

## FROM HETERONOMY TO AUTONOMY: THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL THINKING IN CHILDREN IN GENETIC EPISTEMOLOGY

ȘTEFAN VIOREL GHENEA

Department of Sociology, Philosophy and Social Work, University of Craiova, Romania

### Abstract

This article examines the development of moral thinking in children through the lens of genetic epistemology, as formulated by Jean Piaget. It argues that moral judgment is not innate or merely socially transmitted, but progressively constructed through the interaction between cognitive development and social experience. The analysis focuses on key domains such as moral realism, responsibility, lying, and justice, showing a gradual shift from heteronomous morality—characterized by obedience to external rules and evaluation based on consequences—to autonomous morality, where intentions, reciprocity, and cooperation become central.

The discussion integrates Piaget's empirical findings with philosophical perspectives, particularly in relation to the problem of lying and the development of justice. Comparisons with Immanuel Kant highlight the contrast between externally imposed rules and self-legislated moral principles, while connections with Aristotle and John Rawls situate Piaget's work within broader ethical traditions. The article also contrasts Piaget's approach with the stage theory of Lawrence Kohlberg, emphasizing the former's focus on social interaction and practical activity rather than abstract reasoning alone.

The central claim is that moral autonomy emerges from cooperative social relations, where norms such as truth and justice acquire meaning through shared practices. Thus, Piaget's theory provides not only a psychological account of moral development but also a valuable framework for philosophical reflection on the foundations of normativity.

*Keywords: Heteronomy, Autonomy, Development, Moral thinking, Genetic epistemology, Jean Piaget.*

### 1. Introduction

The question of the nature and origin of moral judgment occupies a central place in both psychology and philosophy. What does it mean, rigorously, to judge morally and how does an individual come to distinguish between good and evil? Moral maturity is usually associated with the capacity to adopt coherent normative positions and to act in accordance with them. However, this perspective risks treating morality as a stable given, neglecting the complex process by which moral structures are constituted and transformed throughout the development of the individual. In this context, the contribution of Jean Piaget proves fundamental. From the perspective of genetic epistemology, morality is neither innate nor simply internalized through social transmission, but the result of a constructive process, dependent on the interaction between cognitive development and social experience. Moral judgment does not appear suddenly at a certain moment of maturation, but evolves gradually, from initial forms characterized by heteronomy and moral realism to autonomous forms, in which intentions, reciprocity and cooperation acquire a central role.

This approach allows a classic question in moral philosophy to be reformulated in a genetic key: not only what is a correct moral judgment, but how such a judgment becomes possible. From this point of view, the analysis of moral development in children provides not only psychological data but also an empirical framework for evaluating ethical theories. For example, the emphasis placed by young children on rules and consequences can be related to rudimentary forms of deontology, while the emergence of cooperation and reciprocity anticipates structures close to contractualist theories or virtue ethics, as it appears in Aristotle. Similarly, Piagetian distinction between heteronomy and autonomy invites comparison with the conception of moral autonomy formulated by Immanuel Kant, but also with contemporary theories of justice, such as that proposed by John Rawls.

The present paper aims to analyze the development of moral thinking in children from the perspective of genetic epistemology, focusing on key concepts such as moral realism, responsibility, lying, and justice. At the same time, the approach aims to go beyond the descriptive level of developmental psychology, integrating these results into a philosophical reflection on the nature of morality. The working hypothesis is that Piaget's theory not only provides a description of moral development, but also relevant clues for understanding the foundations of moral normativity, especially regarding the role of cooperation and reciprocity in the formation of autonomous moral judgment.

## **2. Genetic Epistemology**

Genetic epistemology, formulated by Jean Piaget, represents one of the most influential attempts of the 20th century to reconstruct the problem of knowledge in an empirical and interdisciplinary manner (Piaget, 1973). Unlike classical approaches in epistemology, which investigate the conditions of possibility of knowledge at an abstract level, the Piagetian project traces the actual genesis of cognitive structures, analyzing how they are progressively constituted within the framework of child development (Kitchener, 1986).

In this sense, genetic epistemology is not only a theory of knowledge, but also a research methodology, based on systematic observation and experiment (Geber, 2006). Its central objective is to identify the mechanisms by which cognitive structures emerge from the interaction between the subject and the environment, avoiding both empiricist reductionism and the appeal to fixed a priori structures (Piaget, 2008; Piaget, J., B. Inhelder, 2011). Knowledge is thus conceived as a constructive process, characterized by successive transformations of thought patterns, and not as a simple accumulation of information or as an update of pre-existing forms (Piaget, J., B. Inhelder, 2011; Piaget, 1973).

