

INTRODUCTORY ARTICLE

VALUE ORDER DECOMPOSITION AS AN EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGE

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ABSTRACT

The turn of the 20th and 21st centuries brought numerous social changes related to value order and human perception of its different elements. Changes, in turn, brought new sentiments, fear, and attempts to hitherto prevailing rules. Access to the Internet and various modern technologies has enabled clashes to shift to a digital dimension, providing opportunities to learn about cultures that arrive infrequently and instilling a sense of danger. Among the information available on the Internet, disinformation has also become common, fuelling uncertainty and doubts, and also increasing hatred. According to some parts of society, their traditional values and culture are especially at risk. This chaos, human emotions, insufficient civic education and lack of critical thinking are used by politicians to spread their propaganda and hatred towards “others” and oppositionists, which automatically become enemies. All the authorities became undermined, which worked their way up to it to varying degrees. Society, in its choices, loses rationality; it becomes clear that there is a lack of media awareness, as well as a need to develop informal education fairly.

Keywords: civic education, cultural change, community involvement

INTRODUCTION

Educational systems and processes can be analysed on two levels. One of them is solutions in terms of procedures, technologies, practices, *pedagogia*. The second, is a general orientation towards value order, indicating development ways of societies and frames of possible social activity – cultural basis. Value order implies social order. Held values are translated into norms and concrete actions (Burszta, 1998), including the shape of pedagogical ideas, parenting styles and educational practices (Alam, 2025a; Beg et al., 2025). In any case, pedagogues do not have any doubts that concrete educational activities must always be embedded in an accepted cultural value order of a particular society, in which schools operate (Adamczyk & Ładyżyński, 1999).

The turn of the 20th and 21st centuries brought clear doubt in a values system, which until that time had been relatively stable in Western civilisation. By convention, the turn of the century can be established as the beginning of a new era, involving the decomposition of Western world values; however, this process is complex and was induced by multiple events, the implications of which we are not able to predict yet (Alam et al., 2025). We are in the process, which is not yet complete and might bring the exposure of the new order as well as annihilation of humanity.

NEW HISTORIOSOPHY

Historiosophical and quasi-historiosophical works in the 20th century were focused on attempts to identify the development specificity of the greatest civilisations, as in the case of work by Feliks Koneczny (1935), written back in 1906, and then on defining the reasons of conflicts between the great value orders, on which were built the dominant cultural systems. Samuel P. Huntington drew attention to conflicts between the great civilisations (1997), which manifest in wars over territories at their junction. In a similar way, i.e., based on a territory, like one of the defining criteria of cultural identity, others refer to historiosophy, among others, Hamish McRae (1996), Benjamin R. Barber (1995) or Francis Fukuyama (1993). The last of the mentioned authors even announced the end of history, from which he later had to explain himself, since the development of political systems progressed in an unobvious way.

Simultaneously, the 20th century is the beginning of a renewed perspective on relations between identity, values and territory. On the one hand, we deal with analyses of decay factors, chaos, decomposition and diversification in the postmodern perspective (Baran, 2003), on the other hand, Manuel Castells (2000) forces the conception of separating identity from such categories as territory or physical space.

The Internet has enabled the rapid dissemination of information and the mixing of values from different cultural orders. Since then, it is no longer possible to speak about a civilisation clash in such a sense as described by Huntington, even

though conflicts over territory continue. The internet has indeed ushered in a new era, in which battles and wars could be held online, in virtual space (Ahmad et al., 2025). However, the technological matrix itself, its availability, has not been sufficient for the escalation of conflicts. Digital tools have become the new means to achieve both new and old goals (Alam, 2025b), and concerns related to the inappropriate use of information and technologies are becoming increasingly justified. All the more – the more develops the market, which manipulates data (Harari, 2024). From reflections on the possibilities and limitations of information manipulation aimed at disorientation and crumbling value systems, the new historiosophy begins, based on analysis of network relations and impacts in virtual space.

VALUE CHAOS AND TWO ORDERS AFTER THE END OF HISTORY

In the infosphere, the turn of the century brought increased interest in specific cultural practices, which in traditional society, based on traditional values, could (and can) seem strange or even shocking. Cultural studies in Western world societies have increasingly begun to undertake research on research problems, which have finally found an independent place, foremost in the awareness of residents of metropolitan civilisations: feminism, non-heteronormativity, and climate change. In Zbigniew Bauman's (1987) understanding, for well-educated "translators", oriented in a contemporary world, such scientific interests seem to be something natural, as it is for scientific elites, yet for people immersed in the world of scientific values and stable societies, in which time rhythm is much slower, such problematics may seem too remote from their everyday life.

