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SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF ETHICAL VALUES IN THE
ROMANIAN POST-SECULAR SOCIETY

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Abstract: The purpose of the research presented in this article was to identify the social perception regarding ethical values and the way they are reflected in the daily activity of the inhabitants in the North-Eastern Region of Romania. The Romanian society is in a developmental phase, characterized by a rejection of the individualistic, modern values and the respect for social, communitary and family values, of (post)traditional lineage. The impact of the religious factor on public morality is significant, as the Romanian society is in a post-secular stage of development. However, religious values are transmitted indirectly, through education received within the family. Research results highlight the existence of a conflict between the ethical values that the individual adheres to in his personal life, and those to which he adheres while participating in the public sphere, especially in his professional activity, and the conflict is solved by a contamination of one of the spheres with the values specific to the other sphere.

Key words: Ethical values, post-secular society, value imperialism, conflict of ethical values.

1. Introduction

Ethical values represent a social and communicative construction generated as a negotiation of interpretations between actors (moral agents). Accessing and assimilating the fundamental ethical values is required for aquiring professionalism in all branches of activity and particularly in education and research-development, but also in health care, public administration, in the legal sphere, in public communication, politics etc. Any establishment of rules is based on defending values and transforming them from an act of culture into a social act. Therefore, the purpose of the present research was to identify the social perception regarding the ethical values and the way they are reflected in the daily activity of the inhabitants of the North-Eastern Region of Romania.

2. Constitutive ethical values and operational ethical values

Some authors (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck 1961) consider values as *principles with a high degree of complexity.* Other approaches (Baron, Jonathan, and Spranca 1997) consider that values are *deontological rules and prescriptions* regarding actions or abstentions. This overlap between values, principles and prescriptions arises when individuals do not have their own vision of what an ethical value represents, therefore they consider respecting ethical codes to be an additional bureaucratic requirement, especially when these codes emphasize the sanctioning and not the prescriptive-affirmative side of ethics. We support a pragmatic distinction between values and principles. The value has an immaterial and inoperative character and the principle operationalizes the value in the sphere of social action.

The social-constructionist perspective has an anti-essentialist nature, showing that values are social constructs resulting from the act of communication, as a negotiation of interpretations that individuals attach to elements of reality. Following the deconstruction of reality in various constructive instances, we consider it useful to make the distinction between constitutive values, those that lead to the emergence of a social institution, and operational values, that guide the functioning of the respective institution.

Through communicative action, the functioning of social institutions instills values within society, that are transformed into principles of good practice. Both constitutive and operational values can have a dual axiological status, as intrinsic values or instrumental values.

The operational definitions of social constructs depends on the context that influences their construction. Constructs, once fully

accepted, are perceived as universal, and the subject is no longer aware of their context dependence.

3. Studies on ethical values

A series of recent studies (Bennett 1993; Butts 1988; Conroy 2000; DeRoche and Williams 2001; Kagan 2001), which seek to identify the ethical values of today's society, have outlined an axiological universe that spans up to 120 significant values. Starting from the synthesis of the aforementioned literature, Mercader (Mercader 2006) summarizes a series of 28 values, which he considers fundamental for the moral education of young people: altruism / kindness, communication, understanding, courage, creativity, decision-making ability, enthusiasm, justice / honesty, forgiveness / compassion, friendship / unity, generosity, gratitude / appreciation, honesty, humility, humor, integrity, knowledge / learning, love, patience, perseverance / resistance, respect, responsibility, self-discipline / temperament, fulfillment / diligence, self-motivation, serviceability, tolerance and objectivity.

We have adapted the values proposed by Mercader and comprised our own list of ethical values, which we consider to be representative for the Romanian ethos: integrity, respect, responsibility, fairness, equity, justice, respect for individual autonomy (the decisions he takes), courage, tolerance, patience, kindness, gentleness, caring (for others), compassion - understanding - towards the problems of others, honesty, perseverance, forgiveness, altruism, transparency in decision making, appreciation (the ability to identify the positive aspects of individuals or situations).

