

Przemysław Maj¹

The “Axiological Revolution” in Poland in 2020: ‘Five for Animals’ and the Decision of the Constitutional Tribunal on Abortion – An Attempt at Explaining the Reasons for the Decline in Support for Law and Justice with the Use of a Circular Matrix

Keywords: “five for animals”, Constitutional Tribunal, circular matrix, abortion

Słowa kluczowe: “piątka dla zwierząt”, Trybunał Konstytucyjny, macierz kołowa, kwestia aborcji

Abstract

In 2015–2020, support for the Law and Justice party was to remain stable. In autumn 2020 political decisions were made on issues that polarized public opinion. At the same time, a decline in polling support for the government was observed. The aim of the article is to explain changes in support with the use of a circular matrix.

Streszczenie

Aksjologiczna rewolucja w Polsce w 2020 roku: „piątka dla zwierząt” i decyzja Trybunału Konstytucyjnego w sprawie aborcji – próba wyjaśnienia przyczyn spadku poparcia dla PiS z wykorzystaniem macierzy kołowej

W okresie 2015–2020 poparcie dla partii Prawo i Sprawiedliwość utrzymywało się na stabilnym poziomie. Na jesieni 2020 r. podjęto decyzje w kwestiach, które polaryzowały

¹ ORCID ID: 0000-0002-5151-5464, Assoc. Prof., Department of Political Theory, Institute of Political Sciences, College of Social Sciences University of Rzeszow. E-mail: przemaj@ur.edu.pl.

opinię publiczną. Jednocześnie zaobserwowano spadek poparcia sondażowego dla rządu. Celem artykułu jest wyjaśnienie zmian poparcia dla tego ugrupowania w odniesieniu do macierzy kołowej.

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I. The Circular Matrix as a Method of Evaluation of Politics

The matrix of meta-values is a method of evaluating political values, created on the basis of the adaptation of the Shalom H. Schwartz value theory (SVT)². Explaining the assumptions of the postulated method requires, first of all, defining the concept of meta-value.

1. Values that are present in the public sphere (in party manifestos, platforms, political debates, declarations, and decisions) will be referred to as meta-values. These types of axioms can be characterized as follows:

2. Meta-values are political axioms of society, developed within a particular civilization³. They can be arranged within the four main types (*self-enhancement-self-transcendence* and *conservation-openness to change*) according with the rules of compliance and conflict⁴. It means, that the structure of basic human values constrains the content and structure of meta-values. That is, for each region of the Schwartz circumplex, there are a corresponding set of political meta-values that are consistent with the values that define that region.

3. Axiological conflicts in democracy result from meta-values antinomy, during the French Revolution these values were given the labels of “leftist”

² S.H. Schwartz, *Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries*, [in:] *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, ed. M.P. Zanna, New York 1992, pp. 1–65.

³ P. Maj, *Lewicowość, centrowość i prawicowość w nauce o polityce*, Rzeszów 2019, pp. 143–146.

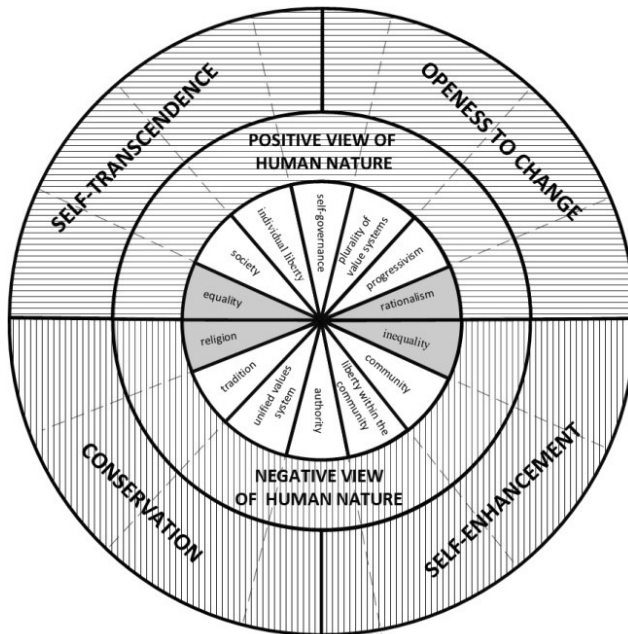
⁴ Correlations between basic human values at the individual and country level have been demonstrated in psychological research by R. Fischer, M. Vauclair, A.M. Fontain, S.H. Schwartz, *Are Individual-Level and Country-Level Value Structures Different? Testing Hofstede's Legacy with the Schwartz Value Survey*, “*Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*” 2010, vol. 41, No. 2, pp. 135–151.

and “rightist”. The sources of these conflicts lie in the contradictory array of basic values described by Schwartz.

