

SOCIAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY



UDC 130.2, 364.2



Original Theoretical Research

<https://doi.org/10.23947/2414-1143-2026-12-1-16-20>



Relativism of the Value World and the Security of Modern Person

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Abstract

Introduction. Modern society has created a system for the peaceful resolution of most conflicts, introduced powerful and technologically advanced means of defense against enemy attacks, learned to prolong human life, and create comfortable conditions for human existence. However, people are still concerned about social instability, aggression from other countries, the spread of viruses, invasion of privacy, dangers posed by social networks, telephone fraud, etc. The issue of ontological and psychological security remains relevant and significant for modern humans. The aim of the study is to conduct a comparative historical analysis of aspects of safe existence and the associated system of values that determines human stability and security.

Materials and Methods. Analyzing statistical data showing contemporary threats and aspects of danger that are significant for people, the author draws on scientific works on philosophical anthropology, history, and axiology by Russian and foreign thinkers. The study employs dialectical and comparative-historical methods, as well as axiological and systemic approaches.

Results. Traditional society, with its fairly transparent hierarchical system of values, has formed an open, calm attitude towards death and an understanding of the world that accepts the end, despite the lack of resources, mass epidemics, and high female and infant mortality rates. As for modern society, it has created external conditions for a safer existence, granted equal rights under the law to different segments of the population, and formed a culture of longer and more comfortable life. However, in the absence of a clear hierarchy of values, people may perceive illusory problems as dangerous and worry not about a specific situation, but because of the peculiarities of their internal state. Axiological relativism leads to a conformist existence in which anxiety is so ingrained in people that they can be manipulated. In this regard, the need for stable life in a world of constant change requires a clear and transparent system of values and social institutions on which it can rely. Actualizing the dialogue about values is the work of maintaining human security.

Discussion and Conclusion. Research into the clash of values, especially in harsh political regimes, shows that people with a clear relativism of significant aspects of life find it difficult to adapt to reality, are unable to make choices, and experience feelings of guilt. Having a hierarchy of priorities and acting in accordance with them (for example, a humanistic system of relationships) can guide them toward a more meaningful life and, consequently, an inner sense of a more secure existence.

Keywords: value, axiology, safety, danger, hierarchy, relativism of values

For Citation. Zhizhileva L.I. Relativism of the Value World and the Security of Modern Man. *Science Almanac of Black Sea Region Countries*. 2026;12(1):16–20. <https://doi.org/10.23947/2414-1143-2026-12-1-16-20>

Оригинальное теоретическое исследование

Релятивизм ценностного мира и безопасность современного человека

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Аннотация

Введение. Современное общество создало систему мирного урегулирования большинства конфликтов, внедрило мощные и технологичные средства защиты от нападения противника, научилось продлевать жизнь челове-

ку и создавать комфортные условия его существования. Однако до сих пор предметом беспокойности людей является социальная нестабильность, агрессия со стороны других стран, распространение вирусов, нарушение приватности пространства, создание опасностей через соцсети, телефонное мошенничество и т. д. Проблема онтологической и психологической безопасности продолжает оставаться актуальной и значимой для современного человека. Цель исследования – сравнительно-исторический анализ аспектов безопасного существования и связанной с ним системы ценностей, определяющей устойчивость и защищенность человека.

Материалы и методы. Анализируя статистические данные, показывающие современные угрозы и аспекты опасностей, значимые для людей, автор опирается на научные работы по философской антропологии, истории и аксиологии отечественных и зарубежных мыслителей. В исследовании применяется диалектический и сравнительно-исторический методы, аксиологический и системный подходы.

