

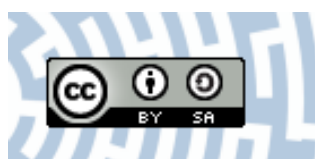


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The Need of Upbringing with Values in Mind in the Post-Normative Epoch

Abstract: The contemporary times are characterized by a radical withdrawal from the traditional principles of normative ethics. The commonly encountered attitudes are axiological pluralism, permissivism, and moral relativism. The results of research on attitudes and preferences of young Poles indicate towards a clear advantage of interest in hedonistic and utilitarian values, as well as a disrespectful approach to the examples of order and harmony. What is instead valued are such moral values as honesty, honor, and helpfulness. However, we need to ask whether the research method adequately reflects the real preferences. It is possible that the axiological disorientation among youth has its roots in the lack of skills of a proper understanding and expression of own intuition in the area of values. The author suggests that we should contemplate alternative methodology, modeled and based on the Ph. Johnson-Laird's situation analysis.

Keywords: post-normativeness, youth, preferences, value structure, axiological education

Twilight of Normativeness, Tyranny of the Cultural Idiom

Steve Wilcox writes that we all live in a permissive epoch, referred to as the “ludic century.” In sociological and philosophical culture and literature we can also find different names used to define this socio-civilizational structure, for instance, “entertainment society” or “Erlebnisgesellschaft.”¹ What is happening

¹ See Gerhard Schulze, *Erlebnisgesellschaft. Kultursoziologie der Gegenwart* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Bibliothek +, 1992).

in a cultural framework defined in such a way—and partially what has already happened—is a radical rebuilding of the way the social model functions: a post-normative society, in which cultural and social norms to a bigger and bigger extent cease to fulfill the regulatory functions, is born and is developing. The place of the regulatory functions is occupied by components of the mass culture; among them a prominent place is taken by the omnipresent computer games. The world of games, together with its entire encasement of virtual reality, captured, with a mighty force, the entire human imagination, first of all the young ones. That is from this sources that more and more often the young (however not only them) draw examples of attitudes and behavior, which gradually take root and then serve people in their adult life.²

One of the prominent features of the contemporary times is the change of attitude to the phenomenon of normativeness. According to Ryszard Moń, “since 1960s we have been witnessing an incessant attempt to call into question the normative order in all areas of social and moral life [...] performance understood in the widest possible way [...] owing to mass media contributes in a significant way to transforming the current reality and constitutes an attempt to create new norms of conduct.”³

Simultaneously, we are witnessing a serious crisis of ethics and axiology. The current beliefs about sources of norms and obligations are being challenged.⁴ The classical ethics (not only Christian, but also, among others, per-

² “All of this converges in a potentially promising century, one in which an art form that is ideally suited to fostering understanding rises to cultural prominence at the same time that it begins to more accurately reflect the various communities that make up our culture. This suggests to me that the ludic century has the potential to realize a post-normative state, one in which cultural and social norms no longer serve their regulatory function, as the ever-expanding library of games that produce new contexts, and afford the discovery of new knowledge, begin to obsolesce the very idea of a norm. Such a state arises out of a gaming culture that increasingly relies on active collaboration and community engagement, rather than outdated norms and tropes, as its members continue to understand how systems—be them social, political, cultural, or ludic— impact all persons.” Steve Wilcox *Videogames and Empathy. Towards a Post-Normative Ludic Century*, 2015, <http://www.firstpersonscholar.com/videogames-and-empathy/>, accessed 26.10.2017; cf. Eric Zimmerman *Manifesto for the Ludic Century* 2013, <https://ericzimmerman.wordpress.com/2013/09/09/manifesto-for-a-ludic-century/>, Accessed August 31, 2018.

³ Ryszard Moń, *Wpływ performatyki na nowe rozumienie normatywności*, in: *O normatywności w etyce*, edited by P. Duchliński, A. Kobyliński, R. Moń, and E. Podrez, 193–208. Kraków: WAM, 2015.

