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Cunoaștere și dezvoltare socială în secolul XXI

Coordonatori:

**Lucian Marina,
Mihai Pascaru,
Bogdan-Nicolae Mucea**



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PREMISELE MORALITĂȚII AXIOLOGICE**Mirela Teodora BĂBUȚ**

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ABSTRACT:

THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES THE FOUNDATIONS OF AXIOLOGICAL MORALITY, EXAMINING THE PRINCIPLES AND THEORIES THAT SHAPE ETHICAL VALUES IN A PHILOSOPHICAL AND PRACTICAL CONTEXT. THE ANALYSIS FOCUSES ON THE ROLE OF AXIOLOGY IN DETERMINING MORAL STANDARDS AND HOW IT INFLUENCES HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND ETHICAL DECISIONS. BY INTEGRATION OF CORE VALUES, WE CAN DEVELOP A CLEAR PERSPECTIVE ON MORAL BEHAVIOR. THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE DEMONSTRATES THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AXIOLOGICAL APPROACH IN PROMOTING MORAL VALUES IN SOCIETY, THROUGH THE ANALYSIS OF A CASE STUDY.

KEY WORDS:

MORALITY, AXIOLOGY, MORAL BEHAVIOR, VALUES.

I. Introduction

The exploration of moral values and their philosophical underpinnings remains a central activity in both ethical theory and practical application, particularly in a rapidly evolving societal context. Morality, as a cornerstone of human interaction, is intertwined with axiology, the philosophical study of values. Axiology provides a systematic framework for examining the origins, structures, and applications of ethical principles, making it an essential field of inquiry for understanding the standards that govern human behavior. The

subject takes on additional significance when one considers its impact on shaping personal conduct, collective norms, and institutional practices.

In contemporary discussions of ethics, the study of values has moved from purely theoretical deliberations to addressing pressing societal issues. Values today are often analyzed through pluralistic and dynamic frameworks, recognizing their diverse cultural, social and historical dimensions. This change reflects the growing need to assess not only the content of ethical standards, but also the processes by which they are adopted, justified and internalized by individuals and societies. Modern approaches emphasize the interdependence of moral values and lived experiences, recognizing that ethical standards influence decisions and actions in deeply interconnected ways.

This article examines the axiological basis of morality by exploring its principles and theories as they apply to ethical behavior in the real world. The objective is to articulate the role of value-oriented frameworks in shaping moral decision-making and to illustrate the relevance of axiological inquiry through a focused case study. Interrogating the theoretical foundations of moral values and their practical implications, the discussion aims to highlight the applicability of axiological perspectives in addressing ethical challenges.

The choice of this theme is rooted in the urgency to promote ethical clarity in an era marked by rapid social, technological and cultural transformation. Societies today face a number of moral dilemmas that require nuanced and well-grounded approaches to ethical decision-making. From debates about justice and equity to issues of technology and environmental sustainability, applying axiological perspectives provides valuable avenues for navigating such dilemmas. Understanding how values inform moral behavior is essential not only for advancing ethical theory but also for

improving the quality of human interactions and institutional policies.

The principles of modern value systems are inherently dynamic, reflecting the evolving nature of human societies. Ethical values today are shaped by factors such as globalization, technological advances, and increased cultural interconnectedness. These developments challenge traditional notions of morality, calling for frameworks that are adaptable yet grounded in coherent philosophical reasoning. Axiology provides an essential perspective in this regard, as it connects abstract theoretical concepts to the practical realities of ethical behavior. It enables an examination of the origins and structures of values, while providing tools for their critical evaluation and application.

This article contributes to a broader discourse on morality by situating axiological inquiry at the intersection of philosophical analysis and practical ethics. By integrating theoretical perspectives and case study analysis, it aims to demonstrate the continued importance of value-oriented approaches in fostering ethical understanding. In doing so, it asserts the enduring role of axiology as a critical lens for examining the principles and practices that shape human behavior.

