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Contemporary Parenthood. The Meaning of Mother and Father in the Child's Life

Współczesne rodzicielstwo. Znaczenie matki i ojca w życiu dziecka

Streszczenie

Współcześnie coraz częściej wskazuje się, iż rola obojga rodziców w prawidłowym rozwoju osobowości dziecka jest istotna i ważna. Bliskość, serdeczność, bezpośredniość i intymność wzajemnych relacji rodzice – dziecko, pozwala na ukształtowanie prawidłowej osobowości jednostki, zdolnej kochać i nawiązywać serdeczne oraz trwałe kontakty z innymi ludźmi. Rodzina jest jakby „kolebką” rozwoju osobowości każdego przychodzącego na świat dziecka. To na jej gruncie kształtuje ono mowę, język, uczucia i postawy wobec najbliższych i otaczającego świata. Na tej też drodze rodzina wprowadza dziecko w świat kultury i przygotowuje do udziału w życiu społecznym.

Rodzicielstwo dzisiaj ma charakter coraz bardziej świadomy. Dzieci coraz rzadziej traktuje się jako „dar od Boga”, a raczej są postrzegane jako „dzieci chciane”, „zaplanowane”. Ponowoczesność stawia przed współczesnymi matkami i ojcami wiele wyzwań i zadań na drodze do urzeczywistnienia swojego rodzicielstwa. W artykule autorka podejmuje refleksję nad niektórymi z nich, stara się wskazać zarówno szanse, jak i zagrożenia wpisane we współczesne bycie rodzicem.

Odpowiedzialne rodzicielstwo oznacza nabycie przez rodziców umiejętności poważnego przeorientowania swojego życia; chodzi też o zdobycie się na wysiłek samokontroli i czuwania nad tym, by towarzyszyć dziecku w jego dorastaniu. Aktywna obecność rodziców na każdym etapie rozwojowym dziecka, pozwala mu na sprostanie stawianym wymaganiom/zadaniom oraz osiągnięcie coraz wyższego poziomu dojrzałości.

Słowa kluczowe: rodzina, matka, ojciec, współczesne rodzicielstwo, rozwój jednostki.

Abstract

The role of both parents is essential in the proper development of the child's personality. Closeness, warmth, directness and the intimacy of parents-children relationship, enable the proper formation of the child's personality; an individual who is able to love and make warm and permanent contacts with other people. The family is the cradle of personality development of each child born to this world. It is on the basis of family that enables the child to form speech, language, emotions and attitudes towards the people closest to it and to the surrounding world. The family introduces the child to the world of culture and prepares him for participation in social life.

Parenthood is of more importance in today's consciousness. Children are perceived not as "a gift from God", but rather as "planned or expected children".

Responsible parenthood means acquiring the skills for the reorienting of the parents' life, and the effort of self-control and to be on the alert in accompanying the child in his growing up. Active parental presence at every stage of the child's development enables it to complete the required tasks and gain the upper level of maturity.

Parents are obliged to do a lot more than just to welcome the child to this world. Mature parenthood demands patience, engagement and attention but most importantly immense love and devotion which are missing when it comes to contemporary parents "embedded" in "Fast culture".

Keywords: family, mother, father, Contemporary Parenthood, personality development.

Contemporary family transformations

The family has been in existence for ages; its fundamental meaning in life had been already noticed and emphasized in ancient times, when Aristotle identified the role of the family as the priority in social functioning. In my opinion, the family phenomenon may be characterized by its variety, the mosaic of forms and shapes, the fact of its being subject to constant changes and transformations, independently of the times of its existence. The family alters with the alterations of the world, constantly exposing the new image, nevertheless, as August Comte specified: it is the most elementary social unit, and highly placed in the interests hierarchy (according to the public opinion poll), and the value for every human.