⁴ “In the situation of a frequent discrediting or even negating the point of referring to superior values, the meaning of the presence of standpoints [...] underlining the role of values and referring to their phenomenological depictions [...] in our culture is difficult to overestimate”—Katarzyna Olbrycht writes: *Prawda, dobro i piękno w wychowaniu człowieka jako osoby* (Katowice: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego, 2000), 124. Also, Janusz Nagórny warns us against such a threat for axiological objectivism: “If a man loses the perspective of the aim and point of life then, at the same time, he is incapable of a full reading of the objective hierarchy of

sonalistic and phenomenological) was looking for these sources in the objective world order,⁵ the integral component of which was to be the hierarchy of value—invariable, not relativized historically and not reducible to subjective evaluation.⁶ However, currently, as Moń notices, “all possible normativeness is a derivative of a vision of a happy life, which a subject has, and some idiom of conduct; moral, cultural, organizational, technical” and as such “is characterized by a large arbitrariness, since every human being has his or her own vision of what is beneficial for him or her or can bring him or her happiness.”⁷ Inclining towards such a vision, we forget that “the elementary theorem of personalistic pedagogy suggests that man can develop to the full only when he or she has a personal example apart from him or her that is transcendent in relation to him/herself. A culture, the final reality and measure of which is the very man, becomes a threat to him or her.”⁸

The permissivism, which Wilcox addressed as a determinant attitude in the contemporary culture makes us accept the relativization and subjectivization of norms,⁹ not only the moral ones; but also esthetical and other. The illustrative example confirming the accuracy of these diagnoses are results of a great many empirical studies, showing attitudes of the contemporary man in the face of values. Not long ago one of such studies was conducted on a representative group of one thousand secondary school students from the Kujawy-Pomerania

value. That is when he forgets about the fundamental principles of this set of values. Lower values constitute the basis of human existence and are necessary as a means: since they constitute a condition to achieve other values, higher values. That is why lower values cannot constitute a real aim of life, they are merely a means to an end”—Janusz Nagórny, *Świat przelomu tysiącleci – wyzwania wychowawcze*, in *Dzieła wybrane. Wychowanie do wartości*, edited by K. Jeżyna (Lublin: RW KUL 2012), 39–40.

⁵ “The basis for morality is the ontic foundation, which explains the fact of morality, which is one of the most personal phenomena in a man’s life”—Krzysztof Stachewicz explains: *W poszukiwaniu podstaw moralności* (Kraków: Universitas 2001), 7.

⁶ “The value of an object exists, or at least can exist ‘objectively’ (‘really’) does not at all depend on our cognition or one or another way of behaving.” Roman Ingarden, *Uwagi o względności wartości*, in *Przeżycie – dzieło – wartość* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Literackie 1966), 209.

⁷ Moń, *Wpływ performatyki*, 194.

⁸ Franciszek Adamski, *Personalistyczna wizja kultury*, in *Pedagogika kultury – wychowanie do wartości*, edited by Bogusław Żurkowski (Kraków: Impuls, 2003), 33.

⁹ “Permissivism consists in a belief that, in fact, it does not matter who, what and how. However, it never works like that. Permissivism does not mean that I ‘allow myself,’ but it means that the ‘society allows,’ ‘democracy allows.’ It is the liberal society that is permissive, since it does not create obligations, resigns from condemning adulterers, as if it was no difference, rejects the permanence of matrimony, allows abortion [...]. Permissivism is an accusation against the society, not against an individual, who is capable of handling his conscience on his own”—Józef Tischner explains in: J. Tischner, A. Michnik, and J. Żakowski, *Między Panem a Plebanem* (Kraków: Znak 1995), 97.

Province¹⁰. The subject of research were the beliefs about the preference of values, and the research methodology was based on the so called Scheler Values Scale (SVS), adopted and prepared by Piotr Brzozowski.¹¹

Question about the Importance of the Contemporary Axiological Breakthrough

Before I move on to present the analysis and a comment to the research, it is worth, on the margin, highlighting the fact that the research of attitudes in the face of norms and values are nothing new. Also Jesus was subjected to such research—by the then experts in ethics and axiology, so law and religion scholars: Pharisees and Sadducees. It was not, obviously, scientific research aiming at establishing an objective state of affairs, but instead it was a repeated attempt to “test him” [Matthew 22, 35] and “try to trap him” [Mat 22, 15]. Since when it came to some issues there was a mutual agreement between them and the Teacher (Pharisees and Sadducees accepted Jesus’ answer to the question: “Which is the greatest commandment in the law?” [Mat 22, 35]); however, the more Jesus was preaching Gospel, the more discrepancies appear in the comprehension of the structure of norms and obligations between the followers of the Old and New Covenant.

