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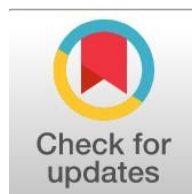
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Philosophy Of Values: Ethics And Aesthetics

Filsafat Nilai: Etika dan Estetika

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Abstract

Background: Contemporary education requires a holistic foundation that encompasses moral clarity and aesthetic sensitivity to guide learners in navigating complex social and cultural realities. **Specific background:** Although ethics and aesthetics are central to value philosophy, educational practice often separates moral instruction from aesthetic experience, resulting in fragmented character formation. **Knowledge gap:** Limited conceptual work explains how these two value dimensions operate as a unified foundation for character development, particularly within the context of modern schooling. **Aims:** This study examines the philosophical relationship between ethics and aesthetics and articulates how their integration contributes to character formation in contemporary education. **Results:** Analysis of classical and modern philosophical sources demonstrates that ethical values gain depth when expressed through aesthetic experiences, while aesthetic expression becomes meaningful when grounded in moral virtue. This unity supports learning that is reflective, compassionate, and imaginative. **Novelty:** The study offers a conceptual synthesis linking axiology, ethics, and aesthetics to Indonesia's current educational model, emphasizing harmony between moral reasoning and aesthetic expression. **Implications:** Integrating these dimensions encourages curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture that cultivate morally aware and aesthetically sensitive learners equipped to face twenty-first-century challenges.

Highlights

- ♦ Ethics and aesthetics function as integrated value dimensions in character formation.
- ♦ Aesthetic experience deepens learners' moral sensitivity and reflective awareness.
- ♦ Unified ethical-aesthetic approaches support holistic development in contemporary education.

Keywords

Value Philosophy, Ethics, Aesthetics, Character Education, Axiology

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I. Introduction

In the contemporary world characterized by rapid technological growth, cultural pluralism, and moral complexity, the question of values becomes increasingly urgent. Education is no longer merely about transmitting knowledge but about shaping the moral and aesthetic sensibilities that enable human beings to live meaningfully and responsibly. Within this context, the philosophy of values or axiology offers an essential framework for rethinking the unity between moral virtue (ethics) and beauty (aesthetic).

Modern education system often separates these two domains. Ethical education tends to focus on rules, norms, and behavior management, while aesthetic education is confined to art or cultural appreciation. This artificial separation results in what Dewey [1] calls “a divided experience.” Where human rationality and emotion are fragmented. To restore wholeness, we must understand ethics and aesthetics not as parallel paths but as intersecting dimensions of value that together forms the essence of humanity. As Max Scheler [2] emphasized, values possess a hierarchical structure ranging from sensory and utilitarian to spiritual and holy values with goodness and beauty at the highest levels. This philosophical insight implies that moral goodness without beauty may become rigid or lifeless, whereas beauty without moral grounding risks becoming superficial or hedonistic. Therefore, the synthesis between ethics and aesthetics is not only desirable but necessary for cultivating what Noddings [3] calls “the ethic of care” a moral sensibility infused with aesthetic appreciation for life.

In Indonesia's educational landscape, especially under the Kurikulum Merdeka, character education (pendidikan karakter) aims to develop learners who are independent, creative, and virtuous. Yet, the discourse often focuses predominantly on moral discipline and neglects the aesthetic dimension that could make values more meaningful, experiential, and transformative. Hence, this paper seeks to bridge that gap by addressing two fundamental questions:

1. What is the nature of value philosophy that unites ethics and aesthetics?
2. How can the integration of ethics and aesthetics enhance character formation in modern education, particularly within the Indonesian context?

The objective of this article is threefold:

1. to articulate the foundational concepts of axiology as a philosophy of value,
2. to analyze the dialectical relationship between ethics and aesthetics, and
3. to apply these philosophical insights to the moral and aesthetic formation of learners in the 21st century.

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the philosophical discourse on education. It provides a conceptual foundation for integrating moral and aesthetic values as complementary dimensions of human flourishing. Furthermore, it invites educators, policymakers, and philosophers to rethink educational practices that harmonize intellectual rigor, ethical responsibility, and aesthetic creativity.