4. Traditional values versus secular-rational values. The World Values Survey studies

Inglehart and Welzel's research (World Values Survey, n.d.a) revealed two major dimensions regarding ethical values: traditional values versus secular-rational values. Traditional values emphasize the importance of religion, of traditional family ties in general (Apostu, 2016), of respect for authority.

Secular-rational values generally opose traditional ones, and are comprised of survival-oriented values (economic safety and immediate physical security) – characterized by moral relativity, ethnocentrism, a low level of trust and tolerance – and self-expression values (environment protection, increased tolerance of minority groups, gender equality, increased participation in decision-making processes) (World Values Survey, n.d.b).

The WVS (World Value Survey) study identifies 4 categories of societies: 1. highly traditional societies, mainly oriented towards survival values (eg: Zimbabwe); 2. highly traditional societies, mainly oriented towards self-expression values (eg: USA); 3. secular-rational societies, mainly oriented towards survival values (eg: Russia); 4. highly secular-rational societies, oriented towards self-expression values (eg: France). According to these studies, Romania and the Republic of Moldova are placed in the third category.

For Romania, the first data regarding values was collected by the Institute for Research on Quality of Life and the University of Bucharest between 1995 - 1997. Romanian research was directed towards religious values (Voicu 2019), civic participation and gender stereotypes (Voicu, Mălina, and Voicu 2016), the role of values in social change (Voicu, Bogdan, and Telegdi 2016) and the ability of individuals to develop relations with others based on trust (Voicu 2013).

The abovementioned research, however, hardly touches the issue of values with a high ethical content, and when it does, these values are less studied from a sociological perspective. Our research addresses not only the latent ethical content of values, but mainly their practical, manifested ethical weight.

5. Individualism and post-moralist ethics

For Gilles Lipovetsky (Lipovetsky 2000), in the hyperconsumer society, the individual lives in the presence of objects and not of other individuals, thus things gain an intimate value. Welfare has a devaluating effect, therefore the intrinsic value of both objects and individuals disappears (Lipovetsky 2007). Happiness, joy, love are objects of consumption, which various providers - secular or religious – use as surrogates to saturate a consumerist market. The surrogate is specific for the postmodern society, the artifact replaces the original. The artifact is a serial product that mimes the unique, whose only function is to satisfy the immediate devourer. The postmodern society focuses on deconstruction, that is, on atomizing up to the level of surrogating any claim of exceptional, leading the imperalism of values in derision.

In accordance with the deconstruction of great stories, postmodern ethics is postmoralist, abandoning moral principles in favor of moral constructs with immediate pragmatic value. Theoretical ethics is replaced by applied ethics locating society in the twilight of duty (Lipovesky 2000). Principiism, as a theory of ethical decision, is mapped and formalized in codes of ethics *duty* is replaced by *debt*, the normative is replaced by the axiological. Morality is a practice negotiated in the social space by individuals with moral agent capacities, based on some consensual

practices, a source of a permanent negotiation of power and domination positions with the other members of society.

6. From post-secular society to post-religious morality

Secularization, as a rational-humanistic basis for morals, contraposed the experience of traditional morality, based on the major significance of the Other in the construction of one's Self through love. Humanist-secular justice is based on norms, while religiously-founded justice is based on the mercy and goodwill of God and of the people who were called to perform divine justice.

The failure of the total separation between State and Church and of establishing a humanist-secular ethics outside traditional-religious values led to the idea of restoring religion to a privileged position, as a significant actor in public discourse (Habermas 2008).

The post-secular society recognizes the infusion of the public ethos with faith-originated values, even though these values have undergone a deconstruction process through secularization, and they somehow resemble ascetic or philosophical ones (Frunză 2019).

