia. Małe struktury społeczne*, Lublin 1993.

Stanisław Ossowski describes a psychosocial concept of social ties as “approving awareness of belonging to a group, tendency of keeping the most important group conformities, worship of common values, awareness of common interests, but also readiness to put group interests above personal interests, if such a conflict arises, or at least a belief that group interests should be put above the own ones.”⁴⁶ In other words, “a collection of people becomes a social group if and only if they develop an awareness of social connection and when this awareness manifests in their behaviour.”⁴⁷

The structural concept of a “social tie” assumes that it is based on the existence of interdependencies that arise from the division of functions in the social body or from the division of labor between people binding them with respective social relations. Jan Szczepański writes about this approach: “Social tie, bringing together a collection of people, is the sum of all relations between its members subordinated to one dominant relation... Accordingly, sets of individuals bound by a defined tie will be called social collections (groups).”⁴⁸ Therefore, social relations are considered to be a fundamental element of social ties in these theories.

However, one should finally assume that this tie is of a twofold nature: awareness and structural. In such a way it is also recognized by Paweł Rybicki, who writes: “social ties manifest in 2 ways in human reality. The first comprises of commonalities and relationships between people that can be objectively defined: commonalities and blood ties, origin and territory, language, culture in its different areas, and the organization of collective life. The second comprises of specific states and acts of consciousness: a sense of special connection with others or mutual dependence with them, and the manifestations of this sense in attitudes, behaviors, activities whether individual or collective.” That is why Piotr Sztompka distinguishes amongst a behavioral tie (similar or joint actions undertaken by members of a group); a cooperative tie (a sense of community based on the mutual necessity of group

46 S. Ossowski, *O osobliwościach nauk społecznych*, Warszawa 2001, p. 52.

47 S. Ossowski, *O osobliwościach nauk...*, p. 57.

48 J. Szczepański, *Socjologia. Rozwój problematyki i metod*, Warszawa 1969, p. 502.

members to achieve individual and collective objectives); an objective tie (a sense of community resulting from the similarity of life situations) and a subjective tie (a sense of communion with members of a group to which we belong).⁴⁹

3.4. Postulates of sociology of relationships

Only since the 1980s did one speak of “sociology of relationships” or “relational sociology.” The Italian sociologist Pierpaolo Donati is considered to be its originator. According to him, an importance of a social relationship lies in the fact that it is always present as a factor constituting both reality and consciousness. Relation, understood both as a “reference to” (*refero*) and “relationship between” (*religo*), is a fundamental category of existence and the activity of community. It is understood as a “space of inter-subjective relations and structural communication in all possible forms,” which are motivated by common values achieved or planned to be achieved by members of collection by their cooperation.⁵⁰

Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde expresses a similar opinion. He reminds us that the aim of man should be shaping and implementing one’s own, individual being. Because it is of ethical-personal, generic and social nature, therefore, this task cannot be performed in an ethical-social vacuum, without existing in community and without any relations with it. He indicates a tie as an element binding individuals.⁵¹ A uniting bond precedes freedom, which, in the social dimension, fulfills itself in a relation towards others to such an extent that society deprived of ties could not exist. Also, Hannah Arendt, tried to restore an ideal of community to her contemporaries. In her opinion, the conscious taking on of the responsibility for community’s fate constitutes this dimension of existence, in which man, overcoming the pressure of natural necessity,

⁴⁹ Cf. P. Sztompka, *Socjologia. Analiza społeczeństwa*, Kraków 2002, p. 184f.

⁵⁰ Cf. P. Donati, *Relazione sociale*, in: *Nuovo dizionario di sociologia*, a cura di F. Demarchi, A. Ellena, B. Cattarinussi, Milano 1987, pp. 1721–1729.