In the history of peoples, cultures, and civilizations there are breakthrough moments, which radically change stances and beliefs about what is good and what is bad, and what should be done and what avoided. Obviously, not all of them equal to the Incarnation of the Son of God, which brought the greatest turning point in the outlook in history. However, the smaller ones should not be ignored as well.

¹⁰ See Magdalena Wędzińska, „Preferencje wartości uczniów szkół ponadgimnazjalnych – próba charakterystyki,” *Przegląd Pedagogiczny* no 2 (Bydgoszcz 2017), 102–124.

¹¹ Cf. Piotr Brzozowski, *Skala wartości Schelerowskich – SVS* (Warszawa: Pracownia Testów Psychologicznych Polskiego Towarzystwa Psychologicznego 1995).

Polish Youth and Their World of Values

With full awareness that the chances to obtain a trustworthy diagnosis of the contemporary outlook situation within the area of norms, obligations and values are slim and the generations that will come after us will know how deep the axiological stances were transformed at the beginning of the third millennium, we will, nevertheless, try to have a closer look at what results from the conducted investigations and analyses—at least from the aforementioned survey research. Their author, a Doctor of Philosophy in Pedagogy Magdalena Wędzińska, presents and comments the obtained results in the following way:

1. “Analyzing the issue of values preferred by the youth studying in secondary schools Max Scheler’s value ethics was used as a theoretical background. It has a deeply humanistic dimension—it defines the direction of man’s transgression. What is more, Scheler’s contemplation of the place of man in the Worlds, his role and conditions, which make him a man, became unusually inspiring for the anthropological pedagogy (Ablewicz, 2003; Ostrowska, 2006). Values as understood by Scheler are of an objective character (they exist as the Worlds characteristics).”¹²
2. “According to Scheler there are four groups of informal values: hedonistic, vital, spiritual and religious values. The hierarchy of values tells us to take into consideration the dependencies between values. Transfer from a lower value to a greater one, according to Scheler, signifies a moral choice. [...] There are three types of spiritual values. The first one are the values of what is beautiful and what is ugly, so esthetic values. The second type of spiritual values are values of what is just and what is unjust, which are the basis of an objective legal order, which does not depend on political systems. The third one are values of learning the truth. [...] The religious values correspond with states of happiness and despair connected with proximity or remoteness of what is saintly. Religious values are the greatest values.”¹³
3. Value evaluation method: “Scheler Values Scale was created by Piotr Brzozowski on the basis of the values classification prepared by Max Scheler. The scale makes it possible to construct a hierarchy of values, understood as some groups of values, not as isolated values. The scale is used to evaluate the elementary values: hedonistic (H), vital (V), esthetic (E), truth (T), moral (M) and religious (R). The vital values scale includes two factors: fitness and physical condition (FPC) and resistance to tiredness (RT). The religious values scale includes the following factors: secular sanctities (SS) and religious sanctities (RS). The scale presents values from 0 to 100, depending on

¹² Wędzińska, „Preferencje wartości uczniów,” 103.

¹³ Wędzińska, „Preferencje wartości uczniów,” 103–104.

the grade of preferences (the value of 100 is assigned to the values that are most preferred, whereas value 0 to the least preferred). The values are in an alphabetical order.”¹⁴