Religious values infuse today's society, even if spiritual meanings are present at a rather symbolic level. The return to spirituality and religiosity is a reaction to globalization and to the axiological leveling felt by individuals subjected to globalization. Secular values merge with religious values in a logic of secular-religious or religious-secular type, depending on the epistemic focus that the individual places on religious or scientific knowledge.

The secular humanism invokes values such as: care, responsibility, altruism - all of which are similar to their homonyms from religious morals. The moral consciousness of the individual is what makes the difference between a genuine religious value and a secular ethical value, although faith-originated. The transparent to faith moral conscience is oriented towards the Other – as a recipient of the divine, while the secular moral conscience responds to the duty towards the Other, seen as an equal.

The post-secular understanding of ethical values ranges from values transparent to faith to those originating in faith, but secularly deconstructed (Nistor 2018; Nistor 2019; Nistor 2020; Sider, Ronald J., and Unruh 2004). The cited authors use the terms *faith based faith originated* and *faith permeated* values, terms that we use here *with reference to moral consciousness.*

We consider that post-secular society coexists knowledge-based society, forming a transmodern society, since knowledge-based values and faith-inspired actions are generally combined in social practice, blurring boundaries between the public sphere - mainly based on knowledge - and the private sphere - where faith-based values prevail -, dissolving both

into a virtualizing society, where the individual simultaneously lives in both spheres.

This can generate a conflict of values, which is resolved either by a transfer of personal values into the public space - generating a neoconservative discourse - or by an imperialism of the public sphere as opposed to the private sphere and a contagion of private values by public ones.

Boundaries are blurred especially when religion exits the private sphere and enters the public sphere, by placing some issues that confront traditions on the public agenda, by contextualizing and the nuancing how traditional, religious-based morality is applied in today's social context, phenomena amplified by globalization and by the features of a knowledge-based society, in which the act of instantaneous communication of information creates cohesion (or conflict) of values between groups that are territorially separated by long distances, which although do not co-exist in the same geographical area, influence each other, including the values they practice and adhere to. This communicative action is seen by Habermas (Habermas 1996) as the foundation of social consensus, in which the ethical discourse would be incomplete without the correlation between secular and religious ethics, as the absence of the religious factor could even constitute a deficit of the democratic exercise.

Post-secular society is characterized in the habermasian vision (Habermas 2008), by a relocation of traditional values on new foundations, marked by the communicative action of social actors, but which confirms the fundamental character of values such as human dignity, tolerance, understanding, dialogue and mutual respect, values that are, in fact, essentially Christian.

Therefore, we can define the post-secular society - from the perspective of ethical values - as that society whose values and morality originate in old precepts of religious morality, transformed and adapted to contemporary realities, without being completely secularized. Also, in the post-secular society, there is a phenomenon of "camouflage" of traditional values, by removing them from the private sphere and adapting them to the public sphere, in which the absolutely secular character of the new directions of morality is only apparent, because individuals remain devoted to traditions, morals and values which they learned within their family, even when these traditions and values are repudiated by those same individuals in the public sphere, at a declarative or even factual level.

The influence of religious values absorbed in the primary socialization stage from the family of origin is best noted in case of conflict between personal and public values, when the individual comes in contact with and is affected by public values during the inevitable socialization process or his professional activity. In such situations, there is a return to the secure environment of the uncontested traditional

values, learned as such, undisputed and taken for granted in the process of primary socialization, which gives the individual the feeling of stability and order, the meaning of existence and of confidence in the resources that help him cope with the internal ethical conflict.

7. Methodology

7.1. Purpose of research

The purpose of this research is identifying and measuring the social perception regarding ethical values and how they are reflected in the daily activity of the inhabitants of the N-E region of Romania.

We use the term of public perception in the sense of a social construct involved in obtaining an operational definition for a resulted concept – the notion of ethical value, in this case -, in the process of communicative action. Social perception is, in fact, that element of social construction through when individuals take cognizance and understand each other, building a widely accepted definition on a social phenomenon or social institution.

