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Printed in May 2016 by Editografica • Bologna (Italy)

ISBN 978-88-7587-731-6

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The European Union and crisis of values

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Abstract

The paper is written from the normative perspectives. The author tries to convince that the crisis of values is a key issue and a source of crisis that affects the European Union. He treats the European Union as an autotelic and existential value as well as a political structure and community based on fundamental and universal values, especially on the norm of solidarity. The author believes that bureaucratized and technocratic structure does not present the spirit of European integration. The expansion of the bureaucratic structures devaluated a system of elementary values. They were substituted by practices of functioning of European institution based on principles of bureaucratic effectiveness and legalism which lead to overgrowth of legal regulations as well as excessive number of documents. However, the governments of nation-states are mainly responsible for the crisis of values. The solidarity became a slogan and stopped being a moral imperative. European common good has been exchanged for a sum of national egoisms. In the face of a world economic and political crisis as well as real but current interests, so-called political realism used to win with long-term policy based on the values. Summarizing the paper, the author convinces that the return to the fundamental values can be a rescue for the European Union and in general for the integration project.

Keywords: values, the European Union, crisis, axiology

1 Introduction – methodological remarks

The paper is written from a normative perspective. That is why it is not free from prescriptive assumptions. Taking a positivist perspective social and political sciences cut from a normativism off. However, thanks to John Rawls and his work *Theory of Justice* the normative approach had an own revival in the early 70ths. But it did not become a research and analytic paradigm dominating in social sciences. It was a role of positivism and later neopositivism. Today we can find many stereotypes and prejudices pertain to the normativism. They are very often an expression of shortcuts in a perception of the political and international reality as well as science and its elementary functions. But it is hard to imagine reliable researches of democracy, civic society or human rights without reference to the normative order nor simply literature dedicated to normative issues. Politics more than each other sphere touches normative issues and ideas constituting reality. Analysing the political reality we cannot avoid a referring to these ideas. Generally, empirical researches very often confront an ideal state with reality. But of course the constructing of the ideal state is not a subject of empirical sciences. It is a field for normative oriented theories, among them also for normative political theory. Normative approach is also present in theory of international relations. Thanks to Charles Bietz it got out of the impasse that was a result of so-called behavioralistic revolution.

We have to distinguish the normative approach from the metanormative one. In the second case we can talk about either philosophy of normative theories or oftener about their historiography. We should not also mix both approaches – I am talking about normative and metanormative – with sociology of morality or anthropology of values. They are empirical sciences which research norms and values appearing in the particular human groups. Their science-creating question is typical for empirical sciences. They do not quest about obligations. My aim is a normative reflection about the current state of European values which became a moral and functional foundation of the European Union. Despite that, I refer to current facts of European reality, my considerations are not focused on researches dedicated to the perceptions of values in European societies – it is a task of sociology of morality. I would like rather to present an essence of the European system of values and its importance for the European Union. Those considerations have a normative character.

I am formulating here a hypothesis that the constitutive issue and primal source of all crises affecting currently the European Union is essentially a crisis of values. Abandoning the values which are fundamental for the European Union and generally for European civilization, especially in functional dimension, bears serious consequences for that supranational political structure. The problem is strengthened by increasing antinomy in

the system of European values. This situation can contribute to the disintegration or marginalization of the European Union as a subject of international relations. In this brief paper I will be able at most to draw the issue; it is rather a contribution to the further, deeper discussion than a comprehensive analysis of the problem of values in the European Union.

Speaking about the values which are fundamental for the European Union, I do not mean values which originated from the whole richness of traditions of European civilization [1]. However, surely I directly refer to them. I do not speak also about values of Europeans, but of course as Shalom H. Schwartz's research team individual values give coherence to political values [2]. I am aware that the system of political values in Europe and finally the form of social and political relations as well as the future of political structures like nation state and the European Union depends largely on values of Europeans. I mainly mean constitutional values which are a base for the European Union as a supranational institution as well as a social and political community. They are defined in main documents of the European Union, among them in Lisbon Treaty [3]. Solidarity is particularly essential for my considerations. It is a basic value and norm which regulates relations between states – members of the European Union. My attention will be focused mainly on the solidarity in further part of the paper. Furthermore, the European Union can be also, especially in objective approach, treated as the value and in its autotelic form.