4. “The research I conducted involved secondary school students from the province of Kujawsko-Pomorskie. The research was conducted in Bydgoszcz, Toruń and Włocławek, from January 2016 till June 2016. Among the participants were 372 students from comprehensive schools, 381 from technical schools and 327 from vocational schools. The sample was representative.”¹⁵
5. Summary of the results.
 - a) “The surveyed youth held the lowest esteem for esthetical values connected with looking for harmony, order, regularity or arrangement. These values are connected not only with reception of works of art, but they refer to the way of functioning of a human being in the world (arranging the space of own life both in the physical as well as mental way). Do the examined youth not aim at arrangement in their life? Have they got settled in the world, in which the only thing that is certain is a change? On the opposite pole the researchers located moral values connected with acting to the benefit of other people, fairness, life based on honor and honesty. Similarly important are for the researchers values connected with personal development, especially cognitive development, widening one’s intellectual horizons. The surveyed people have nothing against an easy and pleasurable life, which is proved by a high position of hedonistic values in the values hierarchy of the examined people. Life has to be prosperous, comfortable, full of happiness and abundant in various and rich experiences. Holy values are also important for the examined youth. Young people, however, have higher esteem for secular sanctity connected with fatherland, national identity and patriotism. Values of a religious sanctity character (God, faith, redemption, eternal life) are of a lower importance for the surveyed people.”¹⁶
 - b) “Comparing the results of own research with the exemplary Max Scheler’s value hierarchy we can establish that the surveyed youth choose a path of life which is, as a matter of fact, a shortcut. Scheler postulate that all types of values have to be recognized and explored through the prism of own life experiences. The hierarchical value structure that he introduced was at the same time a peculiar ‘ladder,’ climbing which man was supposed to experience his own being, walk toward transgression. The surveyed youth in their preferences reverses the order of values. In their choices of

¹⁴ Wędzińska, „Preferencje wartości uczniów,” 105. See Piotr Brzozowski, *Skala Wartości Schelerowskich – kwestionariusz*, <http://sirius.cs.put.poznan.pl/~inf74839/a.../Skala%20Wartosci%20Schelerowskich-SWS.doc>

¹⁵ Wędzińska, „Preferencje wartości uczniów,” 105.

¹⁶ Wędzińska, „Preferencje wartości uczniów,” 122.

what is important and valuable, they want to combine an easy, pleasurable life, based on, first and foremost, taking care of oneself, with a life which can be characterized by placing the other human's good above own, with sacrifices, and sometimes offerings. That is where a question appears, is it even possible? The surveyed, young people wander in an axiological chaos—on the one hand, they long for order, high ideals, human solidarity and moral principles, which would define their way of life, and on the other, they cannot escape a loud offer of the contemporary life: all has to be effortless, without merits, fast, easy and pleasurable, without consequences.

Such an arrangement of values by the young people might be an attempt to show that

I am looking for a teacher and master
make him restore my sight and speech
make him once again call things and concepts
make him separate light from darkness

like the title Survivor from Tadeusz Różewicz's poem.¹⁷

What Does the Scheler's Value Scale Tell Us?

The presented results of research on axiological attitudes of youth point towards a significant change of preferences in comparison with the previous generations. The order of values presented by Scheler, and commonly accepted as a basis for methodological socio-psychological contemplation, was, in practice, negated, and in its place a new, more random and wobbly, however, definitely different scale begins to appear. It is worth to ask what it proves. I would like to present the following variant of possible answers:

1. Max Scheler and other philosophers as well as scholars are wrong when they suggest that the values are objective. The following argument of Friedrich Nietzsche and supporters of axiological relativism, inspired by his works, should be accepted:
 - a) man is a creator of values and not their discoverer,
 - b) the subject creating new values is autonomous and sovereign in his decisions, is not subject to pre-established systems of external norms and obligations,

¹⁷ Wędzińska, „Preferencje wartości uczniów,” 122–123.

- c) values are identical with acts or content of appraising judgments, these instead have the status of subjective psychical acts.¹⁸
2. There is an objective order of values, however, the subject of morals activity has—also objectively—difficulties with its accurate recognition. Values as integral elements of objective structure of reality are something different from subjective preferences and evaluations, however, in a common awareness this difference is wiped out. Since the contemporary civilization is characterized by a strong naturalistic and reductionalistic orientation, then what becomes almost a “cultural norm” is the attitude based on the so called naturalistic error. This attitude suggests (in short): “what is natural is good.”¹⁹ The forms of preferential thinking that refer to it accept that a spontaneous aiming of a subject at obtaining some good—or the desire of this good alone—is a measure of the value of the subject of intention: the more I want something, the bigger its value is.
 3. Values exist objectively and a human being has the ability to recognize them, as Scheler taught, however, with this difference that this ability is not of an innate character, but of an acquired one. It is potentially present in the form of a seed in the human soul, however, it required updating in the way of teaching and practicing, similarly as the Aristotle’s virtues.