Through social perception, the individual - as a social actor - creates his own interpretation, his own significance upon the actions of others, including their causes and motivations. Changing the social perception of a construct can lead to changes in it's operational definition and, implicitly, to a change in social behavior.

An ethical value perceived by the individual as important will generate a behavior that will allow the factual application of the respective value, while the axiological depreciation of an ethical construct in social perception gives the subject a praxeological freedom in referring to it, even if, formally, it represents a normatively instituted ethical value.

7.2. Research objectives and hypotheses

Our first research objective was to identify the significance attributed to the concept of ethical value by the inhabitants of the N-E Region of Romania. We propose three operational hypotheses: I.1. - the concept of ethical value is correlated with its traditional meaning - derived from religious ethics; I.2. - the meanings of the ethical constructs derived from secular moral theories - including professional deontology - are correlated with the concept of obligation; I.3. - there is a wide overlap between the meaning of ethics and the strive against negative phenomena in society - such as corruption, bureaucracy etc.

The second research objective is aimed at creating a hierarchy of ethical values according to the importance attributed by the inhabitants of the N-E Region of Romania to these values, and our operational hypothesis (I.4.) is that the conflict between personal and social-professional values is

solved by undermining professional values, when they come in contrast with personal ones.

The third research objective aims at comparing the perception on the importance of ethical values in personal, professional, family and social life, while the fourth objective is to measure the impact that ethical values have on the current activity of individuals. This fourth objective is being analyzed starting from two working hypotheses: I.5. - the Romanian society fits into the model of a postmodern society, based on a post-moralist, individualistic ethics, with limited respect for ethical values; I.6. - ethical values have a moderate impact on the social life of individuals, because their attachment to values is limited.

7.3. Research universe and sampling

The research universe is represented by persons over 18 years of age from the N-E Region of Romania. The sample was comprised of 670 respondents, out of which 661 questionnaires were analyzed, after eliminating the respondents who predominantly refused to answer.

Table 1. Demographical data

County			Gender			Age			Education			Living area		
Botosani	289	44%	Feminin	367	44%	a) Between 18-25	326	49%	a) No education	18	3%	a) Rural	275	42%
Iasi	95	14%	Masculin	294	56%	b) Between 25-35	141	22%	b) Secondary education	288	44%	b) Urban	384	58%
Suceava	199	30%				c) Between 35-55	159	24%	c) University studies	333	50%			
Neamt	78	12%				d) Over 55	35	5%	d) Postgraduate studies	22	3%			
TOTAL	661			661			661			661				

The survey was carried out between April and May 2019. Data interpretation was carried out during May-November 2019, within the Center for Applied Ethics of "Ştefan cel Mare" University from Suceava, in collaboration with LUMEN Research Center in Social & Humanistic Sciences from Iaşi, Romania. The questionnaire comprises 22 questions, out of which 6 are socio-demographic questions. The thematic axes are: which ethical and moral values are considered important, the meaning of ethics, the importance given to ethical values (on a scale from 1 to 20), the convergence between individual ethical values and professional ones, the benefits of implementing values.

7.4. Validity and limitations of research

This study represents a component of a larger research, which initially included both the N-E region of Romania, the Republic of Moldova and from the Romanian diaspora. In this article we only analyze the social

perception in the N-E region of Romania, because regional particularities of social constructs are significant, and a national or transnational research can only be carried out starting from significant samples for each region.

The large number of people with secondary education included in the sample is due to the inclusion of students among people with average education, because they did not complete their University studies, and the number of students from Suceava and Iași counties is larger because these municipalities are important university centers. A further explanation is that some of the survey operators - students of "Ştefan cel Mare University" from Suceava - have applied the questionnaire in places frequented mainly by students. This may somewhat influence the research results, as students may be more inclined to place an important emphasis on ethical values such as integrity, responsibility, non-discrimination, specific to their social-professional environment, unlike other respondents, who did not integrate into social groups that focus on ethical values specific to academic freedom.