According to Figure 1 *Circular Structure of Meta-values*, the north side of the model is intended for leftist axioms. Leftism is determined by seven meta-values: *equality, society, individual liberty, self-governance, plurality of value systems, progressivism* and *rationalism*. The names distinguished are contractual, while their meaning is crucial, setting political motivational goals at the state level. The basic meaning of these meta-values is as follows⁵:

The axiom of *equality* with its economic, political and social dimension becomes a foundation of social programme and proposals for limiting various privileges. *Equality* is justified by justice, which has a social and distributive reference, it is anchored in a group of *self-transcendence* values and oriented toward others (the weak, the discriminated).

Figure 1. Circular Structure of the Meta-Values



Source: own research.

⁵ For the extended meaning of the meta-values. P. Maj, op.cit., pp. 155–197.

Universalism and going beyond state boundaries are characteristic to *society*. This vision assumes equal and free individuals who are socially and politically active. Belonging to *society* is subjective (the decisive factor is the subject's sense of belonging). Meeting formal requirements permits an individual to become an equal member of a society (e.g. by obtaining citizenship).

Individual liberty has the broadest possible context; citizens enjoy an extensive catalog of rights, including personal and decision-making ones. Restrictions of *individual liberty* are imposed according with Kant's categorical imperative. In simple terms, its content is as follows: we should respect such standards that we would like to be applied to anyone and anytime⁶.

Self-governance intends to democratize hierarchical structures. The state exists for citizens and is emanation of their will. It is desirable that decisions are made directly by the governed or at the lowest possible representative levels.

Plurality of value systems is the desire to have world free from top-down moral commands or authorities. Practically, it objects to political pursuit to establish the one and only value system. Therefore, *plurality of value systems* is a state in which many different value systems operate freely in the public sphere, and state institutions recognize them as equal, not favoring or discriminating against any of them.

The meta-value of *progressivism* is rooted in the belief in inevitable development, civilization, technology and economic progress. *Progressivism* strives to "liberate man from the embarrassing corset of traditions, customs, imposed obligations and, as a result, to expand the area of individual freedom"⁷.

Rationalism is the pursuit to secularize not only state institutions, but generally public sphere. It is based on the assumption that there are no supernatural events or processes, reality can only be explained in relation to scientific knowledge; religion is citizens' private matter and as such should not interfere with public sphere in any way.

The southern side of the model includes such domains as self-enhancement and conservation and in politics is utilized by rightist *inequality, community, liberty within the community, authority, unified values system, tradition and religion*.

⁶ M.G. Singer, *The Categorical Imperative*, "The Philosophical Review" 1954, No. 63(4), pp. 577–591.

⁷ J. Reykowski, *Trzecia Rzeczpospolita a lewica*, [in:] *Projekt dla Polski. Perspektywa lewicowa*, ed. J. Reykowski, Warsaw 2011, p. 47.

Inequality assumes the differences between people are natural and result from the individual characteristics and one’s social competences and position. People are considered unique, while differences that occur are a prerequisite for individual and social development. It results in hierarchization of society, considered natural and desirable.

Community is understood as a historically shaped, cultural ethnic group (nation)⁸. Organicism and anti-egalitarianism (elitism) are the keys to its interpretation. The goals of *community* are opposed to the liberal concept of the autonomy of the individual presented in the meta-value of *society*.

Liberty within the community is not absolute, it is limited by the participation of an individual in a group. The community determines the scope of liberty, creating moral norms regulating its members conduct. The starting point is the *negative view of human nature*, on the basis of which certain restrictions are imposed on the individual in advance. They can be reduced only if it is certain that this will not result in social disorder⁹.

Meta-value of *authority* is based on a centralized vision of human relations. *Authority* is not (as in the case of the left) means to implement the principle of equality and social justice, but “serves to command and influence”¹⁰. The state authority should be strong and efficient.

The right strives for a *unified values system*. It is assumed that the existence of a common axiological denominator is beneficial for the community (nation). Therefore, in the public sphere, axioms constructed through historical experience, considered as characteristic for a given community, are highly valued. One specific axiological system is clearly indicated.

In Western civilization, the meta-value of *religion* covers various variants of Christianity. Religion is an element of the natural order, a source of hierarchy of values, and is also in the public sphere. The right-wing attempts to preserve the presence of religion in both private and public spheres.

⁸ The proposed name of the meta-value being opposite to leftist *society*, is a *community*. It must be presumed that this term will cover both the idea of a nation in nationalism, as well as conservative organicism and anti-egalitarianism.

⁹ D. Wendelken, *Contemporary Conservatism, Human Nature, and Identity: The Philosophy of Roger Scruton*, “Politics” 1996, vol. 16, No. 1, pp. 17–22.

¹⁰ R. Scruton, *Co znaczy konserwatyzm?*, Poznań 2002, p. 37.

Tradition is understood as attachment to the natural order, heritage, care for the historical memory of the community; its two varieties are distinguished¹¹. The first one, inspired by Edmund Burke's views, is based on a philosophy of change as similar as possible to the previous state and leads to the preservation of reality. The second one, in line with Louis de Bonald's (or Joseph de Maistre's) ideas, aims at restoring order considered natural and eternal, which sometimes requires a change in the current state (its restitution, restoration).