Theoretical Framework

A. The Nature of Value Philosophy (Axiology)

Axiology, derived from the Greek words *axios* (value) and *logos* (study or discourse), is the philosophical inquiry into what is valuable, why it is valuable, and how such values shape human life. As one of the three classical branches of philosophy alongside epistemology and ontology, axiology provides the foundation for understanding the moral and aesthetic dimensions of existence. According to Broudy [4], axiology in education serves as the bridge between theoretical reflection and practical wisdom, guiding how values are embodied through educational practice.

Axiology traditionally distinguishes between intrinsic and instrumental values. Intrinsic values refer to things that are good in themselves such as truth, beauty, and goodness while instrumental values are those that serve as means to achieve other ends. Within education, this distinction becomes essential: is beauty valued only as a motivational tool for learning (instrumental), or is it recognized as a dimension of meaningful experience in itself (intrinsic)?

Scheler [2] proposed that values are not created by human will but are intuited through emotional and spiritual acts. He organized values hierarchically, placing sensory and utilitarian values at the bottom, followed by vital, spiritual, and holy values. In this hierarchy, goodness and beauty occupy the higher spiritual levels. This understanding situates ethics and aesthetics not as arbitrary preferences but as objective dimensions of human existence that call for realization through education and culture. Contemporary philosophers continue to expand the field of axiology. Wirawan [5] defines value philosophy as “the reflective endeavor to unify moral, aesthetic, and epistemic commitments into a coherent vision of human flourishing.” This vision aligns with the educational goal of forming learners who can integrate thought, feeling, and action harmoniously.

In other words, value philosophy seeks to humanize education by ensuring that learning is not only about cognitive mastery but also about living ethically and beautifully.

B. Ethics as Moral Value

Ethics represents the normative dimension of value philosophy that governs human actions, intentions, and judgments. It concerns what ought to be done, what is right, and what constitutes a good life. Immanuel Kant [6] articulated that moral action arises from duty guided by the categorical imperative, which commands that one should act only according to that maxim which one can will to become a universal law.

This deontological principle emphasize rational autonomy and moral consistency.

In contrast, Aristotle's virtue ethics [7] conceives morality as the cultivation of eudaimonia a state of human flourishing achieved through the practice of virtues such as courage, temperance, and justice. For Aristotle, ethics is not merely about obeying rules but about forming a virtuous character capable of moral discernment. Contemporary moral education draws heavily from this Aristotelian legacy. Carr [8] and Biesta [9] highlight that moral education must transcend compliance and focus on developing ethical dispositions embedded in life experiences. Modern theorists like Noddings [3] advance a relational perspective on ethics. Her ethic of care framework argues that morality emerges through empathic engagement and responsiveness to others. This care based ethics redefines moral learning as an affective and interpersonal process, emphasizing compassion, dialogue, and relational awareness.

In the context of Indonesian education, Dewantara [10] reinforces that moral education (pendidikan budi pekerti) is not limited to instruction but must be lived through example, art, and community involvement. Ethical formation thus involves the unity of thought, feeling, and behavior a unity that resonates with the aesthetic dimension of education.

C. Aesthetics as the Value of Beauty

Aesthetics, derived from *aisthesis* (perception or sensation), explores how humans experience beauty, harmony, and artistic expression. Classical philosophers such as Plato and Kant viewed beauty as a reflection of universal order. Plato regarded beauty as "the splendor of truth" while Kant described aesthetic judgments as a disinterested pleasure that unites imagination and understanding.

In modern educational thought, aesthetic extends beyond art appreciation. Dewey [1] argued in *Art as Experience* that aesthetic experience is not confined to art but pervades all meaningful human activity. Aesthetic perception enables individuals to find unity, rhythm, and meaning in ordinary life. Therefore, the aesthetic dimension of education invites learners to appreciate beauty not only in artistic objects but in moral behavior, nature, relationships, and knowledge itself.

Shusterman [11], a key proponent of pragmatist aesthetics, calls for *somaesthetics*—the cultivation of bodily awareness as a site of ethical and aesthetic growth. Through aesthetic education, learners engage their senses, emotions, and imagination to develop mindfulness, sensitivity, and creative expression. This aligns with contemporary neuroscience research suggesting that aesthetics engagement enhances empathy, curiosity, and cognitive flexibility [12].