To trace back, the pre-industrial age family was basically an economic and social teaching institution, with the possession of tiny production workshops and services, where all members of family were employed, and the father was the owner. The family profits dominated the profits of a single person. The pre-industrial age family was the classical and traditional form of social life organization in a small group, which, however, yielded to the father's authority/control (patriarchy). The family was distinguished by cohesion, and the material conditions dominated the emotional bonds and personal relations. Usually it was a large family, deeply rooted in a tradition, religion, and exposed to exception-

ally strong interrelations between family members, and the local society in which it was embedded¹. The traditional model of the family constituted the absolute entity, with certain roles for family members and was based on community rules. It was a natural way to become a member of such family, where the role of a woman was to have the family under her care, whereas the father was responsible for providing well for the family members².

The industrial époque significantly influenced the change of the image of the family. The intensity of urbanization and industrialization processes at the turn of 19th and 20th centuries, the intensive geographic mobility of people and the rapid development of science brought about revolutionary economic, social and cultural changes, which subsequently had a direct or indirect impact on the family. Capitalistic industrialization (and in consequence industrial enterprises coming into existence, replacing the pre-industrial family workshops) simultaneously altered the economic basis of family functioning.

These processes are considered to have weakened the former strong and long-lasting family bonds yet the processes are said to have expanded the scope of inter-family freedom, and the grounds for extra-family activities. The newly announced ideas of freedom, democracy and equity left behind the times of pre-industrial families³.

In the face of upcoming changes, the new model of family was created. In the middle of the 20th century the model acquired a new name: "contemporary family model". Zbigniew Tyszką⁴ points to the existence of two lines of the model. The first line encompasses partly-developed countries and is equivalent to the phase of industrial society. The basis of its existence and the most preferable form of functioning is the small (two-generational) family with their own separate flat for living, and running a household. Both the husband and the wife take up work outside home; however it is not an obligatory condition for a wife. The predominance of the non-productive family is noticeable. The relations of family with the local society and as well the community bonds become weaker, which is the reason for the family to be a more and more intimate group, and in huge agglomerations even become anonymous. The value and the meaning of both interactions and expressions of family members are becoming more crucial. The distance between a husband and wife disappears (the relations between the couple are of equal terms), and the diminishing of that distance is visible between parents and children (the relations become more democratic and friendly). The emotional function gains special attention, and the personal bond is more

¹ Z. Tyszką, *Rodzina współczesna – jej geneza i kierunki jej przemian*, [in:] M. Ziemska (ed.), *Rodzina współczesna*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, Warszawa 2001, pp. 194–195.

² M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz, „Święta” rodzina?, „Teraźniejszość – Człowiek – Edukacja” 2000, Numer Specjalny, p. 71.

³ Z. Tyszką, *Rodzina współczesna...*, op. cit., pp. 195–196.

⁴ Ibidem, p. 196.

important than the material one. Still, it is emphasized⁵ that families of this type are more combative, prone to the collapse of the internal structures (currently even more than before), which is due to the increasing liberalization of views on marriage, and family respectively.

Another approach to the contemporary family model reflects socio-economic and political transformations, which had been conducted in the second half of the 20th century within pre-industrial societies. The basis of characteristics of the family model include: the intensification of social mobility, social atomization, radical change of society structure, liberalization in many spheres of social life regulators and a decrease in the degree of its enforcement in the field of morality. The model itself is accompanied by the increase of individuals' autonomy, the development of human freedom ideas, and the self-realization of man, manifested in individual and family lifestyle. The intensified process of gaining autonomy of the individual is perceived to occur in its relation to: (1) the nation; (2) local society; (3) micro-groups and other individuals and (5) one's own family⁶.

In post-industrial époque families, women are more often employed, not only due to economical reasons, but also to satisfy their needs of self-realization. Both women and men enter extra-family environments, extending by the same token their own participation in social life. A relative diminishing of the value of children to their parents, due to competing factors (e.g. employment, self-realization, travelling, aiming at achieving a higher standard of living) is also noticeable. The individualisation of forms of activities within families and members autonomy is also exposed. "Fathers, mothers and children enter separate extra-family environments, which begin to fill the greater part of their lives, make their attempts and emotions personal, and constitute the source of specific, separate experiences- so different for each family member"⁷.