2 Why are values so important?

The term of value is ambiguous [4]. We have a dilemma pertain to determination of character of values in axiology. We can find two approaches: objectivism and subjectivism. The first one sees value in objects and in phenomenon independently from a subjective perception. While the second position pays attention to a subjective side, treating a subject as a creator of values. Intermediate standpoint concerns an object – particular phenomenon, fact, institution or attitude as well as a subject and his/her perception of the object. I think that that this approach can be treated as pivotal. We find here simultaneously the object that is transcendent in relation to the subject and the subject valuating the object. The subject gives the objective phenomenon a particular value. In this case objects are interiorized by the subject. However, a valuation does not exist in isolation from the objective state which is a starting point. But finally the subject values or prioritizes. I understand the term of political values in a wide meaning. They are objectified normative patterns of political and institutional order as well as criteria of choice of needs and interests in the political sphere [5]. They are also objectively existing social and political structures which are objects of valuations and identification.

In the above mentioned understating of political values, we can assume that values of the European Union are peculiar norms (standards) of behaviour of institutional subjects and individuals. We can search their sources in tradition – European tradition or traditions as well as in documents establishing the European Communities and the European Union and also in programs of European organizations and agendas, e.g. in European federations of parties. They are indeed instrumental values. The European Union as an objective existing political structure being an object of valuation and identification can be treated as an autotelic value. The place of the European Union and instrumental values (norms) which aim is to support autotelic value or in plural values (the European Union, state, nation, global or local community, family, individual) in the hierarchy of values depends on subjects who assign a specific value to particular beings, phenomenon or attitudes. Why is issue of values so important? In my opinion, values are so important because we permanently consciously or unconsciously use valuation in our life, in social, political and cultural choices. Value can be treated by social researchers as an elementary analytical category. It is something like elementary particle in physics. This category can be useful in analyzing of real political life as well as on the ground of normativism. Location in system of values will be crucial for a quality of social relations and finally will decide about existence of political and social structures. In other words, our values, its hierarchy, decide about a form of social relations. And regarding political subjects, we can say that their future depends on our valuation and evaluation.

3 Values of the European Union

Values have an essential meaning for the European Union [6]. Respect for the values is a condition to access a candidate state to the European Union [7]. In documents of the European People's Party we can find that the European Union is determined as a *community of values* or as a *union of values* [8]. Fundamental values of the European Union are sometimes treated as base of its *normative power* [9]. Because of a short character of this paper I will refer only to treaties establishing the European Communities and the European Union. They indirectly point a direction of policy of the European Union indicating the values which frame this policy. The catalogue of values of the European Union was defined in the first article of The Lisbon Treaty:

The Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common

to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, equality between women and men prevail.

In the article no. 2 the Treaty states that *The Union's aim is being of its peoples*. An existence of the European Union can be co-responsible for the peace and welfare of nations belonging to its structure, these values which are fundamental for the Union. Czesław Maj, the existence is a necessary condition for significance of other values definition, valuation of other norms and values [10]. Although the European Union established for a realization of its egoistic interest called *reason of state*, but saving of peace and well-being in its territory.

As I said above, I would like to pay special attention to the solidarity aspect. It is this value in which the sense of existence of the European Union as a political entity. Solidarity for the European Union is not only an instrumental and co-existential value, but also an existential one. The European Union cannot exist without the solidarity. Of course, for the member states, the solidarity can be treated firstly as the co-existential value. It is essential for them, because in the world of interdependences, any European state cannot live as an autonomous entity, it interacts with other actors, so the solidarity as a mutual bond and obligation is a rational choice. But when we analyse the issue from the side of the European Union as an entirety we see base of its functionality in the solidarity.

We can find references to the European solidarity in many documents. Treaties establishing the European Community of Coal and Steel as well as the European Economic Community mentioned about the solidarity as a base of relations between member states. Treaties from Maastricht and Amsterdam indirectly expressed this principle. Also so-called Constitutional Treaty that was not implemented because of well known causes mentioned about the solidarity many times. We can find references to the solidarity in valid Treaty of Lisbon where this value is repeatedly called. I would like to focus on this document. The solidarity is generally treated as an instrumental value. The European Union, supporting a *peace, its values and well-being* of its nations, contributes – as the article no. 3 says – the solidarity between member states. The European Union obliges itself, what is important in the context of international situation, to act for a support of world community. However, the European Union's priority is its own good and good of its citizens. In the 5 point of the article no. 2 we read:

In its relations with the wider world, the Union shall uphold and promote its values and interests and contribute to the protection of its citizens. It shall contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.