In Indonesia's educational philosophy, aesthetics has long been interwoven with moral and cultural identity Dewantara's [10] notion of *pendidikan seni dan budaya* (art and cultural education) stresses that beauty is not superficial but a manifestation of harmony (*keindahan batin*). When learners are guided to see beauty in truth and goodness, aesthetic education transforms into a moral and spiritual journey.

D. The Interaction between Ethics and Aesthetics

Although ethics and aesthetics are often treated as distinct disciplines, their philosophical intersection is profound. Wittgenstein famously declared in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* that "ethics and aesthetics are one and the same." This statement implies that both concern what gives life meaning—what is worthy of admiration and what deserves commitment.

Scheler [2] similarly argued that beauty and goodness are complementary revelations of value: beauty attracts us emotionally toward the good, while goodness validates and deepens our appreciation of beauty. In moral behavior, the aesthetic dimension emerges when ethical actions are performed with sincerity, grace, and empathy. Conversely, aesthetic creation becomes ethically grounded when it embodies truth, responsibility, and compassion.

Recent philosophical discussion emphasize this interconnection. Biesta [9] refers to education as "the beautiful risk of teaching." Where the aesthetic encounter with the unknown opens moral possibilities for both teacher and learner. Aesthetics thus becomes a medium through which ethical transformation occurs.

In summary, ethics without aesthetics risks rigidity, while aesthetics without ethics risks moral emptiness. Their integration represents the fullness of human value the unity of the good and the beautiful.

II. Method

This study employed a qualitative-descriptive approach grounded in conceptual analysis and literature review methods. The aim was not to test hypotheses but to explore the philosophical interrelation between ethics and aesthetics as foundational dimensions of value philosophy and their implications for education, particularly character formation.

1. Research Design

The research adopted a conceptual-analytical framework involving the systematic interpretation of philosophical texts, both classical and contemporary (2020–2025). This approach allows for identifying the logical relations, tensions, and syntheses between ethical and aesthetic theories within axiology.

The study followed three analytical steps:

1. Compilation of sources: Gathering classical works [2], [6], [7], [13] and contemporary literature [3], [5], [9], [11], [14] relevant to moral and aesthetic philosophy.
2. Conceptual analysis: Interpreting the definitions, assumptions, and relationships among ethical and aesthetic values, especially how they intersect in human experience and education.
3. Contextual synthesis: integrating the findings within indonesia's educational landscape under Kurikulum Merdeka to provide practical implications for curriculum, pedagogy, and school culture.

This research did not employ empirical sampling; rather, it utilized philosophical reasoning and literature triangulation to ensure conceptual validity. According to Sugiyono [15], qualitative conceptual research gains credibility through the coherence and internal consistency of argumentation rather than statistical data.

2. Sources of Data

The sources included philosophical texts, educational journals, and contemporary academic works from 2020–2025 focusing on ethics, aesthetics, axiology, and character education. The inclusion criteria were:

1. Works offering theoretical contributions to the philosophy of values,
2. Research on moral and aesthetic education,
3. Studies connecting philosophical reflection with practical pedagogy.

Major references included [2], [3], [5], [6], [7], [9], [14].

3. Analytical Procedure

The analysis involved hermeneutic interpretation—understanding texts within their historical and cultural contexts combined with dialectical reasoning to synthesize differing philosophical perspectives. The final interpretation was grounded in the belief that ethics and aesthetics, though conceptually distinct, converge in the lived experience of education as complementary expressions of human value.

III. Result and Discussion

A. Ethical Dimensions in Character Formation

Ethics provides the moral foundation for education by guiding learners to distinguish right from wrong and to act responsibly. However, moral education often becomes overly didactic, emphasizing compliance over conscience. As Wirawan [5] observes, “the over-moralization of education risks alienating students from the joy of ethical living.” True ethical learning involves cultivating moral sensitivity the ability to perceive moral significance in everyday situations. For instance, a students helping a peer nor because of teacher instruction but form genuine empathy embodies internalized virtue. This aligns with Aristotle's notion of *phronesis* (practical wisdoms), where ethical judgment arises from habituated virtue rather than external compulsion.

