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AXIOLOGICAL SPHERES OF CHOICE AMONGST EMPLOYEES OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION: PODKARPACIE PROVINCE AS CASE STUDY

The objective of the paper is an attempt to analyse the axonometric spheres of choice by public administration employees, especially in respect of 21st century values. It does seem that the world, including the world of values is subjected to dynamic changes, with the beginning of the 21st century being exemplary. This has not only been due to political transformations in Poland, the tearing down of borders, but also the rapid development of technology and the subsequent availability of opportunities to mankind. The speed of communication and media has changed thus making way for varied opportunities, including their associated threats, unfortunately. Numerous publication point direct fingers on advances and technology as being culprits of the trivialisation of human life. Criticisms of technology that it shallows man and destabilizes his spiritual dimensions is just one of the view-points. Perhaps, it is not enough to talk about advances, but rather change in the sphere of morality.

Keywords: *axiology, ethics, values, public administration.*

Стецько Ю. АКсіОЛОГІЧНА ПЛОЩИНА ВИБОРІВ СЕРЕД ПРАЦІВНИКІВ ДЕРЖАВНОГО АДМІНІСТРАЦІЇ НА ПРИКЛАДІ ГМІН ПІДКАРПАТСЬКОГО ВОЄВОДСТВА

Метою статті є спроба аналізу аксіонормативної площини у виборах осіб, які працюють у сфері державного управління, з особливим акцентом на цінностях XXI століття. Здається, що світ, і світ цінностей також, швидко змінюється, а початок XXI століття є цьому специфічною екземпліфікацією. Це викликано не тільки зміною устрою в Польщі, з відкриттям кордонів, але також з динамічним розвитком техніки, а, отже, й новими можливостями людини. Змінилася швидкість комунікації і носії та засоби масової інформації; з'явилися багатоманітні можливості, але, на жаль, також загрози. Численні публікації прямо вказують на відповідальність поступу і розвитку техніки за баналізацію людського життя. Критика техніки за сплюснення і духовну дестабілізацію людини є лише одним з аспектів. Можливо, в моралі взагалі не можна говорити про поступ, а лише про зміну.

Ключові слова: *аксіологія, цінності, сучасність, поступ, державна адміністрація.*

1. Introduction

The scope and dynamics of change that has taken place over the last few years have resulted in the emergence of new values and challenges in the reality of life we live in, and in consequence our interpersonal relationships. The world seems to have gained in acceleration, while our attempts to catch up have remained unsuccessful as progress gets much faster, technologies much better and gadgets are becoming more efficient. It does seem that our world has for a long time been steadily increasing its acceleration, with no indication of its intent to slow down. This raises such questions as: have humans been keeping up with such changes, have our values as a society changed or have the challenges of the 21st century effected changes in our morality and value systems?. The speed of change of our contemporary world, and in deed its vehemence has become the sign-post of our times. The changes have become so dynamic, that it is becoming increasingly difficult to define the term "contemporary". Attempts are being made to answer the question if the contemporary is the last 100 years as assumed by several philosophers or 30 years as was hitherto defined by generation change or even 10 years is rather too long? On-going changes at each level of life are spectacularly intensive. Modern science, technology and hence modern culture has

undergone extensive modifications. The question that arises is if the said changes will be similarly violent at the axiomatic level. The notion that technology and change in general is accompanied by more evil than good is deeply rooted in philosophy. Platon had observed this prior to the changes. Other philosophers, including Max Schieler, Oswald Spengler, Nicolai Bierdiajew, Jose Ortega y Gasset, Martin Heidegger and Marian Zdziechowski, a Polish philosopher were also sceptical about the revolutionary changes. Relying on the heritage of the aforementioned thinkers, one would have found several critical assessments and convictions denoting that reliance on technology has become a modern religion that is, however, devoid of spirituality and transcendence. However, the prophecies of philosophers predicting the downfall of western civilisations, atrophy of humanistic cultures, and hence a far-reaching crisis of values failed to materialize, fortunately. Technology has developed at a breakneck speed, leading to the question of if we as a society are matured enough for it and if a return to a natural world is ever possible. Lovelock is of the opinion that modern man's entanglement in technosphere is so engulfing that any attempt to disengage him is "as unrealistic as jumping off a boat in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, with the intend to continue swimming with a feeling of lofty independence" [Sorman, 1993]. It,

thus seems that all concepts calling for a return to nature can safely be categorized with fairy tales meant for young readers. How can, however, the overwhelming surrounding technology be assessed and how can the yawning gap between man's creation and his moral abilities be coped with?