In the real world, the inflow of immigrants (sometimes from distant cultures) and in the digital world, the inflow of information, knowledge and values could disrupt the sense of safety in traditional societies in the Western world. For cultural centres, such a type of transformation did not really matter since they were a natural consequence of civilisational changes, with which said "translators" had to deal in their habitat every day. It can be assumed that for people living in a slower-changing world, particularly in countries and small towns, rapid and unexpected change, as well as analysis of phenomena that are distant, unprecedented, and bizarre, will seem more disturbing and dangerous (Martin et al., 2018).

What for some was a diversification of value systems – controlled chaos, in which they could find many different coexisting systems and orders, for others it was just a regular, incomprehensible chaos and danger for their calm existence in a well-ordered world, in which everything is defined and established. Unfortunately, in the 20th century, it was not so obvious (Pavliková & Tavilla, 2023). Only the emergence of two oppositional value orders in the 21st century allows for a longer perspective (since

it was not until almost half a century later) to realise that those two “new” value orders have their roots in the past. In other words – they did not just come out of the blue.

POLITICISED EVERYDAY LIFE

At the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, a new idea of the political divide arose. Its creators – James G. March and Johan P. Olsen (2010) proposed an innovative approach to analysing the political dimension of the functioning of institutions, which can be directly translated into two, functioning oppositional value systems in one society. In integrative institutions, core values organising society’s functioning are communitarianism, identity, and the past. Within the aggregate institutions, in turn, value systems organise themselves around such as negotiations, diversity, future. In this way, the a new division was shaped, which replaced traditional left-right opposition.

Today, it seems that this or similar opposition of clashing value systems has always existed in Western societies, yet it has taken different forms: tradition-modernity, stability-change, unity-change, known-unknown. However, its meaning has increased all the more as it has become more marginal, until now, populist parties have started to heat up public sentiment to the point of the spread of hatred. As a result, today we can see marked differences, which seem irreconcilable and take the form of two hostile, clashing powers.

The clash of two such opposing value orders led to an entirely new situation in the social world and reorganised even everyday relations. Slowly, everything could become political. Each institution, action, person or group can be analysed through the prism of opposition aggregative-integrative. This is followed by perceiving even fine elements of everyday life as fitting into one of the defined orders. One can declare impartiality and apoliticality, but the action effects favouring one of the mentioned categories.

A division is emerging or being reborn (what is important, for example, in a case of post-communist countries), a division between we (trustworthy) and they (enemies). In such a situation, it is difficult to have a social order, build social capital based on trust (Sztompka, 2007) and also develop healthy relationships. In such an atmosphere, it is easy to manipulate – it is enough to indicate an enemy, appeal to emotions and fuel them by appealing to conspiracy theories.

This deepens the lack of trust even more and fuels hatred towards foreigners (migrants, political opponents, people who think differently/who have different views and hold different values) (Lasinska, 2013).

The 21st century brought the Western world significant changes, which inevitably had to influence the way regular people perceive the surrounding reality.

Division into two tribes, deepened by populist parties, referring to the resentment and a sense of marginalisation, led to a permanent breakdown of societies. Elections

in many Western democracies, from a few terms of office (exactly from the time of Brexit), became a struggle for the survival of democracies themselves.

NIGHTMARE SIMULACRUM

Social life can be viewed as a form of performance. In a public space, we can observe other people's behaviour, which becomes for us a benchmark and inspiration for our own reactions. They can even be categorised into certain cultural scenarios. For adult people, observation of social life is as good a way to learn as any other. We call it informal education anyway.

What happens at the head of power sets an example for the rest of society. It can be an example of ideals, for which citizens receive prizes and medals and become media heroes due to their demonstration of proper civic attitudes. There can be examples of behaviour types which are unacceptable and socially noxious, for which bad people face appropriate consequences: firstly, enforcement agencies and media take an interest in them, and later they bear the deserved punishment. Thanks to such an order, citizens may feel safe and at ease. The world lets itself be disenchanted and understood. It seems to be organised because the basic organising categories are strictly defined.

Politics in the 21st century breaches those basic orders. Observing social life, and foremost politics in the Western world, one may conclude that good and evil are terms which could be freely redefined. One can get the impression that from postmodern axiological diversity, we have suddenly moved to an absolute axiological chaos.

Such a situation was shaped by four groups of factors:

- Decline of authorities;
- Escalation of political struggle;
- Media panopticon;
- Flawed educational systems.

The beginnings of the process undermining authorities can be seen in postmodernism. As the most destructive let us consider acceptance of the thesis that there are no absolute truths, there are only different narrations, behind which are just the narrators' interests. Since then, the world can be considered more like a game of interests rather than a game of scientific truth (Martin et al. 2025). Anyone who refers to absolute truths, axioms, or higher values that require sacrifices may be suspected of hiding their own particular interests and pettiness.

