



**Axiological Parameters of the Somatic Concept "Heart" in 20th-Century  
Spanish Literary Discourse**

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**Abstract:** The paper is devoted to investigating the axiological (value-oriented) parameters of the somatic concept "heart" (*corazón*) within 20th-century Spanish literary discourse. Drawing upon the methodologies of cognitive linguistics and cultural axiology, the study determines how the heart functions as a primary evaluative standard in Spanish ethical and moral systems. The author examines the binary oppositions that structure this concept, primarily "Heart vs. Reason" and "Authentic Heart vs. False Appearance." The textual analysis proves that in Spanish prose, the heart serves as a positive axiological anchor, where emotional authenticity, spiritual openness, and moral integrity are culturally privileged over utilitarian calculation and intellectual distance.

**Keywords:** axiology, semantic value, concept "heart", Spanish discourse, moral evaluation, binary opposition, cognitive ethics.

In modern anthropocentric linguistics, concepts are studied not only as structures of knowledge but also as structures of values. Every cultural concept possesses an axiological layer—a set of deeply embedded societal evaluations that determine what is considered good or bad, desirable or undesirable, noble or base within a given linguistic community. Somatic concepts, being deeply rooted in human physical experience, naturally absorb these moral judgments. In the Spanish language picture of the world, the concept "heart" (*corazón*) carries an exceptionally high axiological workload. Throughout the 20th century, a period during which traditional ethical systems were constantly challenged by wars, dictatorships, and secularization, Spanish literature actively sought new spiritual anchors. This article aims to isolate and analyze the axiological parameters of the concept "heart" in 20th-century Spanish literary discourse, revealing how a physical organ is elevated to a supreme moral and ethical yardstick.



The axiological architecture of the concept "heart" in Spanish literary discourse is primarily structured through a series of fundamental binary oppositions. The most significant of these is the opposition "**Heart (Emotion/Authenticity) vs. Reason (Intellect/Sterility)**". In many modern Western European discourses, the intellect is treated as the supreme positive value, ensuring progress, order, and objective truth, while the heart is pushed to the periphery as a source of irrational error. However, 20th-century Spanish literary discourse frequently reverses this hierarchy. The heart is conceptualized as the locus of genuine human truth, while cold reason is viewed with suspicion, often modeled as an artificial, limiting force that distances an individual from authentic life. To act *con el corazón* (with the heart) is evaluated as an act of moral courage, even if it contradicts social logic or pragmatism.

The second major axiological opposition manifests as "**Authentic Heart (Internal Truth) vs. False Appearance (External Mask)**". In the prose of 20th-century Spanish writers, the heart acts as an infallible internal judge and a guardian of moral integrity. While a person's words, social status, or facial expressions can be deceitful, the heart is linguistically modeled as incapable of structural falsehood. If a character attempts to live a lie, the text represents the heart as rebelling, suffocating, or aching, thereby exposing the psychological conflict. Thus, the heart serves as a positive axiological standard for measuring human sincerity. A person characterized as *sin corazón* (heartless) or possessing a *corazón duro* (hard heart) is automatically placed at the absolute negative pole of the narrative's ethical spectrum.

Furthermore, the axiological parameters of the heart are tightly linked to the concept of cultural altruism and emotional generosity. In Spanish prose, the size and open state of the heart serve as direct metaphors for ethical excellence. The metaphorical slot of a "big heart" (*corazón grande*) or an "open heart" (*corazón abierto*) codes virtues such as hospitality, empathy, readiness for self-sacrifice, and deep love. This moral evaluation is deeply influenced by the historical heritage of Mediterranean culture and Christian ethics, which prioritize interpersonal warmth over institutional detachment. Conversely, any contraction or closure of the heart (e.g., a "narrow heart" or a "locked heart") is evaluated as a sign of spiritual decay and moral failure.

To summarize, the axiological analysis of the somatic concept "heart" in 20th-century Spanish literary discourse reveals its role as an ethical compass in the national worldview. Through the structural oppositions of heart vs. reason and authenticity vs. deception, Spanish literature consistently privileges the emotional, intuitive, and morally committed self over cold calculation. The heart is not merely an object of



cognitive metaphorical mapping; it is a supreme value-bearing unit through which Spanish culture affirms its commitment to emotional sincerity, ethical responsibility, and existential depth in the face of modern crises.

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