II. Theorized aspects

Axiology and morality

Axiology and morality are interconnected dimensions of philosophical inquiry, each contributing to a deeper understanding of ethical principles and human behavior. Axiology, derived from the Greek words „axios“ (value) and „logos“ (study), is concerned with the systematic exploration of values, including both ethical and aesthetic dimensions (Hartmann, 1962). Morality, on the other hand, refers to the standards, principles, and rules that guide human actions and interactions, determining what is considered right or

wrong in a given context (Williams, 1985). The relationship between axiology and morality lies in the ability of the former to provide a structured framework for analyzing and justifying the values underlying moral judgments and behaviors.

The influence of axiology on morality is evident in its role as a foundational discipline for ethical decision-making. Axiology examines the nature of values—whether intrinsic or instrumental—and their application in moral contexts, thus shaping how individuals and societies define ethical standards (Rescher, 1969). Through this process, axiology informs the criteria by which moral actions are evaluated and the principles that guide ethical behavior. An example of this would be Schwartz's (2012) theory of core human values, which highlights how shared value systems influence moral norms across cultures, demonstrating that axiology serves as a critical tool for understanding ethical consistency and variability human behavior.

Empirical studies have further demonstrated the impact of axiological considerations on moral decision making. Roccas et al. (2021) examined the interaction between personal values and moral judgments, finding that individuals prioritize ethical actions aligned with their internalized value systems, such as fairness or caring. Similarly, a study by Skitka et al. (2005) explored moral conviction and its connection to values, concluding that individuals with strong axiological commitments were more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors and less tolerant of moral violations. These findings emphasize the practical relevance of axiology in influencing ethical attitudes and actions.

Comparisons across cultural contexts also highlight the variability of axiological influences on morality. For example, Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory illustrates how value hierarchies differ between collectivist and individualist societies, leading to distinct moral frameworks. In collectivist cultures, values such as harmony and loyalty

often dominate moral reasoning, while individualistic societies prioritize autonomy and justice. These variations exemplify the role of axiology in shaping diverse moral landscapes, providing comparative insight into how values inform ethical practices globally.

By determining the criteria for evaluating ethical decisions, axiology not only improves theoretical understanding but also guides practical applications in various sociocultural environments. Its continued study becomes imperative for addressing the evolving moral challenges of contemporary society.

Basic principles and theories

The study of axiology is underpinned by a number of theories and principles that provide a structured understanding of values and their relationship to moral reasoning. These theories, developed across philosophical traditions, provide the basis for analyzing how values function both theoretically and practically in shaping ethical behavior.

One of the earliest and most influential theories in axiology is Plato's Theory of Forms, which posits that values such as goodness or justice exist as abstract and universal ideals. Plato argued that these forms are immutable and serve as ultimate reference points for evaluating human behavior (Fine, 1993). The theoretical orientation of this principle situates values as independent of human experience, emphasizing their role in guiding moral judgments through reason and contemplation. While this framework provides clarity in the conceptualization of absolute values, its practical application is often criticized for its lack of adaptability to various moral contexts (Nussbaum, 1986).

In contrast, Aristotle's Virtue Ethics emphasizes the cultivation of virtues through habitual practice and moral education. Aristotle argued that values are not abstract ideals but emerge from practical engagement with the world,

guiding individuals toward the attainment of eudaimonia or human flourishing (MacIntyre, 1981). This approach aligns theoretical and practical dimensions by integrating value-oriented reasoning with everyday ethical decisions. Virtue ethics has been widely applied in contemporary moral discourse, particularly in ethics and professional education (Hursthouse, 1999).

Moving to more modern frameworks, utilitarianism, as articulated by Bentham and Mill, prioritizes values such as happiness and well-being. Utilitarianism evaluates actions based on their results, advocating the greatest good for the greatest number (Mill, 1863/2002). The practicality of this approach lies in its applicability to policymaking and public ethics, where measurable outcomes often guide decisions. However, its critics argue that it reduces values to calculable units, overlooking the intrinsic value of individual experiences (Sen, 1985).