In indonesia's Kurikulum Merdeka, the Profil Pelajar Pancasila emphasizes moral and civic virtues such as integrity, mutual cooperation (*gotong royong*), and independence. These values are ethical in essence but require aesthetic expression compassion, harmony, and grace to become genuinely transformative. Ethics, therefore, must be lived beautifully to inspire rather than merely regulate.

However, the implementation of meaningful ethics education still faces obstacles, such as the pressure of a curriculum focused on academic outcomes, teachers' limited time for moral reflection, and a school culture that tends to assess behavior administratively rather than based on moral depth. As a result, ethical values taught often stop at the cognitive level and fail to address students' affective awareness.

B. Aesthetic Dimensions in Learning and School Life

Aesthetic experience enriches education by awakening joy, wonder, and creativity. According to Dewey [1], the aesthetic is the

unifying thread that connects emotion, imagination, and intellect in learning. Classrooms designed with visual harmony, natural light, and cultural symbols evoke a sense of belonging and beauty, making learning intrinsically motivating.

Practical examples of aesthetic education include integrating art, music, and storytelling into moral lessons. For instance, students creating visual narratives about environmental ethics not only learn moral responsibility but also express beauty through creative media. Such practices align with Shusterman's [11] idea of somaesthetic education, where bodily awareness and sensory engagement foster empathy and aesthetic sensitivity.

Furthermore, aesthetic literacy in the digital age requires learners to navigate images, videos, and virtual environments ethically. The aesthetic design of digital content color, rhythm, tone can influence emotional and moral perception. Hence, educators must guide students to interpret and create digital aesthetics responsibly, combining artistic creativity with ethical awareness.

However, real challenges arise when aesthetic education is still considered a supplementary activity and lacks adequate facilities and policy support.

Many regional schools, for example, lack adequate art and technology resources to develop digital aesthetic literacy. Furthermore, art teachers are often excluded from character development, despite their strategic role in fostering ethical awareness through aesthetic experiences.

C. The Dialectical Relationship of Ethics and Aesthetics in Character Education

The interrelation of ethics and aesthetics represents a dialectical unity: ethics without aesthetics becomes rigid and prescriptive, while aesthetics without ethics becomes indulgent and morally empty. Scheler [2] posits that "beauty attracts the heart toward the good." In education, this means that moral behavior expressed beautifully through kindness, empathy, and composure enhances its moral impact.

Wittgenstein's claim that "ethics and aesthetic are one" can be interpreted to mean that both concern value judgments beyond empirical verification they belong to the realm of meaning, not measurement. When learners experience moral acts aesthetically, they do not merely follow rules but perceive moral goodness as something admirable fulfilling,

This synthesis echoes Biesta's [9] vision of education as a "beautiful risk." Teaching involves moral responsibility (ethics) and creative improvisation (aesthetics). When teachers design lessons that harmonize structure and freedom, discipline and imagination, they embody the ethical aesthetic ideal of education.

However, the application of the ethics aesthetic dialectic in schools is often hampered by an educational culture that still emphasizes measurable outcomes (exam scores) over character building.

The national evaluation system, which tends to be quantitative, makes aesthetic aspects such as empathy, harmony, and creative expression difficult to measure, thus receiving less attention in learning practices.

D. Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation

Despite its philosophical appeal, integrating ethics and aesthetics into education faces several challenges:

1. Curricular fragmentation: Moral education is often isolated in civics or religion subjects, while aesthetics is confined to arts. This separation limits holistic development
2. Teacher preparation: Many educators lack training in creating aesthetics learning environments that reflect ethical values.
3. Cultural instrumentalization: Aesthetic activities are sometimes valued merely for entertainment rather than as moral formation.

However, opportunities are emerging through the Kurikulum Merdeka framework. Project Based Learning (PBL) allows the development of moral aesthetic projects for example, community murals about empathy, digital storytelling on environmental ethics, and local art exhibitions promoting unity. These practices illustrate that ethical learning becomes more engaging and memorable when expressed aesthetically.