We worked with an oportunity sample, and although it was not strictly randomized, the large number of operators and the dispersion of questionnaires resulted in a study with a 99% confidence degree and a +/- 5% margin of error.

8. Research results

8.1. Semnification of the term"ethics"

Table 2. The meaning of „ethics"

a) religious moral – the 10 commandments	130	18%
b) corruption	57	8%
c) bureaucracy	40	6%
d) a series of rules of conduct that you must follow	402	57%
e) other	7	1%
f) DN –DA (Don't Know-Don't Answer)	73	10%

Regarding the meaning of the term ethics, we note that 14% of the total respondents (those who answered „yes" to variants b and d) semantically overlap ethics with the strive against negative phenomena in Romanian society. This partially validates hypothesis 3, in the sense that negative phenomena gain major importance in public consciousness, causing a significant number of respondents to conceptually overlap ethics with the prevention and sanctioning of unethical behaviors. It is surprising to us that a very high percentage (57%) of respondents considered ethics in its normative dimension, as a set of rules of conduct that must be followed, therefore we emphasize on the necessity of

constructing an affirmative ethics (hypothesis 2, regarding the deontological character of ethics, is validated).

18% of respondents overlapped ethics with religious morals (a partial validation of hypothesis 1), but religious influences on individual ethics are in many cases culturally filtered, which means that ethics is a social product rather than religious. It is very likely that in the respondents' conception there is a separation between ethics (as a secular construct, which signifies a desirable conduct) and morals (a behavioral guide that represents the concrete and immediate application of divine commandments).

8.2. The importance of ethical values depending on their applicability

Regarding the importance of ethical values depending on their applicability, personal values are most important for 12% of respondents, family values for 37%, community values for 9%, religious/spiritual values for 9%, economic for 6%, cultural for 16%, other values for 1% and 11% refused to answer or did not know what to answer. We consider that individuals from the North-Eastern area of Romania are generally attached to traditional values, primarily family values, but not necessarily religious, because these values are stimulated by cultural factors, rather than religion.

The respondents remain focused on values correlated with otherness, either an immediate otherness - the family, or a generic one - the community. The religious motivation is rather a background for a prosocial orientation, but it is not seen as the main source of social morality. The fact that only 12% of respondents place their personal values at the center of their ethical universe can be considered an indicator that the Romanian society withdraws itself from the individualistic ethos of modernity or postmodernity. The refusal to place one self to the center of ones ethical universe and seeing the Other as an ethical value can lead to the idea of a morality infused with religious values, but which publicly denies manifested religiosity.

This partially invalidates hypothesis 1 regarding the religious orientation of the Romanian public ethos, bu it confirms its traditionalism and the fact that the community is a receptacle of ethical values. There is a deficit of modernity (only 6% of respondents have focused their ethical universe on economic values). We are talking about a post-secular society, where religious values are perceived by individuals through cultural filters and the social control exercised by the group.

8.3. Sources of information on ethical values

Regarding the sources of information that led to the social construction of ethical values, 20% responded their source is „the family", 10% - „the church", 15% - „the school", 9% - „friends/ acquaintances", 6% -

„at work", 9% - „mass media", 9% - „internet", 8% - „books, publications", 3% - „professional trainings", 1% - „nowhere", 1% - „other sources", 10% - „don't know-don't answer". We note the family is the main source of information on ethical values. This, together with the role of the Church in shaping ethical values, is a partial confirmation of hypothesis 2 regarding the rather traditional character, of religious inspiration, of the Romanian ethical axiological. The fact that only 6% of respondents have indicated the work place as a source of information partially confirms hypothesis 4, according to which ethical values are more personal and social in nature, rather than professional (which correlates to the small percentage of respondents who placed economic values at the center of their ethical-axiological concerns). This may be a consequence of the lack of ethical counseling programs inside organizations (Frunză *et al.* 2019).