⁵¹ Cf. E. W. Böckenförde, *Wizerunek człowieka w świetle dzisiejszego porządku prawnego*, in: *Człowiek w nauce współczesnej*, red. K. Michalski, Paris 1988, pp. 117–125.

reaches the best of their existence – a feeling of happiness and the experience of creative freedom.⁵²

An idea, which perceives the most basic premise of reality in “relation,” locating itself on the border between social science and metaphysics, allows for open dialogue between the various actors of relationship. In this framework, one can analyze the interaction between social structures and Christian thought without mixing social and religious aspects together. Relational thought also raises and develops the long-forgotten aspect in the social teaching of the Church, which is expressed in the sentence by St. Augustine: “There is nothing whatsoever that begets itself that it may exist” („nulla enim omnino res est qui se gignat ut sit”).⁵³ This does not mean that everything that exists, also in social life, has its predestined goal (which does not happen in social life), but indicates that everything that exists, also in social life, exists within relation.

The relational theory, specifically sociological, is a tool that allows to understand if there are any significant relations (if yes, how and in what sense they might exist) between the Christian thought (theology, ethics, philosophy) and the interventions in the social life (legislation, social policy). Without such a matrix respective areas either overlap or each of them develops independently in their own direction without regard for another. If theology was to be directly transformed into legislative and political decisions, it would become senseless theocracy today. On the other hand, if political and legislative decisions were to completely disregard the Christian thought, theology would not have any social and cultural meaning. Some consider this possibility as positive, but reality it shows the dramatic consequences of such a separation. Sociological relational theory offers cultural mediation, which allows two actors of relation (the Christian thought and practical action in society) to maintain their identity, while enabling mutual communication.

52 Cf. P. Śpiewak, *Hannah Arendt i Alexis de Tocqueville o solidarności*, “Res Publica” 1987 nr 5, pp. 83–88.

53 In the following context: “Qui putat eius potentie Deum ut se ipsum ipse genuerit, eo plus errat, quod non solum Deus ita non est sed nec spiritualis creatura, nec corporalis. Nulla enim omnino res est que se ipsam gignat.” St. Augustine, *De Trinitate (Aurelii Augustini de Trinitate Libri Quindecim)*, tłum. M. Stokowska, Kraków 1996, p. I.

It should be emphasized that this is not about identifying human beings with relation. It would constitute their degradation and – as pointed out by John Paul II – an anthropological mistake characteristic of socialism. It is rather about highlighting the importance of relation as a factor creating social tie.

Zbigniew Stawrowski, a Warsaw political philosopher, briefly describes such a political and ethical tie by referring to Hannah Arendt: “The first type of relationship is born with an awareness of a common enemy. What unites and integrates us comes from the outside. [...] The content of our unity and identity, and a source of strength that binds our community is our common enemy, some ‘They’, complete strangers, and yet in a strange relationship with us, because without them there would simply be no ‘Us’. It is these two words – ‘Us and They’ – which express experience of this tie in the most concise way. This bond is based solely on negation. In extreme cases the meaning of the word ‘Us’ means only as much as: ‘not – They.’” Such a negative “political” ties constitutes an element of the political identity of a given group and serves as a political instrument of closing ranks “against” someone or something. Whereas ethical ties are positive: “It is a bond that defines our community, defines a meaning of the word “Us,” not by relation towards a stranger and an enemy, but on the contrary, from the inside, through shared values [...]. Most deeply [...] and intensively experienced form of ethical community... is the religious community that is such community in which members are bound by shared and the highest values.” Both types of social ties – political ties, based on a negation of an enemy, and ethical ties, built on positive identification of a specific set of values – in the real world usually interpenetrate mutually and constantly mix with each other.⁵⁴

Society-community is born from the human necessity of achieving purposes related to the basic good of their nature, which could not be achieved if they lived alone.⁵⁵ The aim of such *communio* is the

⁵⁴ Z. Stawrowski, *Solidarność znaczy więź*, Warszawa 2010, pp. 102–105.