Another significant theory is Kantian Deontology, which focuses on the value of duty and moral principles. Kant posited that values are determined by rationality and the categorical imperative, which requires that actions be universalizable and respect the autonomy of others (Kant, 1785/1997). This framework is theoretically rigorous and provides clear ethical guidelines. However, its practical application can be challenging in situations that require flexibility or contextual sensitivity, such as medical ethics or conflict resolution (O'Neill, 1989).

Phenomenological axiology, as developed by Max Scheler, introduces the idea that values are experienced intuitively rather than derived from rational processes. Scheler argued that values possess a hierarchical structure, with spiritual values (eg, love, beauty) having greater significance than material ones (Scheler, 1973). This theory highlights the subjective dimension of values, in contrast to the objectivity emphasized in Kantian and utilitarian ethics. Its practical implications

are evident in fields such as psychotherapy and interpersonal ethics, where emotion perception plays a crucial role (Frings, 2001).

Schwartz's value theory, a contemporary framework, identifies universal human values that are organized into a circular structure of competing and complementary dimensions. These values include self-transcendence, preservation, openness to change, and self-improvement (Schwartz, 2012). This theory provides a comprehensive model for understanding how values influence individual and collective behavior across cultures. Empirical studies have validated its application in organizational behavior, social psychology and intercultural ethics (Roccas et al., 2021).

Care Ethics, a feminist ethical framework, emphasizes relational values such as empathy, caring, and interdependence. Developed by Gilligan (1982), care ethics challenges traditional frameworks such as deontology and utilitarianism by emphasizing the importance of context and relationships in moral reasoning. This approach has been widely applied in healthcare, education and social work, demonstrating its practical value in addressing ethical issues rooted in human connectedness and vulnerability (Held, 2006).

Pragmatic axiology has found relevance in environmental ethics, where the dynamic interplay between ecological values and human needs requires adaptive decision-making (Norton, 2005).

The theoretical and practical applications of axiology reveal contrasting emphases. While frameworks such as deontology and virtue ethics provide structured guidance for ethical reasoning, their practical application often requires contextual adjustments. In contrast, approaches such as ethics of care and pragmatic axiology prioritize flexibility and adaptability, making them highly applicable in specific professional and cultural settings. This interaction underscores the need to integrate theoretical rigor with practical relevance in axio-

logical inquiry, ensuring that values remain both analytically robust and responsive to societal demands.

III. The role of axiology in moral standards

Axiology presents the basis for defining moral standards, providing a structured framework for evaluating ethical principles and applying them to human behavior. By focusing on the nature, classification, and prioritization of values, axiology contributes to the establishment of ethical benchmarks that guide moral decision-making. These benchmarks serve as reference points for evaluating human actions, distinguishing right from wrong, and promoting moral clarity in both individual and societal contexts.

Defining moral standards through axiology requires an understanding of how values are conceptualized and prioritized. Traditional approaches, such as Kantian deontology, emphasize universal moral principles derived from reason. Kant's categorical imperative states that moral actions must be based on universally applicable maxims, ensuring consistency and respect for the autonomy of others (Kant, 1785/1997). This theory provides a clear, rational basis for moral standards, postulating that values such as duty and respect for persons are integral to ethical conduct. Although its theoretical rigor has been widely recognized, deontology faces challenges in addressing contextual nuances, particularly in situations that require moral flexibility (O'Neill, 1989).

In contrast, modern theories such as Schwartz's value theory take a more empirical and context-sensitive approach to understanding moral standards. Schwartz (2012) identified universal human values organized into dimensions such as self-transcendence and self-enhancement, providing a nuanced model for analyzing how values influence moral behavior across cultures. This framework emphasizes the diversity of moral standards while maintaining a coherent

structure for comparative analysis. By incorporating empirical research, modern theories provide actionable insights into how values shape ethical decision-making, particularly in multicultural and organizational settings (Roccas et al., 2021).