Mass media, the internet, training courses and books represent 29% of the total informational sources, a percentage which exceeds family as a source of information, but which, considered separately, by sources of information, indicates that training programs are scarce, there is a lack of confidence in the media (or online sources) and a particularly poor cultural consumption.

8.4. The importance of ethical values in the individual sphere

Table 3. Importance of ethical values

	DN –DA	1. (total agreement)	2. (partial agreement)	3. (nor agreement, neither disagreement)	4. (partial disagreement)	5. (total disagreement)
a) I have a clear set of ethical values (or moral, the kind of beliefs about what is good or not, what I should or should not do, what is important or not) according to which I guide my life in all its aspects.	61 (9%)	315 (48%)	124 (19%)	85 (13%)	40 (6%)	32 (5%)
b) I aim to adapt to the existing ethical values at my workplace, whether or not they are the same as mine.	61 (9%)	143 (22%)	226 (35%)	109 (17%9	74 (11%)	41 (6%)
c) My personal and professional values overlap almost completely.	61 (9%)	136 (21%)	190 (29%)	157 (24%)	68 (11%)	38 (6%)
d) I understand and respect the values of others with whom I work.	61 (9%)	171 (26%)	186 (29%)	139 (22%)	57 (9%)	31 (5%)
e) I adhere to the ethical values of the organization I belong to	61 (9%)	103 (16%)	176 (28%)	168 (28%)	84 (13%)	41 (6%)
f) I am very interested in respecting ethical values, both in my private and professional life.	61 (9%)	192 (31%)	173 (28%)	73 (12%)	79 (13%)	39 (6%)
g) Moral values are relative, they depend on the social context that I work in.	61 (9%)	123 (19%)	127 (20%)	135 (21%)	68 (11%)	125 (20%)

Regarding the importance of ethical values in the individual sphere, 67% of respondents feel they have a clear set of values. This absolutism of moral values is specific to a strong level of social control. Individuals internalize values and then explicitly affirm them, even in contradiction with others, which is precisely what generates the axiological conflict between the personal and the professional sphere. These conflicts tempt the individual either to approach a strictly normative postmoralist ethics in the public sphere, while remaining subjective in the personal sphere, or to allow the invasion of public values in his private sphere.

57% of respondents consciously (and not imperceptible) adapt their behavior to professional ethical values, by deliberately ignoring the conflict of values, which contradicts Hypothesis 4. Axiological flexibility can be attributed to doubting the superiority of personal values over professional ones.

The pressure of school, media and the workplace, as socializing instances, lead to the increased respect for public values. The individual is not willing to explicitly state his doubt concerning the values he was socialized in, but he exiles them in the private space, while publicly showing respect for modern values.

The fact that 17% of respondents refuse to adapt their personal values to their professional values represents a tendency towards an imperialism of values, which can be explained partly by negative personal experiences in the workplace and partly by ethical fundamentalism, learned duiring socialization.

The large number of respondents who declared neither their agreement, nor their disagreement with the statements regarding the importance of ethical values, cumulated with the number of respondents who refused to answer, can be explained by a lack of will to conduct an ethical reflection on the issue of conflicts of values. The fact that 50% of respondents consider that there is an almost complete overlap between personal ethical values and professional public ones can be explained either by the extension of personal values in the public space, or by deliberately ignoring the differences of values between the two spheres (validation of hypothesis 5).

As for the understanding and respect for the values of others, even if the percentage of those who express against tolerance is low (14%), it is still worrying, because it can show signs of xenophobia, intolerance and discrimination. The 9% who refused to answer also did not expressly delineate themselves from the possibility of discriminatory behavior. 44% of respondents totally or partially adhere to the values of the organization they belong to, which demonstrates a coherent professional ethos and the existence of an affirmative ethics, centered on values.

55.22% of respondents are interested in respecting ethical values, both private and professional life, which again invalidates hypothesis 5. Respondents who accept the idea of moral relativism are summing 39%,

while 31% oppose moral relativism. Non-responses or neutral responses to the question regarding moral relativism mean a refusal of critical positioning. This indicates a society rather centered on an universalist ethics, with absolute moral values which are independent of social context.