The role of mother and father in the child's life

Many people associate the family house with the oasis of peace and endless love, or "small homeland". Family matters greatly in the child's life. It constitutes the primary environment of the child's broad development; it introduces

⁵ See: Z. Tyszka, *Istotne zmiany w socjalizacji rodzinnej*, „Problemy Rodziny” 2000, № 2–3; Z. Tyszka, *Stan i przeobrażenie rodzin polskich na przełomie XX i XXI w. Niedawna przeszłość i teraźniejszość*, [in:] Idem (ed.), *Współczesne rodziny polskie – ich stan i kierunki przemian*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2001; S. Kawula, *Kształty rodziny współczesnej. Szkice famiologiczne*, Wyd. Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2006.

⁶ Z. Tyszka, *Rodzina w świecie współczesnym – jej znaczenie dla jednostki i społeczeństwa*, [in:] I. Lepalczyk, T. Pilch (ed.), *Pedagogika społeczna*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa 2003.

⁷ Z. Tyszka, *Rodzina w krajach cywilizacji postindustrialnej*, „Problemy Rodziny”..., op. cit., p. 7.

the world of values and social norms, simultaneously teaching the way of functioning in a bigger community, in society. What is taught by the family will stay for the rest of our lives.

The family house is a specific environment of development for all its inhabitants, a child in particular. "For his/her own development, a child needs a friendly environment, facilitating the consolidation of self-identity, and working out his/her own life concept"⁸. Family may both create optimal development conditions for a child, and direct the development inappropriately. Thus the climate within the family, the emotions and social attitudes prevailing in the parent's views, depend solely on the family environment. The way of transferring information to the child, the fact that parents love their child, and the way of introducing the world of values, norms, obligations and prohibitions is introduced to the child⁹.

Parental love ought to be absolute, ubiquitous, and independent of the child's virtues. The need for love, fully satisfied in childhood, provides the possibility of proper functioning in adult life. If the child is to develop properly, he/she has the right to love and be loved¹⁰. Being a parent for the child ought not to be linked only with the fact of giving birth and feeding the offspring, but also being a parent ought to be the process of forming the child's personality through providing the proper physical, moral and spiritual development¹¹. Appropriate interactions between parent and child may be treated as the form of support in development of a certain individual constituting the family community. The family impact on each individual development is immense, and extremely significant. Family is the area of gaining personal experience, which in turn constitutes the basic tools for the mental development of children and adults. If an individual develops within family environment, he/she acquires the paradigms of interpretation and symbolization of the experience, the paradigms of emotional attitudes and valuating. The individual learns social roles, and as well comprehends the basic rules of conduct, internalizing them gradually. Family influences the individual development specifically- through the medium of conscious educational activity. The influence applies to all family members; however it gains special attention in the light of bringing up children. Parents' personality influences the child development in the family in three lines:

⁸ K. Pszczółka, *Uwagi o niektórych problemach współczesnej rodziny*, [in:] W. Korzeniowska, U. Szuścik (ed.), *Rodzina. Historia i współczesność*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2005, p. 438.

⁹ B. Strojjanowska, *Rola rodziny w uczuciowym i społecznym rozwoju dziecka*, [in:] A. Podsiad, A. Szafranśka (ed.), *Spojrzenie na współczesną rodzinę w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Pax, Warszawa 1981.

¹⁰ See E. Jundził, *Rodzina a prawidłowe zaspokajanie potrzeby miłości*, „Problemy Rodziny” 1993, № 4.

¹¹ A. Proniewski, *Rodzina źródłem kapitału ludzkiego*, [in:] M. Przetacznik-Gierowska, M. Tyszkowa (ed.), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka. Zagadnienia ogólne*, vol. 1, PWN, Warszawa 2005.

(1) As a model – through the process of identification and emulation, (2) As a standard carrier, and important factor of consciously created situations and educational influences, and (3) As psychological context of the above mentioned paradigms and educational standards¹².

The role of family in the child's development is immense and irreplaceable by any other social institutions. The strength and the character of its influence stems from certain facts:

- (1) Social influences of parents on children begin in the early period of the child's life, when the child is the most susceptible to such influence,
- (2) Parental influences on children are based on their emotional relationship with the child; the relations are deepened through the fulfilling of the children's needs,
- (3) Parents shape their child intentionally (intentional protective-educational influences) or unintentionally (stemming from mutual emotional relations),
- (4) Parents are the basic personality models for their children, who emulate them both intentionally and unintentionally¹³.