2. Values – basic concepts

The concept of values occurs frequently in the terminologies of many scientists. The concept is common among psychologists, anthropologists, financiers, economists, sociologists, and more specifically among philosophers and ethics. Unfortunately, the concept is defined in varied ways by representatives of the various disciplines. The variety of their range and meaning may not only inhibit communication, but also result in numerous misunderstandings. This is not, however, the only area of concern.

Divergences in assessment and definitions do occur also within a single discipline. Due to the sphere and field of these considerations, interests of the authors will mostly center on the philosophical sphere. The concept of value is a relatively young term, as it only dates back to the 19th century. A scientific analysis of the significance of values was undertaken by Rudolf Lotze, who asserted the ethical norms differ from natural ones in that they do not lose their significance, even when they are unattainable. Ancient philosophers had, in earlier times, more often appealed to the concept of „good”. In Socrates terms, it is associated with virtue, which in essence connotes with good and happiness, but for Plato it is the highest principle and for Aristoteles it is a real and attainable goal. Although there was a proposed reference to transcendence in medieval times, it materialized again (resurfaced) in modern times. It does seem worthy, relying on source texts, to mellow the original meaning of the concept. The category of values can be observed in the works of foreign philosophers, but also in publications of Polish school of thoughts like Marian Zdziechowski, Kazimierz Twardowski, Florian Znaniecki, Roman Ingarden, Władysław Tatarkiewicz, Henryk Elzenberg, Józef Tischner, including many others. However, for the needs of this article and research studies conducted, the author would refer solely to the Ingarden's concept as reference point for the studies.

According to Roman Ingarden only humans are capable of discovering values and that relationships are mutual, which is a value constituent of humans. Only humans can create and associate with values. The accomplishment of these values enables one to be his/her real self. Ingarden unequivocally provides, that implementing the ideal of humanity is only possible if expressed as values. “I am a force that survives in adversity, as it is aware and knows that the freedom of its actions in limbo provokes (causes) an aftermath, which if left alone results in burning out. I am a force that strives to be free and would make sacrifices for the existence of its freedom. But the pressure of force from other living entities abounds everywhere, slavery finds this in itself, if it relaxes and effort fails. The freedom will it lose, if it abides by itself. Enduring and being free is only possible, if it voluntarily gives in to creating goodness, beauty and truth. Freedom exists only then.” [Ingarden, 1987]

Ingarden, however, accepts the pluralism of values, claiming the impossibility of bringing several varied values into single category. Contemporary philosophy refers to the discovery of axiological pluralism as a precious trophy as opposed to ancient philosophy, where goodness served as the only level of discussion. Value, according to Ingarden impacts on human beings as a reinforcement as the higher the determination to achieve a given value, the more precious it becomes for man.

Current discourse on values seems definitely more difficult. However, irrespective of the significance being attached to the value concept and how it is classified, it does seem that we always touch on something, which for mankind is most important.

3. Public Administration

Any attempt to define public administration in Poland reveals three main spheres, namely organisational, material and formal spheres. The first of these covers all governmental entities, while the material concerns state activities, whose subject of interest is administrative matters, but the formal sphere covers all activities carried out by government entities [Ochendowski, 2000; Petrecka 2009]. It is worth paying attention to the definition provided by H. Izdebski and M. Kulesza, namely „a collection of activities, tasks and organisational endeavours undertaken and managed to satisfy public interests by varied entities, agencies and institutions in compliance with resolutions and in accordance with law” [Izdebski, Kulesza 1999]. Various criteria can be adopted while defining administration in Poland, namely the scope of activity (central organizations and field offices), scope of authority (decisive and ancillary), and method of subordination (central government and decentralized local government). [Petrecka, 2010]. Nonetheless, irrespective of the adopted definition the 21st century has brought to fore a significant phenomenon involving the transfer of authority from the central government to local municipal administrations. The role of public administration in meeting the collective needs of the society is gaining in significance. Some of the tasks of the state in the respect are being ceded to NGOs and municipal governments, hence the axonometric sphere accompanying Polish local governments seem to be crucial [Petrecka, Pietrzyk, 2013].

4. Results Analysis

The objective of the survey conducted among randomly selected local government employees in Podkarpacie Province was an attempt to specify and evaluate their preferred values. The specificity of the research issue was decisive in the choice of the diagnostic survey as the research method. The research questionnaire technique was aligned with this method.

The research was conducted in 2015 (30 May – 13 June) with 235, aged 27 – 61, respondents participating with the females dominating (59%). No significant differences of opinions were observed between males and female, hence the need for a direct analysis of each group was required. Armed conflicts and terrorist attacks were designated as the greatest threats (75%) of the 21st century, while the economic crisis was placed second (39%) and the scare of cyberterrorism (35%) was next. Environmental and social crisis as well as moral crisis

with 14% and 10% respectively came up at the bottom of the list.