This perspective has direct consequences for the understanding of morality. If cognitive structures develop gradually, then moral judgment must also be understood as the result of a construction process, dependent on the level of intellectual development and the type of social interactions in which the child is involved. In this framework, moral norms are neither passively internalized nor deduced from preformed universal principles, but are progressively reconstructed through the subject's activity in a social context (Piaget, 2012).

A central element of genetic epistemology is the role of social interaction in the development of cognitive and moral structures. Piaget attaches particular importance to the distinction between coercive and cooperative relationships. In coercive relationships, characterized by asymmetry (e.g., the child-adult relationship), rules are imposed from the outside and are perceived as absolutely binding. In cooperative relationships, on the other hand, based on reciprocity and relative equality between partners, rules become the object of negotiation and understanding, which allows for their internalization and the development of moral autonomy (Piaget, 2012).

From an ethical perspective, this distinction refers to the heteronomy-autonomy relationship. While heteronomous morality is defined by obedience to external rules, autonomous morality presupposes the subject's capacity to understand and justify the norms he follows. In this sense, Piaget's genetic analysis provides an empirical framework to examine how moral autonomy, a central concept in modern moral philosophy, becomes possible in the development of the individual.

Therefore, genetic epistemology is not limited to describing cognitive development, but also provides an explanatory model for the emergence of moral normativity. It suggests that mature morality (characterized by the recognition of intentions, reciprocity, and fairness) cannot be reduced to either rule-based compliance or simple affective reactions, but must be understood as the result of a complex process of cognitive and social construction.

## **3. Moral Realism and Subjective Responsibility**

Unlike the analysis of the rules of the game, where behavior and awareness of norms can be observed simultaneously, the investigation of moral judgment itself raises significant methodological difficulties. In the study of phenomena such as lying or stealing, Jean Piaget resorted to an indirect method, based on the presentation of narrative scenarios and the analysis of the evaluations formulated by children (Piaget, 2012, pp. 119–120). This method allows access to the structures of moral judgment in the absence of direct observation of behavior.

A classic example used by Piaget is the contrast between two situations: a child who accidentally breaks several cups and another who breaks a single cup while committing a theft. Children's responses to the question regarding the degree of guilt reveal two distinct modes of moral evaluation, which Piaget conceptualizes in terms of moral realism and subjective responsibility (Piaget, 2012).

Moral realism refers to the child's tendency to consider moral rules and values as objective, external to consciousness and independent of the agent's intentions (Piaget, 2012: 121). In this framework, moral evaluation is based predominantly on the material consequences of actions, and not on the intentions that generated them. Thus, the child who causes greater damage is considered more guilty, even if his action was accidental. Morality appears, at this stage, as a system of fixed rules, whose authority is not questioned.

This form of moral judgment is associated with what Piaget calls objective responsibility, characterized by the evaluation of actions according to their observable effects. In contrast, subjective responsibility involves taking into account the agent's intentions and marks a more advanced stage of moral development. From this

perspective, an action motivated by negative intentions is considered more serious than one that produces more severe consequences but is devoid of intentionality.

Empirical data indicate that these two forms of evaluation are not strictly stadial, but can coexist in the same child, depending on the context (Piaget, 2012: 146). However, there is a general trend towards a shift from the predominance of objective responsibility to that of subjective responsibility as the child's cognitive and social development progresses. This transition reflects a reorganization of the way in which consequences and intentions are integrated into moral judgment.

The interpretation of these results has generated significant debate. Some critical readings have suggested that the emphasis placed by younger children on consequences reflects an inability to understand intentions (cf. Lawrence Kohlberg, 1981). However, Piaget rejects this interpretation, arguing that the difference is not due to a strict cognitive limitation, but to the structure of the social relationships in which the child is involved. Children can demonstrate in familiar contexts that they understand intentions, but in abstract situations they resort to simpler and more stable judgment schemes (Piaget, 2012: 150).

Piaget's explanation emphasizes the role of adult coercion. In asymmetrical relationships, rules are imposed as absolute obligations, and their violation is sanctioned regardless of intention. In this context, the child develops a "realistic" conception of morality, in which norms acquire the status of objective entities, close to what moral anthropology would describe as forms of taboo (Piaget, 2012: 148; cf. Émile Durkheim, 1995).