Результаты исследования. Традиционное общество с его достаточно прозрачной иерархической системой ценностей сформировало открытое, спокойное отношение к умиранию, миропонимание, принятие конца, несмотря на недостаток средств жизнедеятельности, массовые эпидемии, высокую женскую и детскую смертность. Что касается современного общества, то оно создало внешние условия для более безопасного существования, наделило равными правами по отношению к закону разные слои населения, сформировало культуру более долгой и комфортной жизни. Однако в отсутствие понятной иерархии ценностей человек может воспринимать в качестве опасных в том числе и иллюзорные проблемы, тревожиться не по поводу конкретной ситуации, а в силу особенностей своего внутреннего состояния. Аксиологический релятивизм приводит к конформному существованию, в котором тревога укоренилась в человеке так, что им можно манипулировать. В этой связи необходимость устойчивой жизнедеятельности в мире постоянных изменений требует понятной и прозрачной системы ценностей и общественных институтов, на которые он мог бы опираться. Актуализация диалога о ценностях – это и есть работа по поддержанию безопасности человека.

Обсуждение и заключение. Исследование столкновения ценностей, особенно в условиях жестких политических режимов, показывает, что человеку с явным релятивизмом значимых аспектов жизни оказывается сложно адаптироваться к реальности, он не в состоянии выбирать и испытывает чувство вины. Наличие иерархии приоритетов и деятельность в соответствии с ними (например, гуманистической системой отношений) может его сориентировать на более осмысленную жизнь и, следовательно, внутренне мироощущение более безопасного существования.

Ключевые слова: ценность, аксиология, безопасность, опасность, иерархия, релятивизм ценностей

Для цитирования. Жижилева Л.И. Релятивизм ценностного мира и безопасность современного человека. *Научный альманах стран Причерноморья*. 2026;12(1):16–20. <https://doi.org/10.23947/2414-1143-2026-12-1-16-20>

Introduction. Today, ensuring security is a rather important task related to the functioning of states, society, and individuals. International and domestic law are focused on creating conditions for the protection of physical integrity, health, and the environment, as well as the preservation of peaceful life as a condition for stability and personal development. Security is also considered a basic human need (A. Maslow), without which normal life is impossible.

However, despite the many and varied efforts of international communities, states, and civil society organizations, this issue remains relevant. In Russia, according to a 2024 report by the Human Rights Commissioner of the Russian Federation, Russians are particularly concerned about external factors such as the threat of mass epidemics or attacks by other countries. Among internal problems, concerns about the security of bank accounts, email, social networks, the growth of domestic violence, and telephone fraud are significant. Corruption among government officials and shortcomings in law enforcement make these problems particularly significant [1]. Despite all the efforts of countries themselves and the international community to ensure human safety and security, this problem remains, and new threats to human existence are emerging.

In psychological and ontological terms, the issue of security is revealed as a complex, multi-level phenomenon linked to human experience, social interaction, and value systems. Hence the relevance of research and the importance of dialogue when considering issues related to security as a state of human protection and a system of values in the context of their degradation and relativism in the modern era.

Materials and Methods. The work of domestic and foreign authors in the fields of philosophy, anthropology, and axiology is analyzed. The study uses the dialectical method as one of its fundamental approaches, examining issues through the prism of contradictions, development, and the interconnection of all phenomena. From the perspective of a systematic approach, security is examined as a property of complex, multi-level systems. The axiological approach makes it possible to examine the problem of security through the prism of values. The work also uses comparative-historical and other general theoretical research methods.

Results. Let us consider such features of human subjectivity as the perception of values that are significant to a person and the feeling of security at different periods of time. It seems to us that axiological transformations have taken place from traditional society to modern society, associated not only with the possibility of choosing significant aspects of life, but also with the relativity of their existence. In this regard, the theme of the danger of space is increasingly felt not on a physical, external level, but on an internal one. This is evidenced, in particular, by the active development of psychological sciences, in particular, practical psychology, which allows a person to feel relatively calm, possessing a certain internal set of meanings and values.