⁵⁵ “Man’s natural instinct moves him to live in civil society, for he cannot, if dwelling apart, provide himself with the necessary requirements of life, nor procure the means of developing his mental and moral faculties. Hence, it is divinely ordained that he should

common wealth of its members, the common wealth in the earthly and supernatural order. Every society existing in reality – Mario Toso says – has social consciousness, is based on community of intentions and emotions, on solidarity and friendship of its members, on virtues and vices (ethical, relational, inter-subjective objectivity). It also comprises of resources of common heritage of material, biological, cultural wealth, as well as authorities, institutions and structures (physical, biological, anthropological, cultural and structural objectivity).⁵⁶

4. Conclusions – World Youth Day as an opportunity to implement community society (*socialitas et communio*)

Community society, in accordance with the relational concept is not only a set of objective relations of subjects, or how Achille Ardigò writes: it is not “inter-subjective objectivity” (*oggettività intersoggettiva*).⁵⁷ As a form of unifying relationships between people, it is only “partially” a result of intelligence, practical reason and human attempts. *Communio* comprises of “the whole” multi-level order. It includes the “physical and biological unity,” “cognitive unity,” “unity of intellect, its capabilities, functionality and products,”⁵⁸ unity, or “cultural and religious order,” expressed in a common language, a unity of common technology and technique, common heritage goods, customs and practices; and a unity or order that we somehow introduce into our actions when we contemplate and make choices with the use of mind.

Some aspects of this unity or order are a subject of psychological research; others are found while tracking human biographies and the

lead his life – be it family, or civil-with his fellow men, amongst whom alone his several wants can be adequately supplied,” states Leo XII in his encyclical on the Christian state *Immortale Dei* (1885).

56 M. Toso, *Umanesimo sociale. Viaggio nella dottrina sociale della Chiesa e dintorni*, Roma 2001, p. 362.

57 A. Ardigò, *Per una sociologia oltre il post-moderno*, Bari 1988, p. 49.

58 In the sense that society might have a specific unity in cognitive order because its members think and learn together, acquiring a common foundation of experience and intuition.

course of history, and yet other aspects of this unity are discovered by ethics, political philosophy and related disciplines.⁵⁹ It concerns such an order of relation, which allows for a unity of a joint, goal-oriented action; order, by which every member of a group, at least partially, finds their personal fulfillment, when they help other members of the same community to achieve such fulfillment by providing them and guarding their growth in freedom, responsibility and other aspects of human maturity.

The last level: cultural and religious, is what gives human societies their community nature. Other levels of unity are a necessary condition for this community to exist. However, none of them can replace the last one – “ordered unity” – expressed in cooperation and shared commitment. Unity of cooperation, which arises in communities understood in the full sense of the word, assumes a special kind of cooperation, which is founded on friendship (*amicitia*): family, social, religious and political.

It should be noted that it differs from friendship, that ties up in communities of the same interests or occurs among participants of team games. A community of activities and interests, existing between partners in business or between colleagues on a pitch, has as its ultimate goal not interest or love towards another person but rather “usefulness” or “pleasure,” in other words – individual and private objectives. Certainly, goodness and a joint action exist in such communities, but their main goal is not mutual growth. On the contrary, a community, in a strong sense of the word, increasingly constitutes community reality and involves a type of friendship that directly practices love towards another, a real “well – being” of all.

Stanisław Grygiel writes: “Philosophy reducing human existence to a category of being, which covers everything, did harm to man. It lulled them metaphysically. It made them look at themselves as one looks at a result of a cause. The situation changed, when personal reflection looked into the existence of man and discovered that it is of nature of dialogue [...]. That is why philosophy of human person does not say that man is, but –

⁵⁹ J. M. Finnis, *Legge naturale e diritti naturali*, a cura di F. Viola, trad. F. Di Blasi, Torino 1996, p. 149, after: M. Toso, *Umanesimo sociale...*, p. 362.

that they exist. To exist means to be a history of the Meeting with God conducting in meetings with other people [...]. The one who does not believe in the future of man, does not establish dialogue with anybody. They talk with everyone only about possession [...]. In dialogue of people selflessly devoted to each other an answer to a question “Who am I?” differs from the answer given by partners in possession. To every question “Who am I?” in dialogue of gifts, an answer exceeding human possibilities is heard. And yet people sacrifice themselves to each other to maintain their identity. So great is their hope.”⁶⁰

The World Youth Day, seen as an event and a process, constitutes such a “dialogue of gifts,” which allows us to hope for a reestablishment of relationships and to strengthen ties forming real communities of communion over the wide spaces of the human world.

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⁶⁰ S. Grygiel, *Kimże jest człowiek? Szkice z filozofii osoby*, Kielce 1995, pp. 82–83.

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