Many authors emphasize the immense meaning of the process of child's identification with his parent¹⁴. While searching for the patterns to emulate, the child directs his activities towards the parents, with whom he strongly identifies. The identification with the parents plays the specific role in the process of shaping the child's personality. In early childhood, both boys and girls associate with the mother, who is the most important thing for them, fulfils all their needs, protects them and teaches the contacts with the closest people around them. In the case of girls, it is the constant phenomenon, whereas boys choose another model of identification with time – namely the father. For a daughter, the father is the model of man, shaping her idea of men in general; their roles towards women, the position in the family, and in society.

Mother

In "The art of loving", Erich Fromm¹⁵ stated: "Mother's love is unconditional affirmation of child's life and his needs. There are two aspects of child's life affirmation: the first is responsibility and care for the child absolutely indispensable to maintaining his life and providing his development. The second

¹² See: M. Przetacznik-Gierowska, M. Tyszkowa (ed.), *Psychologia rozwoju człowieka...*, op. cit.

¹³ J. Brągiel, *Zrozumieć dziecko skrzywdzone*, Uniwersytet Opolski, Opole 1996.

¹⁴ See: J. Baniak, *Rodzina a osobowość dziecka*, „Problemy Rodziny” 1996, № 4; J. Sołowiej, *Identyfikacja dziecka z rodzicami*, [in:] M. Ziemska (ed.), *Rodzina i dziecko*, PWN, Warszawa 1980.

¹⁵ E. Fromm, *O sztuce miłości*, Rebis, Poznań 2006.

reflects matters other than just surviving. It is the attitude, which instils the love of life in the child, and gives the confidence that it is good to live, to be a young boy or girl, to be present in the world¹⁶. The relationship to the father is quite different. Mother is the home we come from, she is nature, soil, the ocean [...]. However, while the father does not represent the natural world, he represents the other pole of human existence: the world of thought, of man-made things, of law and order, of discipline, of travel and adventure. Father is the one who teaches the child, who shows him the road into the world¹⁷ [...] Fatherly love is conditional love. Its principle is: "I love you because you do your duty, because you are like me. In the nature of fatherly love lies the fact that obedience becomes the main virtue, that disobedience is the main sin – and its punishment the withdrawal of fatherly love"¹⁸.

"Mother is warmth, mother is food, mother is the euphoric state of satisfaction and security"¹⁹. The role of the mother in child's life was depicted by many authors. Generally, the mother's role is associated with socially significant and appreciated roles. The terms such as: caretaker of the heart, the guardian of the emotional climate and warmth in family are often used in the literature. The role means bringing up children, taking care of them and housekeeping. To be a mother means a lot more than just to give birth to a child (in the physical sense). Motherhood ought to be perceived more broadly. It is the task for a woman to introduce new generations to the world, both in the physical, mental and in the spiritual sense²⁰.

Mother is the most important person for a child. The contemporary mother is expected to be responsible for the child and his unrestricted development, to be warm-hearted and understanding, and to be emotionally expressive. It is her role to create the emotional, family atmosphere, expressed by understanding and fulfilling others needs, in particular children's needs. Introducing children to the circle of the wider family and tradition rests on the mother's shoulders²¹. It is the mother, who is the support for her child, assuring the possibility of confiding all the joy, sadness and worries, and always offering help and support²². Recently her position has been enriched with her occupational role, outside the family environment, which results in additional responsibility for a woman.

¹⁶ Ibidem, pp. 57–58.

¹⁷ Ibidem, p. 51.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 52.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 48.

²⁰ M. Braun-Galkowska, *Psychologiczna analiza systemów rodzinnych osób zadowolonych i niezadowolonych z małżeństwa*, Towarzystwo Naukowe KUL, Lublin 1992.

²¹ M. Matuszewska, *Funkcjonowanie w rolach rodzicielskich jako źródło rozwoju młodych dorosłych*, [in:] B. Harwas-Napierała, *Rodzina a rozwój człowieka dorosłego*, UAM, Poznań 2003.