In traditional society, we find a system of ideas based on the notion that identity in the form of sameness is the foundation of the world order (Parmenides, Plato, Aristotle). A. Kozhev, a researcher of G. Hegel's work, pointed out that in it "identity = being," and only through their labor or struggle can people bring about changes in this system [2, pp. 31–35]. Another researcher, M. Foucault, noted that the world in such a society is organized according to the principle of correspondence between words and things, which meant the existence of a hierarchy of values with an ideal model that was copied in social experience [3]. From birth, a person had a certain set of norms and rules, which differed according to gender and social status. Their regular reproduction ensured the person's safety.

Thus, in ancient society, the ideal of man was built in accordance with the ideas of a rational, politically active, physically proportionate man endowed with virtues. It was he who had to ensure the safety of the polis from military threats, even though he himself was constantly facing imminent death. However, the value system, in which a person perceived himself as part of the great Cosmos as a single cyclical space in which there is a return, an opportunity to enjoy the benefits of social experience, allowed him to feel secure in this.

Ensuring inner stability, overcoming fear, and countering threats was seen, for example, as the path of a stoic who was ready to end his life at any moment. Thus, Seneca noted that a sense of security is associated with peace of mind, serenity, and the disappearance of all fears; in essence, it is a test of happiness. It can be assumed that the same state is associated with stones, animals, and people who are not self-aware. However, they lack the intelligence to recognize the advantage of this state [4, pp. 167–192].

For most non-citizens, such as slaves and women of the polis, the situation may have been different. They were granted a status similar to that of property, and their safety depended on the prudence of their master, who knew how to hide and protect his "property." The latter, in turn, created conditions for his existence as a warrior, politician, and landowner. A peculiar situation arose in which a citizen of an ancient polis with a stable worldview and regularly facing physical death felt safer than a woman who had no social privileges, could not defend herself, and felt a constant threat to her physical integrity.

In the Middle Ages, the constant proximity of death was a necessary part of human life, especially among the military class. The fear of physical destruction was compensated for both by Christian beliefs about the afterlife (in paradise, hell, purgatory) and by the fact that the Church itself encouraged war as a godly cause [5]. Acting in accordance with the code of chivalry, a warrior died for a great cause. Circumstances such as the high mortality rate of various people during this period (especially infants, women from complications during childbirth, and those infected with deadly diseases during epidemics), as well as the experience of living out one's life together and openly, created conditions for greater acceptance rather than denial, which, according to F. Aries, allowed us to say that death was "tamed" [6]. Physical death did not end a person's life, especially when they perceived their behavior as being in accordance with the requirements of society, expecting reward in another life.

An interesting aspect of human security is the proclamation in the constitutions of European states of the inviolability of the individual and their property from encroachment, as well as other rights and freedoms in the modern era. To ensure these rights, a penitentiary system, police forces, and an extensive network of psychiatric institutions are being actively developed. On the one hand, liberal-democratic values are emerging, allowing us to talk about individual development, but on the other hand, the will is placed within the limits of reason (R. Descartes), which creates conditions for the formation of a disciplinary society (M. Foucault).

It provides external security for different categories of citizens, as evidenced by the effective fight against epidemics, the development of a medical system that successfully copes with childbirth and infant care, and the possibility of social adaptation for people who were previously not involved in public life. Thus, women began to participate in public life, in particular, studying, working, and visiting public places that were previously inaccessible to them (e. g., cafes, bars). Thus, from the middle of the 19th century, middle-class women appeared on the streets, hurrying to the library, to lectures, to department stores, where they could feel comfortable. In those days, however, they were still forced to walk quickly down the street, unlike male flâneurs, so as not to be mistaken for prostitutes [7]. In addition, an important indication of the weakening of power over the human body is the end of public torture of criminals in the late 17th–19th centuries, as described by M. Foucault. Offenders were now restricted in their freedom, but were no longer subjected to physical pain [8, p. 17].