From a philosophical perspective, infantile moral realism presents an interesting analogy with certain forms of rigid deontology, in which rule compliance prevails over the evaluation of intentions or context. However, unlike Immanuel Kant's autonomy ethics, where the rule is the result of rational self-legislation, in the child's case the rule is perceived as external and imposed (Bazac, 2024). Thus, what appears empirically as "respect for the rule" should not be confused with moral autonomy, but rather represents a form of heteronomy.

The transition to subjective responsibility marks, in this sense, not only a cognitive change, but also a normative one. The integration of intentions into moral judgment indicates the beginning of a more sophisticated understanding of human action, close to perspectives that give a central role to the moral agent, such as the Aristotelian-inspired virtue ethics (cf. Aristotle, 1998). From this point of view, the moral development described by Piaget can be interpreted as a transition from a morality of the rule to a morality of understanding action.

#### **4. Lying and the Two Forms of Respect**

Analyzing the development of the concept of lying provides us with access to how the child comes to correlate language, intention, and moral normativity. Methodologically, Piaget resorts to comparing narrative scenarios involving different types of false statements, asking children to evaluate their seriousness (Piaget, 2012, pp. 157–176).

The results indicate a significant difference between younger and older children. Children in early stages tend to evaluate a lie according to its more or less plausible character or the probability of being sanctioned. Thus, an obviously false statement (such as "a dog is the size of a cow") is considered more serious than a plausible one, because it more easily attracts the adult's reaction. In contrast, older children reverse this evaluation, considering as more serious a lie that is more likely to mislead. This transition reflects a shift from an evaluation focused on the external effects of the statement to one focused on the intention to deceive (Piaget, 2012, pp. 157–176).

This development is also confirmed by the way children define lying. In early stages, lying is associated with the violation of a linguistic prohibition, any "forbidden" or inappropriate statement can be considered a lie. Later, the definition becomes descriptive ("something that is not true"), and in more advanced stages, it is formulated in intentional terms: a lie is a false statement made with the aim of misleading (Piaget, 2012: 157). This suggests that the moral dimension of lying is not given immediately, but is gradually constituted, with the integration of intentionality into moral judgment.

In the deontological tradition, represented by Immanuel Kant, lying is considered morally unacceptable in an absolute way, regardless of the consequences (Kant, 2009). However, for Piaget, in the case of the young child, the prohibition to lie does not have the status of a rationally self-assumed law, but is perceived as an external rule, imposed by the authority of the adult. Thus, what appears as a compliance with the rule does not yet imply an understanding of its normative foundation. Kant's perspective is normative-deontological, while for Piaget we encounter a genetic-constructive approach. In his essay *On a Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy*, Kant argues for the absolute nature of the prohibition of lying, arguing that truthfulness constitutes a perfect duty, independent of consequences and context; lying undermines the very possibility of law and social trust, even in situations where it seems pragmatically justified (Kant, 2009). Contemporary interpretations, such as that offered by Jens Timmermann, emphasize that the Kantian position should not be reduced to moral rigidity, but

understood as a defense of the conditions of possibility of legal and moral relations, in which truthful communication is essential (Timmermann, 2025).

In contrast, Piaget shows that the prohibition of lying is not initially understood as a principle, but as an external rule, associated with sanction and plausibility, and only later does the child come to integrate the intention to mislead and understand the value of truth within cooperative relationships (Piaget, 2012). From this perspective, what appears to Kant as a universal moral law is, for Piaget, the result of a developmental process in which the norm becomes intelligible only through interiorization and intersubjective experience. The difference is not only one of content, but also of level of analysis: Kant formulates the normative conditions of morality, while Piaget explains their psychological genesis.

A further development of this idea is found in Sissela Bok's philosophical analysis of lying, which emphasizes the role of trust in social relationships. Lying is problematic not only because it is false, but because it erodes the trust that makes cooperation possible (Bok, 1978). From this perspective, Piaget's results can be reinterpreted as indicating that the moral value of truth becomes intelligible to the child only in the context of interactions based on reciprocity. This interpretation is supported by Piaget's emphasis on the distinction between coercion and cooperation. In coercive relationships, the rule not to lie is perceived as an external imperative, the violation of which attracts sanctions, but whose rationale is not understood. In cooperative relationships, on the other hand, the exchange of ideas and the need to coordinate perspectives lead to the valorization of truth as an internal norm. Truth is no longer just what "must be said", but becomes a condition for the possibility of social interaction.