Moreover, advances in digital pedagogy enable the use of multimodal media visual, auditory, and performative to convey moral ideas in aesthetically appealing ways. Integrating ethics and aesthetics through technology thus aligns with 21st-century competencies: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (4Cs).

However, this opportunity can only be realized with strong policy and infrastructure support. Without it, the integration of ethics and aesthetics risks remaining a beautiful conceptual slogan but lacking implementation in the classroom.

E. Implications for Character Education in Indonesia

The integration of ethics and aesthetics offers transformative implications for Indonesian education:

- a. Curriculum: Moral and aesthetic values should not be compartmentalized but woven across subjects science can teach harmony with nature; mathematics can reveal patterns of beauty and logic.
- b. Pedagogy: Teachers should embody the ethical-aesthetic model by teaching with empathy, imagination, and integrity. Lesson design should invite learners to experience moral goodness as beauty in action.
- c. School Culture: Aesthetic environments gardens, murals, music, architecture should reflect ethical ideals of care, respect, and harmony.
- d. Digital Ethics: In the era of social media, aesthetic representation must align with moral responsibility. Schools should cultivate digital aesthetic grounded in truth, empathy, and cultural identity.

Ultimately, character education in Indonesia should aim not only to produce morally disciplined individuals but also aesthetically sensitive citizen who perceive life as an art guided by ethical values.

However, a major challenge that needs to be addresses is how to maintain a balance between philosophical idealism and the social realities of education in indonesia. Limited funding, the digital divide, and cultural resistance to innovation can hinder the comprehensive realization of ethical-aesthetic values. Therefore, holistic policies and cross-sector collaboration are needed so that the vision of ethical and aesthetic-based character education does not remain merely a discourse but becomes a true practice that shapes the nation's moral beauty.

IV. Conclusion

Ethics and aesthetics, although historically often separated in philosophy, share a profound unity when viewed from the perspective of the philosophy of value (axiology). Ethics concerns the moral dimension of human action—what is good, right, and just, while aesthetics concerns beauty, harmony, and creative expression. Together, these two constitute two facets of human perfection: moral integrity and aesthetic sensitivity. The results of this conceptual analysis demonstrate that the integration of ethics and aesthetics enriches character education by fostering students who not only act rightly but also act with beauty; who experience empathy as a manifestation of moral beauty, and who think critically through imagination and appreciation of art. In other words, character education is not sufficient simply to instill moral values; it also needs to provide beautiful, touching, and meaningful learning experiences so that these values are truly lived by students. When moral values are experienced aesthetically, they become part of the students' personal meaning and emotions. Conversely, when aesthetic expression is rooted in ethics, that beauty transcends outward appearance and becomes a manifestation of inner virtue. Philosophically, the unity between “the good” and “the beautiful” reflects scheler's hierarchy of values and wittgenstein's idea that ethics and aesthetic are one. In the context of education, this idea aligns with biesta's (2023) view that teaching is both a moral and aesthetic act, a meeting point between freedom and responsibility. This can be realized through learning that comines reflection with creative expression, such as humanitarian themed art projects or collaborative activities that foster empathy.

Practically, this approach is relevant to indonesia's independent curriculum, which views students as holistic individuals: intellectual, moral, and creative. To achieve this, education needs to transform from mere teaching to inspiration, from memorization to meaningful experience. Teachers and schools are requires to be facilitators of values and promoters of beauty, building learning environments that foster empathy, responsibility, and imagination. The unity between ethics and aesthetic demands a pedagogy of harmony, where knowledge is pursued through beauty, and beauty becomes a path to goodness. Ideally, schools should become ethical aesthetic communities, where virtue is lived through art, and art is practiced through morality. Ethical-aesthetic awareness is not an intellectual luxury, but rather a fundamental necessity for 21st-century education, enabling students to face technological, cultural, and moral challenges with balance, empathy, and creativity. As Ki Hadjar Dewantara (2021) reminds us: "True education is the art of shaping character through artistic culture that combines moral clarity with aesthetic depth."

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