The influence of axiological considerations on human behavior and ethical decisions is evident in both traditional and modern frameworks. Aristotle's virtue ethics, for example, highlights the role of character and habitual practice in promoting moral excellence. According to Aristotle, values such as courage and temperance guide individuals to achieve eudaimonia, or flourishing, through virtuous living (MacIntyre, 1981). This approach integrates moral reasoning with practical action, bridging the gap between theoretical ideals and real-world behavior. Contemporary applications of virtue ethics can be seen in professional ethics, where values such as integrity and compassion are emphasized in fields such as medicine and law (Hursthouse, 1999).

Modern approaches such as ethics of care further illustrate the dynamic relationship between axiological principles and moral behavior. Developed by Gilligan (1982), the ethics of care emphasizes relational values such as empathy and interdependence, challenging traditional theories that prioritize abstract principles over contextual sensitivity. This framework has been particularly influential in addressing ethical issues in health and education, where moral decisions often involve balancing competing values and priorities (Held, 2006). By highlighting the importance of relationships and emotional understanding, care ethics provides a practical complement to traditional axiological theories.

Empirical research has also demonstrated the impact of axiological considerations on ethical decision making. For example, Skitka et al. (2005) found that individuals with strong moral beliefs rooted in their value systems were more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors and resist unethical practices. Similarly, studies of moral identity, such as those

of Aquino and Reed (2002), highlight the role of internalized values in guiding ethical choices, emphasizing the integration of personal and social values in moral reasoning.

Comparisons between traditional and modern axiological theories reveal both continuity and divergence in their approach to moral standards. While traditional theories prioritize universal principles and rational consistency, modern frameworks emphasize contextual adaptability and empirical validation. For example, Kantian deontology and Aristotelian virtue ethics offer structured, principled approaches, while care ethics and Schwartz's value theory prioritize relational dynamics and cultural diversity. These contrasts underscore the evolving nature of axiological inquiry and its ability to address various ethical challenges.

The practical implications of axiology in defining moral standards are evident in its application in various fields. In organizational ethics, for example, values such as fairness and responsibility serve as benchmarks for evaluating corporate behavior and decision making (Treviño & Weaver, 2003). Similarly, in environmental ethics, axiological principles guide policies designed to balance ecological sustainability with human development, highlighting the interplay between intrinsic and instrumental values (Norton, 2005).

IV. Case study: Ethical considerations in mandating vaccination against COVID-19 for children

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has spurred unprecedented efforts to develop vaccines as a primary measure to reduce the spread of the virus, reduce mortality, and prevent health care system overload. With the introduction of vaccines, debates have arisen regarding their mandatory nature, especially for children. The case study comes as a brief interpretive investigation, exploring the ethical challenges and philosophical

considerations behind the imposition of COVID-19 vaccination on children, based on insights from a systematic review analyzing the nature of these types of impositions.

The case centers around three stakeholders:

- Children, as direct recipients of vaccines, whose health and development needs are of paramount importance.
- Parents/guardians, tasked with making informed, value-based decisions on behalf of their children, often navigating complex and sometimes conflicting information.
- Society at large, which enjoys collective immunity, but may experience divisions due to resistance or concerns about liability.

Compulsory vaccination involves ethical questions that test the balance between protecting individual rights and promoting the greater good. Exploring these challenges reveals insights into how axiological frameworks guide moral decision-making in public health.

Ethical challenges and perspectives

1. Autonomy and Consent

Mandatory vaccination for children may come into conflict with parents' autonomy, with the right to make decisions in the child's best interest. The tension arises when governments impose vaccination requirements, potentially overriding parents' beliefs or concerns about vaccine safety and efficacy.

Deontological perspective: From a deontological point of view, parents' autonomy to choose aligns with their duty to protect their child's rights. Interfering with this duty through various impositions or compulsions could be ethically controversial if not justified by universal moral principles that give priority to the welfare of the child. Parental autonomy is considered fundamental, unless the decision directly endangers the child.