The integration of intention into the evaluation of lying marks a decisive moment in moral development, as it involves the recognition of the other as an epistemic and moral partner. According to Paul Ekman, lying is not just a false statement, but an act of strategic information management, which involves anticipating the beliefs and reactions of the other (Ekman, 2009). This perspective converges with Piaget's observations: the child can fully understand the moral significance of lying only when he becomes able to take into account the perspective of the interlocutor. In this sense, the egocentrism specific to the thinking of the young child can be reinterpreted not as a form of immorality, but as a limitation of the capacity to differentiate between one's own perspective and that of the other. The child's tendency to "distort" reality in accordance with his desires does not imply the intention to deceive, but reflects the absence of a stable distinction between the subjective and the intersubjective plane (Piaget, 2012: 163). Lying, in the proper sense, becomes possible only when this distinction is internalized.

Therefore, the development of the concept of lying confirms the central thesis of genetic epistemology: moral norms are not simply transmitted or imposed, but actively reconstructed within social interactions. The transition from unilateral respect, based on coercion, to mutual respect, based on cooperation, marks the transformation of an external rule into an understood and assumed norm. In this process, lying ceases to be just a deviation from a prohibition and becomes a moral problem in its own right, related to the relationship with the other and to the conditions of the possibility of truth in social life. If the development of the concept of lying highlights the role of intention and the relationship with the other in the constitution of moral norms, the analysis of justice extends this issue to the level of broader social relations, where the ideas of reciprocity and equity become central.

## **5. Cooperation and the Development of the Concept of Justice**

Analysis of the Development of the Concept of Justice investigates how moral norms become intelligible and internalized in the context of social interactions. Unlike other moral rules, whose origin can be directly attributed to adult authority, the notion of justice presents, in Piaget's view, a higher degree of autonomy, being closely linked to the experience of cooperation between equals (Piaget, 2012: 221).

A first aspect of this development is the distinction between two fundamental forms of morality: heteronomous morality, based on coercion and obedience, and autonomous morality, based on cooperation and reciprocity. In the early stages, the child tends to identify what is just with what is prescribed by adult authority. Rules are perceived as fixed and immutable, and their application is carried out literally, without taking into account the context or the intentions involved (Piaget, 2012).

As interactions with other children become more frequent and complex, this rigid conception begins to be replaced by a more flexible understanding of justice, centered on equality and fairness. Piaget describes this evolution in terms of a shift from retributive to distributive justice. Retributive justice implies a strict correlation between the deed and the sanction, being characteristic of stages dominated by unilateral respect. In contrast, distributive justice implies the idea of equitable distribution and requires consideration of circumstances and relationships between individuals (Piaget, 2012).

This transformation is illustrated by the way children evaluate concrete situations of unequal distribution. Faced with a scenario in which a mother offers a larger reward to the more obedient child, younger children

consider this decision to be fair, as it reflects a merit-reward relationship. Older children, on the other hand, tend to privilege equality and consider unequal distribution to be unfair, invoking not only the principle of equality but also the relational consequences of such a decision. This change indicates an increase in sensitivity to the context and to the social effects of actions (Piaget, 2012).

From a philosophical perspective, this development can be related to modern theories of justice, in particular to the concept of “justice as fairness” developed by John Rawls. Although Piaget does not formulate a normative theory in the strict sense, his empirical observations suggest that the idea of fairness is not simply transmitted by authority, but emerges from the experience of social interactions based on reciprocity. In this sense, the preference of older children for equal or fair distributions can be interpreted as an incipient form of the principles of impartiality that underlie Rawlsian theory (Rawls, 1971).

Another aspect relevant to understanding the development of justice is how children perceive collective responsibility. In situations where a group is punished for the action of a single individual, children's assessments vary depending on age and context. Younger children tend to accept collective punishment, by virtue of a rigid conception of the necessity of the sanction. In contrast, older children distinguish between situations in which the group voluntarily assumes solidarity and those in which punishment is arbitrarily applied. This distinction reflects a more sophisticated understanding of responsibility and the relationship between the individual and the collective (Piaget, 2012).

A characteristic phenomenon of the early stages is the belief in what Piaget calls immanent justice, that is, the idea that breaking a rule automatically attracts a sanction from reality itself. Fortuitous events are interpreted as deserved punishments, which indicates a confusion between the natural and moral order. This conception is supported both by the structure of the child's thinking and by educational practices that frequently associate negative consequences with moral guilt (Piaget, 2012: 280).