The Need for New Axiological Education Models

I believe it is the most accurate to opt for the third of the above-presented answers. However, it causes a necessity to trigger a serious discussion on optimization and contemporization of the existing axiological education models. In particular, it is important to have a closer look at the concept of language competence within this area, so the skills of calling and communicating values and expressing in a clear and articulate way the value judgment.

The research of linguists on the ways of communication among the young in the contemporary times shows that the level of language competence within the area of axiology is very low. The authors refer to this phenomenon as

¹⁸ See Franz Brentano, *O źródle poznania moralnego* (Warszawa: PWN, 1989), Uzupełnienie IX: *Milowanie i nienawidzenie*, 98–126.

¹⁹ “What is justified is to call a naturalistic error confusing the quality of ‘good,’ which is not a natural subject, with any subject of nature [...] even if the quality of ‘good’ were a subject of nature, it would not change the essence of error, nor would it lessen its importance.” G. E. Moore, *Zasady etyki*, translated by Czesław Znamierowski (Warszawa: M. Arct, 1919), 13.

“functional illiteracy.”²⁰ It consists in the fact that the participants to a language communication, even if they use terms expressing and calling values, do not understand the meanings of these terms correctly. They repeat them automatically and thoughtlessly put in random contexts or give them their own meanings, also very random and separated from reality.

It might turn out that the survey research, similar to the ones presented above, do not achieve the assumed cognitive results—since they do not reflect the real beliefs of respondents concerning values and their preference, but merely unveil the low level of communication competence. Therefore, what seems essential in this type of research is an additional evaluation, verifying whether and to what extent the surveyed people understand the content of the instructions and meaning of terms, which, as assumed, they should use. Since in reality it often happens that the concepts derived from the abstract language of philosophy, referring to the area of values and valuing, do not belong to the lexical stock of the respondents and do not create any associations in their minds, or even mislead them. It is worth considering the introduction of an alternative research technique, not based on more and more unreliable scale of values inscribed in the outdated models of language communication. The source of inspiration for the alternative methodology could be the situation analysis method, similar to the one suggested by Philip Johnson-Laird²¹ with reference to solving the logical tasks. He believes that when people reason, then they do not use abstract schemes, but, instead, they make use of picture models of situations described by factors and conclusions. Johnson-Laird thinks that people are rational in their nature, and often the cause of errors in reasoning is not the lack of knowledge of rule of logic, but restriction of operation memory responsible for a correct construction of mental models. If so, then what is key for conducting correct analyses is the ability to construct situation models in imagination, models that would reflect the problem structure of a task.²²

What emerges from the discussion on the credibility of theoretical assumptions of empirical research on the stance of contemporary man in the face of values is a hypothesis, which suggests that possibly these attitudes do not differ so much from conclusions of the Scheler's philosophical value theory and other, having more contemporary scientific discourse, theories based on it. The reasons for the discrepancy discovered in the research might be the reason of the chosen methodology. However—even if it so—we should not disregard the

²⁰ Aldona Skudrzyk and Jacek Warchala, *Literacy of the Young Generation in a Diglossic Environment*, transl. by A. Dylak, A. Lisoń, and M. Udalska (Katowice: W. Walasek 2012), 7.

²¹ See Philip Johnson-Laird, *Mental Models and Human Reasoning*, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA, October 26, 2010, <http://www.pnas.org/content/107/43/18243>, accessed August 31, 2018.

²² Cf. Krzysztof A. Wieczorek, „Dlaczego wnioskujemy niepoprawnie? Teoria modeli mentalnych P. N. Johnsona-Lairda,” *Filozofia Nauki* tom 70 (2007), 111–134.

destructive role of incorrect cultural, customary, and moral examples. A real chance to remedy these pathologies within this area would be to introduce a coherent, well-thought-out program of axiological education.²³ One of the options is to base such a program on the concept of mental models, adapted to the conditions of preferential thinking²⁴. In this case the objective would be to exercise the ability to decide axiological dilemmas—instead of basing them on abstract concepts and reasoning schemes—by means of perfecting the ability of constructing specific situational models, unveiling both the real and the desired preferences of a subject.