²² A. Ratus, *Rodzina – pierwsze ogniwo w społecznym rozwoju dziecka*, „Problemy Rodziny” 1978, № 3.

The unusual role of mother in child's life was often discussed. Mother fulfils the child's needs from the earliest years of life; she bestows her love upon her child, and supports him. As it was pointed by U. Sokal²³, the role of mother is as well to help with shaping child's identity and personality, by forming a constant and stable emotional bond with the child. The lack of a mother or a mother's improperly shaped relations with the child may be the reasons of various disorders.

The lack of an emotional relationship with the mother is significant for the infant in his adult life. The forming of the basic emotional attitude of a child depends on the mother's creation of the emotional climate. The mother is in particular the primary model of the emotional attitude to the surrounding world. Depending on this climate, the world in the future will permanently attract or repulse, "The relationship with the mother is the earliest, both biological and psychological individuality and his primary relations with the surrounding world are developing on the basis of this relationship"²⁴. Mothers have an immense impact on shaping the emotional sphere of their children. Every child needs motherly warmth and love to feel secure. A loving mother gives her sensitivity to the child who may in turn become a loving and caring person, and is able to bestow his love upon other people. Mothers who distance themselves emotionally from their children injure them. Depriving their children of motherly love and care, mothers teach them to treat themselves and other people the way mothers were treated in their childhood.

The times of fluid modernity result in the evolution of the mother's role, which gains new dimensions, and is exposed in various tones. Contemporary women have many models of motherhood to choose from (usually, however, the choice is restricted by the family's economical conditions). They may decide on upbringing and housekeeping (choosing the traditional model). They may as well make an attempt to combine bringing up a child with developing their own hobby, or they may try to combine employment with bringing up a child. Contemporary motherhood is not explicitly joined to the woman's nature and her mission, "destiny" or the innate motherly instinct, since more and more women's behaviours: concerning their return (or not) to work, the method of feeding or the children she might have is the result of women's (and their partners) real choices between many motherhood models²⁵. As noted by Małgorzata Sikorska, the model of "super-mother" begins to vanish, which is the characteristic sign of the contemporary world. In our times, women more often may hear that it is impossible to combine all duties and, what is more, they should not feel guilty

²³ U. Sokal, *Więzi uczuciowe dorosłych dzieci z rodzicami w rodzinach rozwiedzionych*, Wyd. Elbląskiej Uczelni Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej, Elbląg 2005.

²⁴ A. Kępiński, *Lęk*, Wydawnictwo Literackie, Kraków 2007, p. 185.

²⁵ M. Sikorska, *Nowy ojciec, nowa matka, nowe dziecko. O nowym układzie sił w polskiej rodzinie*, Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, Warszawa 2009, pp. 173–176.

about that. Motherhood ought not to be combined with the mission anymore, or with being the “ideal” mother, since such mothers do not exist. The “New” mother has the right to be tired, not to cope with duties, to ask her family for help, and she may be an egoist to a greater extent, than the mother of a dozen or so years ago²⁶.

Father

Having an overview of literature I came to the conclusion, that the role of father has been recognised and emphasized quite recently. For many years, our ideas concerning parenthood were dominated by the mother – child schema, as if fathers were only the context, or in the distant background for those obligations which stem from living in the family. Hence the role of father comes down only to the helping of the shaping of the gender identity of his sons. His influence on daughters and sons in the period of childhood and adolescence was not previously recognised. The significant role of the father in bringing up children has been widely discussed in the recent literature on the subject. The role of man in family life is said to have evolved. Contemporarily, the father is not only family's provider of food and it's brave protector. His active co-participation in the creation of the climate for the family life, supporting his wife in the difficulties of parenthood, is now being appreciated. Father helps his children in creating their character, their value system and in their relations with other people. While only the mother being present in child's life from the moment of his birth directly influences on child's development, the impact of father is a two way impact: a direct relationship with the child, and through the mother and their mutual satisfaction with living together. The degree of the satisfying of the wife's needs by her husband, and the support she gets from her husband has an effect on wife's relationship with the child, forming the feeling of security in the child's perception²⁷. If the mother is happy in her marriage and she feels she is loved, then she will pass on such feelings to her child; when she cries or is overwhelmed with sorrow, anger, or fear, she will “feed” her child with such emotional states.