In the point 2 of the article no. 10c, the solidarity is directly referred to the issue of security what is especially important in current international situation:

Within the framework of the principles and objectives of its external action, the Union shall conduct, define and implement a common foreign and security policy, based on the development of mutual political solidarity among Member States, the identification of questions of general interest and the achievement of an ever-increasing degree of convergence of Member States' actions.

And what is important in the context of crisis with refugees we will find in the article no. 61:

It shall ensure the absence of internal border controls for persons and shall frame a common policy on asylum, immigration and external border control, based on solidarity between Member States, which is fair towards third-country nationals. For the purpose of this Title, stateless persons shall be treated as third-country nationals.

I think that the article no. 176a concerning solidarity in the field of the energy is also worth being quoted:

In the context of the establishment and functioning of the internal market and with regard for the need to preserve and improve the environment, Union policy on energy shall aim, in a spirit of solidarity between Member States, to:

(a) *ensure the functioning of the energy market;*

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(b) promote energy and security of energy
(c) ensure security of energy
(d) promote energy and security of energy
(e) ensure security of energy

- (b) ensure security of energy supply in the Union; and
- (c) promote energy efficiency and energy saving and the development of new and renewable forms of energy; and
- (d) promote the interconnection of energy networks.

In other place of the Treaty (article 188 r.) we find so-called *solidarity clause* that concerns natural or man-made disasters as well as terrorist attacks. This article obliges member states to assist mutually in the case of these kinds of events.

Obviously, not only solidarity is a value promoted by the European Union. The catalogue of values which I mentioned above – is longer. We cannot forget about democracy, human rights or justice. But in my opinion any other value is not as important for the existence of the European Union as the solidarity. Briefly speaking, it is a *conditio sine qua non* of the European Union. The solidarity is an engine of the European Union.

4 European crisis of values and its consequences for the European Union

Wayne Baker in his work dedicated to the crisis of values in the USA distinguishes both categories: „American crisis of values” and „crisis of American values”. In the first case we would rather talk about the perception of the crisis by Americans. This crisis does not have to exist in the world of values; it is only said as existing by the part of society. The second one touches the essence of the values, revealing for instance internal inconsistencies of axiological system. W. Baker is rather interested in the first category, i.e. in crisis of values in America [11]. Many authors point to postmodernism as a source of the crisis. It relativizes absolute values, authorities and objective truth [12]. In the case of the European Union, the crisis is not only associated with perceptions of Europeans but it has deeper roots. It is in fact a structural crisis consisting of dichotomy between values of the European Union being a social, political as well as administrative structure and particular interests of member states.

Contemporary bureaucratic and technocratic structure does not express the spirit of European integration. Bureaucratization of the European Union is accompanied by not only deficit of democracy but also deficit of constitutive values which became foundations of the European Communities and the European Union. The development of bureaucratic structures devaluated the fundamental values. In functional practice of European institutions they are substituted by principles of bureaucratic effectiveness and legalism which led to increasing of legal regulations and production of excessive number of documents (reports, rules, recommendations etc.). European integration lost its dynamic and logic. The bureaucratic European Union, because of low level of political effectiveness and decisional insufficiency, is not able to response for challenges of international reality. I presume that leaving from the European values – not in declarative but rather in functional dimension – can be a source of deficit of trust to the European Union. It is a subject of attacks of national egoisms, populists and anti-integration attitudes. But it is not only a fault of European bureaucracy. Governments of member states are mainly responsible for this situation. They built this European bureaucratic structure and they make politics that often undermines European values what is more important and dangerous for European integration. The case of relocations of refugees can be its exemplification. But it is not only characteristic for countries belong to so-called “new Europe” or traditionally euro-skeptical Great Britain. The attitude toward the values and especially toward solidarity reveals true intentions of governments and often hypocrisies of states of “new” as well as “old” Europe. The solidarity seems to be only a slogan and stopped being a moral imperative. European common good has been exchanged into sum of national egoisms. In the face of world economic and political crisis as well as real however short-tem benefits, so-called political realism wins with long-term policy based on values.