Every organ that is not used deteriorates. If this is conscience—the elementary moral sense of man—then the consequence of its deterioration is a pathetic helplessness towards the everyday tasks consisting in deciding objectively on difficult choices between values. Lack of good axiological education still deepens this difficulty of the contemporary man. If we want the next generations to live in an orderly world, in terms of values and normalized by means of the commonly understood examples of preferences, we must not neglect the duty of giving a credible testimony of life and thinking according to values, which we ourselves perceive to be worth implementing in this and the next world.

²³ A similar question—whether the currently realized educational examples are still timely, or already outdated—is put forward by, among others, Beata Bilicka, when she says: “The phenomenon of advancing globalization of the world, in which we live, questioning the ultimate significance of moral norms and hierarchy of values [...], individualization of stances and moral behaviors of the contemporary man—these are only some of the features of the epoch referred to as postmodernism. It leads to—especially in education—to questioning the current vision of education. Thus important questions concerning the timeliness of pedagogy [...] and tradition of the Christian educational system appear. [...] Therefore, a particularly important issue currently is [...] question: how to educate to value in the world of cyberculture? Such a question should be asked by every educator, counselor, every teacher.” Beata Bilicka, ed. *Słowo wstępne*, in *Wychowanie do wartości w świecie cyberkultury* (Toruń: UMK, 2012), 10–12.

²⁴ Within this context Józef Tischner’s words are outstanding: “When we say that our world is a world of values, we see specific issues and things next to us. Maybe even more ‘issues’ than ‘things.’ Someone was waiting for us a second ago since he had an issue he wanted to discuss, we were waiting to tell him something important, someone came down with an illness and a medication had to be bought, someone passed away and we had to participate in a funeral, someone was happy because he had a wedding. [...] That is how we are put in the necessity of an incessant placing something above something else, the necessity to prefer. [...] We do not know how to precisely define the rule, according to which we make our decisions, and still we live since we know how to place some things above others.” Józef Tischner, *Myślenie według wartości* (Kraków: Znak 1982), 483–484.

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Krzysztof T. Wiczonek

Le besoin d'éduquer aux valeurs à l'époque postnormative

Résumé

Les temps contemporains se caractérisent par le retour radical des principes traditionnels de l'éthique normative. Le pluralisme axiologique, le permissivisme et le relativisme moral sont les attitudes universellement rencontrées. Les résultats des recherches sur les attitudes et les préférences des jeunes Polonais dénotent le net avantage de l'intérêt pour les valeurs hédonistes et utilitaires ainsi que l'attitude irrespectueuse à l'égard des modèles de l'ordre et de l'harmonie. En revanche, on estime les valeurs morales telles que l'honnêteté, l'honneur et la serviabilité. Il faut pourtant s'interroger si les méthodes analytiques reflètent adéquatement les préférences réelles. Il se peut que la désorientation axiologique résulte de ce que les jeunes manquent d'une capacité de discerner correctement leurs propres intuitions dans le domaine des valeurs et de les exprimer. L'auteur propose de réfléchir sur une méthodologie alternative, inspirée de l'analyse situationnelle de Philip Johnson-Laird.

Mots-clés : postnormativité, jeunes, préférences, échelle de valeurs, éducation axiologique

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La necessità dell'educazione ai valori nell'epoca post-normativa

Sommario

I tempi attuali si distinguono per l'allontanamento radicale dai principi tradizionali dell'etica normativa. Le condotte comunemente riscontrate sono il pluralismo assiologico, il permissivismo e il relativismo morale. I risultati degli studi sulle condotte e sulle preferenze dei giovani Polacchi indicano una netta prevalenza dell'interesse per i valori edonistici ed utilitaristici nonché un atteggiamento noncurante nei confronti dei modelli di ordine e armonia. Sono però apprezzati valori morali come l'onestà, l'onore e la compiacenza. Occorre tuttavia domandare se i metodi di ricerca rispecchino adeguatamente le preferenze reali. È possibile che il disorientamento assiologico tra i giovani abbia origine dall'incapacità di identificare correttamente e di esprimere le proprie intuizioni nella sfera dei valori. L'autore suggerisce di riflettere su una metodologia alternativa, ispirata all'analisi situazionale di Philip Johnson-Laird.

Parole chiave: post-normatività, giovani, preferenze, scala dei valori, educazione assiologica