From a philosophical perspective, immanent justice can be interpreted as a pre-reflexive form of moralization of the world, in which normativity is projected onto reality as a whole. Going beyond this conception implies an essential differentiation between natural laws and social norms, which allows the development of an autonomous understanding of justice. This transition marks the passage from a magical or mythical vision of the moral order to a rational and socially mediated one.

Overall, the development of the concept of justice confirms the decisive role of cooperation in the constitution of autonomous morality. Unlike rules imposed by constraint, which remain external and insufficiently understood, the principles of justice crystallize in the context of reciprocity relations, where the coordination of perspectives becomes necessary. In this sense, Piaget's analysis suggests that justice is not just one norm among others, but an emergent structure of social life, which becomes intelligible only within the framework of interactions between equal agents.

These observations, however, raise a more general question about the structure of moral development: is it a gradual and contextual process, as Piaget suggests, or can it be described in terms of universal stages of moral reasoning, as Kohlberg's theory proposes?

## **6. Piaget and Kohlberg: Moral Development Between Action and Reasoning**

The relationship between the theory of moral development formulated by Jean Piaget and that subsequently developed by Lawrence Kohlberg represents a central point of reference in the specialized literature. Although Kohlberg explicitly assumes Piagetian filiation, developing a stage theory of moral reasoning, the differences between the two authors are significant and concern both methodology and the conception of the nature of morality.

Kohlberg expanded Piaget's observations into a systematic model of moral development, organized into six stages grouped into three levels: preconventional, conventional, and postconventional (Kohlberg, 1981). At the heart of this model is the idea that moral development consists of progress toward increasingly abstract and universalizable forms of moral reasoning. Moral judgment is thus conceived as a cognitive process, and moral maturity is identified with the ability to formulate and justify general moral principles. However, this perspective assumes a relatively clear separation between judgment and action, in the sense that moral reasoning precedes and guides behavior. The formula attributed to Kohlberg — “he who knows the good, chooses the good” — expresses this cognitivist orientation, which brings his theory closer to the intellectualist tradition in moral philosophy (Kohlberg, 1981: 189). In contrast, Piaget's approach prioritizes social action and experience in the constitution of morality. For Piaget, moral judgment is not a starting point, but a result of the child's practical activity in interactional contexts. Awareness of norms emerges gradually, as the child reflects on his own actions

and on his relationships with others. From this perspective, morality is not primarily a system of judgments, but a form of social life.

This methodological difference leads to a deeper theoretical divergence. Kohlberg's stage model assumes a universal and relatively rigid succession of forms of moral reasoning, while Piaget emphasizes the variability and contextual dependence of moral judgments. As empirical data indicate, children can simultaneously use different forms of moral evaluation, depending on the situation, which contradicts a strictly stage-based interpretation of development (cf. Piaget, 2012).

From a philosophical perspective, this opposition reflects two distinct ways of understanding morality. Kohlberg's theory can be associated with a formalist and universalist orientation, close to Kantian-inspired ethics, in which the emphasis is on the rational justification of norms and the consistency of principles (cf. Immanuel Kant). In contrast, Piaget's perspective, centered on interaction and cooperation, suggests a more contextual and relational conception of morality, in which norms emerge from the coordination of perspectives and the experience of reciprocity.

This difference also becomes evident in the way the two authors treat the relationship between the individual and others. For Kohlberg, the other appears primarily as a participant in an exercise of moral justification, in which principles must be universalizable. For Piaget, on the other hand, the other is a concrete interaction partner, whose perspective must be practically coordinated. Morality is not only a matter of logical validity, but also of effective relating (Duska & Whelan, 1975). Criticisms of Kohlberg's theory have, moreover, targeted precisely this tendency to privilege abstract reasoning to the detriment of social context and concrete moral practices. Authors such as Carol Gilligan have argued that the stage model does not adequately capture the relational and contextual dimension of morality, proposing an ethics of care that complements the dominant justice perspective (Gilligan, 1982).

In light of these considerations, Piaget's contribution can be reassessed not simply as a precursor to Kohlberg's theory, but as a distinct theoretical alternative. By emphasizing action, cooperation, and the progressive construction of norms, genetic epistemology offers a more flexible framework for understanding moral development, avoiding the rigidity of a strictly determined stage scheme. Therefore, the comparison between Piaget and Kohlberg should not be understood as a simple continuity, but as a productive tension between two models of morality: one centered on reasoning and universalization, the other on interaction and social construction. This tension opens up the possibility of an integrated approach, in which moral development is conceived both as an evolution of cognitive capacities and as a transformation of the social practices in which the individual is involved. The comparative analysis of these perspectives allows a reassessment of the epistemological status of Piagetian theory and its relevance for contemporary debates in moral philosophy.