However, serious problems of a disciplinary society include the formation of a relative system of values and human dependence, the shift of security issues to the level of internal feelings, when a person begins to fear not real objects of the

surrounding world, but sometimes imaginary ones (we can recall that Sigmund Freud spoke about the influence of culture on the emergence of neuroticism). In the absence of a hierarchy of axiological aspects of culture (which is also associated with the “death of God”), a person’s choice is neither final nor important to them for any length of time. Everything is relative and can change at any time, which causes anxiety. For example, the value of freedom, once significant for the opposition, becomes an important part of the constitutional elements of the state and is presented by the authorities as significant for them, which indicates a loss of its original meaning (liberation from feudal dependence).

In modern culture, value relativism is expressed, for example, not by the power of authority (such as the Christian God), but by the fact that public life is invaded by a multitude of private examples (as demonstrated today by social networks) that can be followed [5, p. 76]. In the absence of a hierarchical model and with widespread control, society is a system of similarities, simulacra, in which conformist behavior is safe for a time [3].

The problem of relativism arises when values compete with each other. For example, in a harsh political system that is extremely unsafe for humans, survival will be linked to the choice of behavioral strategies that sometimes do not align with moral priorities and lead to feelings of guilt. Thus, the work of ordinary Germans in concentration camps during World War II was explained by them, among other things, by their extreme naivety, unless they truly believed in the ideas of racial purity. Some of them said that they were simply accustomed to following orders from their superiors, while for others, such work represented an opportunity for career advancement [9]. Issues of personal well-being, on the one hand, and the destruction of a large part of the population, on the other, could compete with each other in a situation of moral choice.

Thus, we have established that the value orientation of traditional society toward meaningful elements of security (divine assistance, the possibility of returning to the world, the well-being of the afterlife, social prestige, etc.) created a sense of stability, while the relativism of values in modern society when creating a disciplinary system caused increased anxiety, especially in conditions of competition, and gave rise to numerous manipulations and conformist behavior [10]. Consequently, despite all the care taken in creating external elements of security, people today continue to need a stable system of values and a more meaningful life.

Discussion and Conclusion. Modern people find themselves in a space of diverse values, relying on their own choices when it comes to safety and adapting to others in the opposite situation. We may also face the problem of moral choice. Not knowing what to rely on, we find ourselves in a space that is unknown, unstable, unreliable, and anxiety-provoking, and we look to others for guidance.

If a person has learned to survive by constantly adapting to the behavior of others, will they be able to live their life to the fullest? Will they feel secure despite their conformist behavior, which only brings temporary results? We believe that our contemporaries need not to focus on others, but rather to consciously understand the hierarchy of values based on thinking and reflection, within which they can make their own choices. And if this hierarchy was not formed in childhood, then it should be understood by an adult. Such conscious existence creates an inner sense of harmony with oneself. Acting within the framework of certain stable semantic guidelines, modern people, like the Stoics of old, can form their own zone of security in which they can live their lives.

In conclusion, we note that the value system in society provides security by creating a predictable, meaningful world and uniting people into stable communities. The problem is that over time, this system can become outdated, conflict with other systems, or be destroyed, leaving people alone with chaos. In the modern era of globalization, relativism has become mainstream thinking. This is the result of the collapse of traditional societies and the departure from rigid religious and patriarchal dogmas; the spread of multiculturalism; information overload and the formation of an endless multitude of opinions in which it is easy to lose one’s footing. Security requires predictability and stability, but relativism erodes these rules. The relativism of values creates a vacuum of uncertainty, and individuals lose their sense of security, which makes the study of ontological and psychological security central to the philosophical understanding of modernity.

Given the importance of philosophical schools for ancient culture and monasteries for medieval culture, it is worth noting that modern people also need civil society structures that help them make informed value choices and prevent manipulation of their consciousness.

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Conflict of Interest Statement: the author declares no conflict of interest.

The author has read and approved the final version of manuscript.

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Конфликт интересов: автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Автор прочитал и одобрил окончательный вариант рукописи.

Received / Поступила в редакцию 01.12.2025

Reviewed / Поступила после рецензирования 15.12.2025

Accepted / Принята к публикации 18.12.2025