The conflict rule in the matrix leads to the distinction of seven pairs of values and their opposites. These are the following dichotomies: *equality-inequality*, *society-community*, *individual liberty-liberty within the community*, *self-governance-authority*, *plurality of value systems-unified values system*, *rationalism-religion and progressivism-tradition*.

The compliance rule, on the other hand, means that neighboring values are close to each other. For instance, *tradition* – the right-wing value – is close to *unified values system* and *religion*. In turn, *authority* is more similar to *community* than *equality* lying in the northern part. The matrix has the character of a circular continuum – the more distant the meta-values are, the greater the differences between them.

On the border of the northern and southern part of the model, tangential meta values can be found. These are axioms belonging to different types, but at the same time similar to each other. In the eastern part, these types of values are *rationalism* and *inequality*, and in the western part *religion* and *equality*. In politics, the axioms of the tangent areas are borrowed both by entities self-identifying with the left and the right. They form an axiological buffer separating two types of worldviews – leftist, constructed within the types of *self-transcendence* and *openness to change* and right-wing, shaped within the types of *self-enhancement* and *conservation*.

An element of the matrix is the antinomial views of human nature (the concept of man) that function in politics and philosophy. From the perspective of the model, they are intended to justify preferences toward the northern (left-wing) or southern (right-wing) meta-values¹².

¹¹ W.J. Reedy, *Burke and Bonald: Paradigms of Late Eighteenth-Century Conservatism*, "Historical Reflections/Réflexions Historiques" 1981, No. 2, pp. 69–93.

¹² P. Maj, *op.cit.*, pp. 149–150.

The distinguished northern and southern meta-values have a circular structure, while analyzed in antinomial pairs form a linear continuum. This allows to identify the centrist values, which are constructed in reference to seven pairs of meta-values. Centrist axioms are intended to decrease the political conflicts arising from the antinomy of the value system. They always have a derivative character and often take the form of a compromise.

II. “Axiological Revolution” in Poland in 2020 – An Attempt at Explaining the Reasons for the Decline in Support for Law and Justice

It must be assumed that voters support those parties that match their values and interests. Law and Justice is a party seen as one that declares its attachment to the southern meta-values, located within the types of *conservation – self-enhancement* and (in the social dimension) to the northern *equality* that we find within the group of *self-transcendence*. In politics, this set of values is emphasized by the Christian democratic parties.

The year 2020 brought quite unexpected axiological changes, some of which resulted from political decisions related to the pandemic and some of which were initiated by those in power in a controlled manner.

The attempt at pushing through a bill called the “five for animals”¹³ must be interpreted as a turn toward values within the *self-transcendence* type. In concrete terms, this is an exceedance of the sense of *equality* accepted by Christian democracy. *Equality* in the context of the animal world is emphasized by ecological groups. Those subjects declare values contrary to the right-wing ones – located within the types of *openness to change* and *self-transcendence*.

The Law and Justice party until 2020 emphasized in its agendas the social dimension of *equality*. In the case of the aforementioned bill, the meaning of this meta-value was extended – in the way presented in politics by the greens. This kind of re-evaluation was an “axiological revolution” for some voters and party members, causing a serious internal crisis in the party and to some extent – decreases in the polls.

¹³ *Poselski projekt ustawy o zmianie ustawy o ochronie zwierząt oraz niektórych innych ustaw*, Print No. 597, Warsaw, 11 September 2020, <https://www.sejm.gov.pl> (15.09.2020).

At the level of social values, this could not have led to support being maintained by the ruling party, because surveys on social attitudes toward abortion show a clear polarization. The division into two blocks was noticeable in CBOS surveys conducted regularly between 1992 and 2016¹⁶. In December 2019, in a survey of the IBRiS conducted for Rzeczpospolita, 49.9% of respondents were in favor of maintaining the so-called abortion compromise¹⁷. As can be seen, the Tribunal’s decision could not be accepted by about 50% of the public and led to protests and public disapproval and, indirectly, to a significant drop of support for PiS¹⁸.

III. Conclusion

The fall in support for Law and Justice in the autumn of 2020 was primarily a consequence of the “axiological revolution” – the ‘five for animals’ project and the Tribunal’s decision on abortion. The first project, probably designed to attract moderate voters who prefer values within the type of *self-transcendence*, resulted in a breakdown in support for a group of their own voters in rural areas (who prefer meta-values within the *self-enhancement* type). The verdict of a formally independent Tribunal was politically attributed to PiS, which meant further losses – this time in the segment of voters preferring centrist values. It is difficult to associate these losses with the coronavirus pandemic, because until September 2020, Law and Justice maintained stable support, in the meantime winning the presidential elections.

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¹⁶ *Opinie o dopuszczalności aborcji*, CBOS research report, 2016 No. 51, pp. 1–10. <https://www.cbos.pl> (12.10.2020).

¹⁷ *Sondaż: Polacy nie chcą adopcji dzieci przez pary jednopłciowe*, <https://www.rp.pl> (19.09.2020).

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