The role of father is mainly psychologically and socially conditioned. Man is required to conduct family matters consciously and responsibly. In the contemporary the family father is assigned certain roles:

- Father is the family guardian, the care refers to material and moral issues, and father provides security, love, understanding and the help in upbringing;

²⁶ Ibidem, pp. 185–186.

²⁷ See: Cz. Walesa, *Rola ojca w psychicznym rozwoju dziecka. Studia psychologiczne*, [in:] D. Kornas-Biela (ed.), *Oblicza ojcostwa*, KUL, Lublin 2001; U. Sokal, *Więzi uczuciowe dorosłych...*, op. cit.

- Father constitutes the factor which draws the family together in the home through his strong and devoted love;
- Father is the spiritual support of the family and its legislator²⁸.

Fatherly love is the stimulus for further transformations in the child's life; it charts the direction of mental, moral and emotional development. The role of father is associated with authority, requirements, and introducing the child to extra-family world²⁹. Fathers are more engaged in playing with their children than in protection activities, often playing with children in a more physical way – lifting and throwing them in the air, whereas mothers are more likely to have calm, conventional behaviours towards their children. Henceforth, each interaction between the child and the father is innovative, exciting and of strong emotions for the child³⁰. The contemporary father does not limit his role to procreation only, as it was in former days, but he is the complete father – guardian and the tutor for his children³¹. The new model of fatherhood emphasizes that raising the child may be based not only on maintaining discipline, being the judge and lawmaker, but also may be based on treating the child as a partner, helping to understand the world and to find the child's place in the world. Fatherly love is quite different to the unconditional, expecting nothing in return, motherly love. As opposed to motherly love, fatherly love is the driving force of further transformations in child's life, and directs the child towards the external world, the extra-family world connected with mental and moral development. Attentive, educationally active and sensitive to his child's needs, the father becomes the primary teacher, introducing the child to the social world. In the literature on the subject concerning the issues of fatherhood, one may find many authors' statements³² emphasizing the father's presence in the family and its importance both for boys for whom it constitutes the natural model of emulation and also for girls. For the latter, the observation of the father enables them to understand men better and as well their role towards women. The person of the father is necessary for the daughter in order to help her form her own femininity. Positive, warm contacts with father constitute the foundation for her emotional stability and her sense of security³³.

²⁸ M. Kielar, *Rola ojca w wychowaniu dzieci. Stowarzyszenie Obrony Praw Ojca*, [in:] E. Syrek (ed.), *Współczesne zagrożenia w strukturach społecznych*, Wyd. Wieczorek – Press, Katowice 1993.

²⁹ U. Sokal, *Więzi uczuciowe dorosłych...*, op. cit.

³⁰ M. Plopa, *Psychologia rodziny. Teoria i badania*, Wyd. Elbląskiej Uczelni Humanistyczno-Ekonomicznej, Kraków 2005.

³¹ K. Arcimowicz, *Męskość w kulturze współczesnej*, „Małżeństwo i Rodzina” 2004, № 2.

³² See: K. Pospiszyl, *Ojciec a wychowanie dziecka*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa 2007; A. Dudak, *Samotne ojcostwo*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls, Kraków 2006; J. Witczak, *Ojcostwo bez tajemnic*, Instytut Wydawniczy Związków Zawodowych, Warszawa 1987.

³³ L. Walewska, *Znaczenie ojca w kształtowaniu tożsamości płciowej córki*, [in:] D. Opozda (ed.), *Rodzicielstwo. Wybrane zagadnienia kontekstów edukacyjnych*, KUL, Lublin 2007.

Fathers teach and influence their children's development through an example, both consciously presented and through their unconscious behaviours, through direct verbal contact or the lack of it at all³⁴.