The responses to the next question also deserve special attention. Respondents were asked if the same or different values were preferred in their private and professional life. The responses in this respect were interesting and rather positive. A significant majority (80%) of the respondents identify with same values in both spheres. They were also requested, using close questions to identify the most important values in their lives. The family (65%) turned out to be the most important value for both female and male groups, followed by health (59%), employment (40%), while both love and friendship came in brackets at the fourth position. Surprisingly, “the other person” was tipped as the next value. This type of response was not observed in studies carried out in 2008 and 2014 among the youth [Stecko, 2009,2014]. Subsequent positions were taken by money (29%), awareness of freedom (27%) as well as trust (25%). The trust category only surfaced in catalogues of adored values. Next, on the list was faith (18%) and having good fun (15%). The last positions on the catalogue of values were taken by justice, tolerance and patriotism with about 5%.

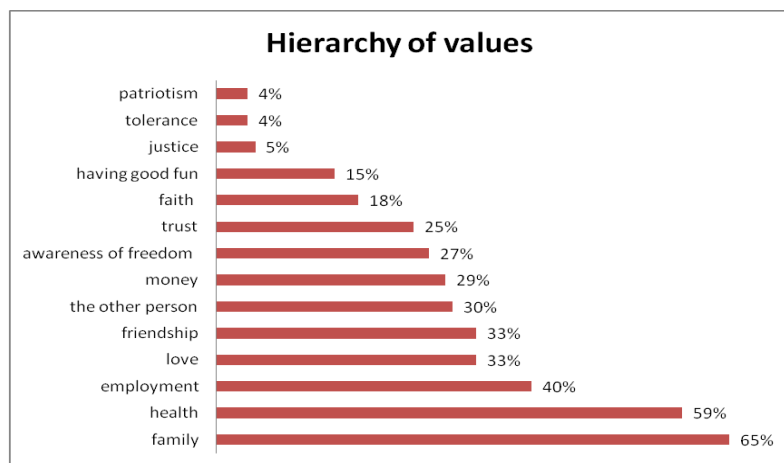
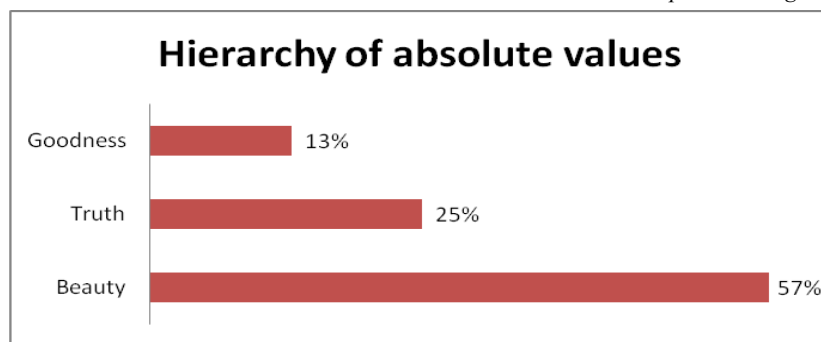


Fig. 1: Hierarchy of values

Source: own design

Interestingly, a large group of the respondents (almost 60% females and 63% males) were of the opinion, that there exist timeless values. When questioned about the triad, the respondents indicated beauty as the most important value, while paradoxically ticking goodness as



the value of least importance in the triad.

Fig. 2: Hierarchy of absolute values

Source: own design

The most important value of the 21st century turned out to be beauty with 57% of respondents, followed by truth (25%) and goodness (13%). The question that arises is what could have led to the erosion of values like goodness and truth. Does contemporary man tend only to efficiency of action packaged aesthetically? Have the values of our ancestors seized to be relevant? Cassandra’s stories of chaos and loss of all values do not seem to be true. It is, however, worthy of note that substantial changes are also taking place in the axonometric sphere. While local government employees from Podkarpacie province have, on the one hand, indicated the family as an important value, they have also rated material value very high.

5. Conclusion

The issue of the individual’s relationship with the society continues to be relevant. The question that easily comes to mind concerns the future of mankind, his position in the newly evolving society as well as on what values and norms will current societal reconstruction be based on. It does seem, however, that Cassandra’s vision of collapse of values that dictate individuals relationship with the community are unnecessary. The research

studies showed that values displayed by employees of public administration were consistent with those they exhibit in their private lives. The value, “the other person”, declared by almost a third of the respondents could, however, raise, albeit moderate optimism.

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