European security is an important issue that can accompany considerations dedicated to the solidarity. How does the crisis of values, in fact crisis of solidarity as a constitutive value, influence on the European security? Security belongs to the category of so-called existential values. So, it is a component of existence of states, social groups or individuals but also supranational structures such as the European Union. We can treat the European solidarity as an instrumental and co-existential value as well as an existential value for the European Union as an entirety. As co-existential value the solidarity is a condition of security, because existential values cannot be fully implemented without co-existential values. Achievement and realization of security of European state that is an existential value depend on other actors as well as level of adaptation of the state to the European and international reality; *de facto* it can be fully obtain only in condition of European solidarity. Financial crisis in the southern countries but also conflict of energy interest as well as the last crisis that is really humanitarian and security one connected with wave of illegal immigration show us a scale of mutual bonds and independences; simultaneously they show the strong dichotomy between declared values and their realization in real European relations.

The issue which has to be mentioned here is also an increasing of populist, anti-democratic and nationalist attitudes in European countries, not only in Central and Easter Europe but in the Western Europe as well. This tendency undermines other values of the European Union, i.e. democracy, tolerance, non-

discrimination of minorities and human rights. But it also strengthens polarization inside the European Union. In fact it undermines a principle of solidarity that is why it threatens an existence of the European Union.

5 Conclusions

It is fact that the European Union is in the crisis. Perhaps it can be the most serious crisis in the history of European integration. The economic crisis in 2008 was its signal [13]. The return to the fundamental values can be a rescue for the European Union and the project of European integration. But it needs also institutional changes. In my opinion it needs realization of the "frozen" federal project and democratization of the European Union. However, federalism should be treated as anachronism in postmodern world. It is term from the industrial epoch. If we say about federalism, we should think about its new formula. The project does not mean a centralization of power (federations were built on ruins of confederations and decentralized empires in industrial world) but it would have to support deconcentration of power [14]. Nation states are rather durable element of the European political landscape and classical federation would mean their disassembly. The new formula of federalization would bind both kinds of elements: characteristic for traditional federations – deepened integration as well as for confederations – the member states would save their subjectivity in international law and relations. The European Union does not need more bureaucracy but it needs an effective and efficient management in the range of supranational competences and a strong social legitimacy. In this point I agree with Lech Zielonka although he goes further. He is seemed to bury the European Union as a political project, substituting it a functional European nets. In the frame of these nets the concrete supranational tasks would be realized. But in fact it means the end of the European Union as indicates the title of book by Zielona [15]. However the nets will not create a common good that would be a priority over national interests; nets would be rather unions of common interests. Bonds between states will have only instrumental character. It will not guarantee neither balance among European states, nor a respect for such values as justice and solidarity. In the changing international reality states will be only guided by short-term national interest; alliances will be based on community of interest. Their stability and durability will depend on convergence of these interests. In the short time this situation can lead to anarchy of European system and be a cause of conflicts, maybe even of wars in Europe. The European Union fulfilling principles of solidarity, justice democracy and human rights is a real guarantor of the stable peace in Europe. The European Union as an entirety should be involved in external relations and in this way it would protect interests of all member state. The European Union could stop tendency to impose a particular narration of any member state. That is why the European Union should be strengthened, especially in aspect of its international subjectivity.

The European Union needs a change of mentality of decision makers from the member states. They should stop enhancing populist tendencies in their states. They should also realize the meaning such European values as solidarity, subsidiarity, European common good as well as freedom in the European space. More than decade ago European People's Party declared its will to build European community of values. It is time to make this declaration true in relations between European relations. We would have to redefine the conception of European parties. They should become civic movements engaging individuals in the integration project. People should be fully aware their European citizenship and its consequences as well as be active part of European political system, not only as voters but as real creator of European reality.

Summarizing we can say that the European Union of values is essentially the project of deeper integration. The solidarity should remain a pivotal and constitutive value. In 1981 Józef Tischner, the great Polish philosopher, published his work entitled *Etyka solidarności (The Ethics of Solidarity)*. He stated there that: *When politics is a good one, it has to be fulfilled by the spirit of the solidarity* [16]. This statement concerned internal politics in Poland during so-called festival of Solidarity but we can refer it also to the supranational politics. So, a good European politics should be based on solidarity as a basic value.

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