Probably most fathers are not aware of how big is their role in their sons' life, just by being with them everyday. Fathers are unusually attractive figures in their son's lives, since fathers are the symbol of what is outside the family home, mysterious, full of pleasure and worldly wonders. It is the father who takes his son to a football match, who goes fishing or camping with the son, presenting the "man's world" of independence and freedom, and enabling the son to go beyond the world of motherly warmth and security. It is the father, who teaches the fair play rules, transfers norms and values, and teaches the distinctions between good from bad deeds. A responsible and mature father is able to transfer it all through the way he interacts with his child, not just by telling the child about the rules. The time spent with the father is an enormous change from the familiar motherly surrounding. A good minder and adviser will accompany his child at every stage of his development, and prepares the child to be able to cope with life difficulties effectively.

Martin Buber³⁵ states that educational programs and ideals fail whenever the person conducting them fails. Children are brought up not via programs or announced ideals, but via "the presence". Only then the maturity of the person who does the raising is exposed, and the responsibility for a child is as well the responsibility for one's own development. Fatherhood does only mean the act of begetting the offspring, since the act itself is not the essence of fatherhood. Its sense is expressed in the eternal responsibility for the child through all the process of the child's development, and requires both being engaged in the child's problems, and keeping their company during moments of joy or sorrow.

"Having a wise father is the priceless investment for a child for the rest of his life"³⁶. In my opinion, most fathers are not even half aware of how important their role is in their children's life. One of the features of fatherhood, evidently different from the motherhood, where mothers by perceiving the child as the part of themselves naturally form their attitude towards the child, is the fact that fathers have to train in the need and the feeling of a close psychic relationship with the child. Such a task, understood and given to a man who is at the same time the father demands an emotional and social maturity from him³⁷. The father is also required to take up an effort of conscious self – work in order to meet certain obligations, and to take responsibility for the small, still defenceless infant, which is expressed in the father's care for the child's development. As it was

³⁴ H.N. Wright, *Tatusiowa córeczka*, Vocatio, Warszawa 1997.

³⁵ M. Buber, *Wychowanie*, Wyd. Znak, Kraków 1968.

³⁶ I. Obuchowska, *Kochać i rozumieć ciąg dalszy*, Media Rodzina, Poznań 2000, p. 56.

³⁷ P. Oleś, M. Oleś, *Z psychologicznych aspektów ojcostwa*, [in:] D. Kornas-Biela (ed.), *Oblicza ojcostwa*, KUL, Lublin 2001.

aptly noticed by J. Witczak “it is much easier to become a father than to be a father”³⁸.

Instead of conclusions

The above considerations undeniably imply that the role of both parents is essential in the proper development of the child’s personality. Closeness, warmth, directness and the intimacy of the parent/child relationship, enable the proper formation of the child’s personality, an individual who is able to love and make warm and permanent contacts with other people. Family is the cradle of personality development of each child born to this world. It is on the foundations of the family that the child is able to form the speech, language, emotions and attitudes towards those closest and the wider world. Family introduces the child to the world of culture and prepares him to the participation in social life.

Parenthood is a more conscious process nowadays. Children are perceived not as “a gift from God”, but rather as “planned or expected children”.

Responsible parenthood means acquiring the skills for the reorientation of the parents’ life, and the effort of self-control and to be on the alert in accompanying the child with his growing up. Active parental presence at every stage of child’s development enables the child to fulfil the requirements/ tasks and attaining the higher level of maturity. Maria Ryś states, that “wisely loving parents make their child feel secure”³⁹, and “wise love” is characterized as respecting child’s rights, treating the child sensibly and appropriately to his age requirements, cooperating with the child and his activities and providing the child with an adequate margin of freedom, accepting the child the way he is, and strengthening his feeling of being loved.

As presented in the article, parents are obliged a lot more than just to welcome the child to this world⁴⁰. Mature parenthood demands patience, engagement, attention but most importantly immense love and devotion which are missing when it comes to contemporary parents “embedded” in “Fast culture”.

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³⁸ J. Witczak, *Ojcostwo bez tajemnic...*, op. cit., p. 26.

³⁹ M. Ryś, *Wpływ dzieciństwa na życie dorosłe*, [in:] T. Rzepecki (ed.), *Studium rodziny*, Oficyna Współczesna, Warszawa 1999, p. 149.

⁴⁰ Kenzaburō Ōe, *Sprawa osobista*, PIW, Warszawa 2005.

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