In the sphere of morality, the Catholic Church fell "victim" to this trend. Affairs and crimes committed by representatives of the clergy in the recent past (paedophile scandals, schools in Canada), unwillingness to deal with the past, moral excesses and political engagement (for example in Poland) meant that those who previously

doubted the authority of this institution, now turn their back on it (which can be seen by the drop in declared Catholics even in very catholic countries, like Poland).

Also, the authority of science is eroded. In this case, representatives of the scientific community themselves were a party to it. Belief in the authority of science was undermined not only by the postmodern upheaval, but first and foremost by the affairs related to grant accounting, predatory journals, the “paper mill” phenomenon, and problems with social research replication. All this indicates that doing science is not always a fair playground of scientific truth, and that morally questionable actions can also appear. Moreover, scientific language is often airtight enough that regular people feel excluded and are unable to understand the significance of other scientific discoveries or the results of scientific research (Sokal & Bricmont, 2014).

Extreme parties, right-wing, populist, also engage in combat with authorities. Proposed by them, the new world order naturally had to turn against dominant ideologies and sometimes personally against established leaders. In reality, populist movements have offered and continue to offer a new version of history that glorifies new heroes related to their society. Political opponents are presented as traitors to the homeland, losers and people without honour. Since populists got into power, the politics of hatred, lies and excluding political opponents has intensified.

Clashes at different levels of government and politics of hatred are very well visible thanks to the media, which are very interested in keeping their subscribers attention. After all, their survival depends on it. Current media create some kind of a multicoloured and polyphonic stage, on which actions of politicians are more visible, sometimes even sharpened through a proper media perspective and additional meanings attributed to them by political communication specialists. Thanks to the functioning of transparent and independent media, we can also observe the malaise of Western democracies. On the one hand, we can observe clashes in a political area, mutual accusations of not only indolence but also of criminal acts: corruption, nepotism, property appropriation and even common crimes; on the other hand, we can see that “crime met the punishment”. Instead, we can see how the makers of the biggest chaos and corruption stay unchastised and freely function in political life, sometimes achieving/or regaining prestigious positions in public service.

One might have expected that citizens experiencing such political crises would be more inclined to rethink their choices and confer the mandate to populist parties again. However, it appears more complex.

An indispensable condition for a healthy, rational, and moral society functioning is a rational citizen. Whereas rationality is closely related to morality, a rational man would not do wrong if they had known the result of their irrational actions (Łukaszewski, 2018).

So, are citizens not guided by rationality in their political choices?

Or maybe they are underinformed because they are not interested in the political sphere, or perhaps even social life in general (Mahrik et al., 2018).

The answer, as always in such cases, is complex since entirely different regularities must be considered. Foremost, the world of politics refers more to emotions than rationality. Emotions are very useful in mobilising the electorate, and in the 21st century, election campaigns begin just after elections and last till the next ones – permanently. Media representations of reality, so-called political theatre and factional wars have a significant impact in fuelling and maintaining emotions (Ahmad et al., 2025). Therefore, a growing group of voters is influenced by emotions, and they vote more often, but not for a concrete choice, but against it.

The rationality of a voter is also limited by informational deficit, lack of critical thinking and insufficient civic education at school.

CONCLUSION

Successes of populists, who use the acquired knowledge to dishonest practices, without concern for the welfare of the state, lead to paradoxes and a vicious circle, from which escape seems impossible. Visible corruption of political elites does not lead to their removal from power. Crime and even judgment of conviction are not sufficient reasons to end a political career (a politician cannot be “killed with a newspaper” any more). Adults allow others to manipulate them like children, despite the availability of information from many sources. The place of the fallen authentic authorities is being taken by showmen and conspiracy theories. In such an absurd situation, it is hard to imagine liberation in the form of rational political choices, legitimising rational and responsible power.

Closer analyses of social phenomena, related to production and distribution of both oppositional value orders, lead to the conclusion that they are political simulacrum of some kind, which provides an apparent option of choice. Reality around us is more complex, and in order to build anything (habitus, position, wisdom), one cannot focus on war (even media war), which leads only to “destructurisation”, but also on everyday life and realistic aims.

Regarding formal education, we are very painfully affected by the lack of vision for what should be a priority. Currently, many systems operate in a manner similar to those of the 19th century. Students are equipped with curriculum contents like living encyclopaedias. In times of artificial intelligence, critical thinking counts even more – knowledge of where to look for useful information, how to assess its reliability and how exactly it can be used.

In case of adults, especially when it comes to informal education, it is necessary to raise media awareness (in both senders and receivers), deepen critical thinking, responsibility and engagement.

Unfortunately, all of this requires a lot of work, engagement, investment, but foremost, a consistent educational vision. At present, it looks quite utopian since politicians

generally think in the perspective of the next term of office. However, it is crucial to realise that without a change of education paradigm, we will be moving further and further away from the idea of smart elections and a smart society. Neither old nor new authorities will help. We need to work out new exit routes for ourselves again.

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