Axiological modernization encounters cultural resistance of people adhering to traditional and neo-traditional values, for whom the immutability of values and their transcendent source represents a guarantee of social coherence, as well as of their own moral conscience. Moral values are, for these people, rather a transcendental or a quasi-transcendental grant, than a social construction.

8.5. Factual application of ethical values

Table 4. The importance applying ethical values (multiple choice question)

a) useless, ethical problems are false problems	39	4%
b) optional, as long as they are not principles stated by law, including codes of ethics, deontology	188	17%
c) important for my own conscience	298	27%
d) important at work	141	13%
e) important for the entire society	263	24%
f) DN/DA	163	15%

The low number (4%) of respondents who consider ethical issues a false problem (option a) invalidates hypothesis 6, regarding the lack of interest for ethics in Romania. The answer to option a (the postmoralist option) proves that Romanian society is not the postmodern, individualistic and libertarian society described by Gilles Lipovetsky (Lipovetsky 2000) as being "in the twilight of the duty", and also the predominance of moral conscience as a motivational source for the factual application of ethical values (a partial validation of hypothesis 6). The starting point for the reconstruction of social solidarity in a post-secular society may be the development of moral awareness in family, educational and social-professional contexts.

8.6. Concordance of personal ethical values with professional ones

Table 5. Comparison between personal values and professional values

a) these are generally the same	224	28%
b) there are a number of differences, but this does not affect my personal nor my professional life.	196	24%
c) there are a number of differences and this sometimes affects my personal life	178	22%
d) there are a number of differences and this sometimes affects my professional life.	21	3%
e) other	2	< 1%
f) DN/DA	184	23%

The large number of non-responses suggests the refusal of becoming aware of the axiological differences between public and private spheres and the influence of this conflict on the private life of individuals.

The answers that show an incongruence between the two axiological levels are summing 49% (variants c, d, e, f), which confirms our hypothesis regarding the existence of an axiological conflict. We consider that the large number of people who declare themselves affected in the private life by this conflict is a consequence of the tendency to balance this conflict by exporting personal values in the public sphere, especially when the fulfillment of tasks at the workplace contradicts personal values, and this conflict is not solved by appealing to ethical instances in the workplace and is being transferred within family life (partial invalidation of hypothesis 4: professional values sometimes invade private life).

8.7. Advantages of transposing ethical values into social practice

20% of respondents believe that transposing ethical values into social practice ensures the best quality of life, 18% - respect from society, colleagues, family etc., 10% - a high degree of professionalism, 4% - moral dilemmas related to the conflicts of values, 16% - self-content, 14% - peace of mind for doing the right thing, 2% - envy, hatred of other people, especially those who are less ethical, 1% - nothing, < 1% - something else, 15% - did not answer or know what to answer. The large number of non-answers can be explained either by the refusal to assert a firm negative option, to show the social or personal uselessness of ethics, either by the disadvantage of an ethical behavior in the current society. Given the high facade effect of the answers to this question, we are circumspect of some affirmative answers. We do not suspect the respondents of being insincere, but we place those answers on the refusal of conducting a serious ethical reflection.

9. Conclusions

Romanian society is in a development stage characterized by a rejection of the individualistic modern values and by respect for social, communitary and family values, of (post)traditional origin. The impact of the religious element on public morality is significant, thus the Romanian society is in a post-secular stage of its development. However, religious values are transmitted indirectly, through education received within the family. The development of moral awareness is perceived as important for individuals, especially from the perspective of the subjective quality of their life.

We underline the existence of a conflict between personal ethical values public, especially professional values, and this conflict is solved by a

contamination of one of the spheres with the specific values - perceived as such - belonging to the other sphere. The imperialism of values is a consequence of this contamination, denoting some public disinterest in institutionalizing public ethics.

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