## **7. Conclusions**

The analysis of the development of moral thinking in children from the perspective of Jean Piaget's genetic epistemology highlights the profoundly constructive nature of morality. In opposition to views that treat moral norms as either innate or transmitted through simple social internalization, Piagetian theory shows that moral judgment emerges progressively from the interaction between the child's cognitive development and relational experience. Mature morality is not a starting point, but the result of a transformation process that involves the transition from heteronomy to autonomy, from unilateral respect to mutual respect.

The examination of concepts such as moral realism, responsibility, lying, and justice has allowed us to highlight some regularities in the development of moral judgment, without reducing this development to a rigid succession of stages. The young child tends to evaluate actions according to their observable consequences and to perceive rules as absolute and external, while the older child becomes able to integrate the intentions, context, and perspective of the other. This transformation reflects not only a cognitive evolution, but also a change in the structure of the social relations in which the individual is involved.

Cooperation plays a decisive role in the constitution of autonomous morality, while constraint favors a formal and rigid understanding of rules, interactions based on reciprocity allow the internalization of norms and the development of a sensitivity to fairness, intention and responsibility. From this perspective, notions such as truth or justice are not simple rules of behavior, but conditions of the possibility of social life, which become intelligible only within the framework of relations between equal agents.

The integration of the philosophical dimension has shown that Piaget's results can be put into dialogue with major traditions of ethics. The distinction between heteronomy and autonomy invites a critical comparison with Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics, highlighting the difference between compliance with external rules and rational self-legislation. At the same time, the emphasis on intention and the progressive development of the

capacity to understand human action brings the Piagetian perspective closer to virtue ethics, in the tradition of Aristotle. Regarding the concept of justice, empirical observations on the emergence of ideas of equality and fairness can be interpreted as incipient forms of the principles formulated in contemporary theories of justice, such as that proposed by John Rawls.

Comparison with Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development also highlighted the existence of two distinct models of understanding morality: one centered on the evolution of moral reasoning and the formulation of universal principles, the other on practical experience and the social construction of norms.

Overall, genetic epistemology provides not only a description of how moral thinking develops, but also a relevant conceptual framework for understanding the foundations of normativity. Morality thus emerges not as a system of imposed or discovered rules, but as a result of participation in social life, in which cooperation, reciprocity, and trust play a constitutive role. In this sense, Piaget's contribution goes beyond the field of developmental psychology, opening fertile perspectives for philosophical reflection on the nature of morality.

## **8. References**

- Aristotel. (1998). *Etica nicomahică*. București: IRI.
- Bazac, A. (2024). Our Most Important Everyday Use of Kant: the Categorical Imperative. *Analele Universității din Craiova. Seria Filosofie*, 54 (2), 47-99.
- Bok, S. (1978). *Lying: Moral choice in public and private life*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Durkheim, E. (1995). *Formele elementare ale vieții religioase*. Iași: Polirom.
- Duska, R., & Whelan, M. (1975). *Moral development: A guide to Piaget and Kohlberg*. New York: Paulist Press.
- Ekman, P. (2009). *Telling lies: Clues to deceit in the marketplace, politics, and marriage*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Geber, B.A. (2006). *Piaget and Knowing: Studies in Genetic Epistemology*. London: Taylor & Francis.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press.
- Kant, I. (2009). *Despre un pretins drept de a minți din iubire de oameni*. In Mureșan, V. (editor). *Legea morală la Kant*. București: Editura Universității din București.
- Kitchener, R.F. (1986). *Piaget's theory of knowledge: genetic epistemology and scientific reason*. New Heaven: Yale University Press.
- Kohlberg, L. (1981). *Essays on moral development*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Piaget, J. (1973). *Epistemologia genetică*. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia.
- Piaget, J. (2008). *Psihologia inteligenței*. Chișinău: Cartier.
- Piaget, J. (2012). *Judecata morală la copil*. Chișinău: Cartier.
- Piaget, J., B. Inhelder. (2011). *Psihologia copilului*. Chișinău: Editura Cartier.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- Timmermann J. (2025). *Kant and the Supposed Right to Lie*. Cambridge University Press.