Invitation to the
13th International Symposium in Konstanz, July 25-26, 2019,

Moral Competence:
Its Nature, Relevance, and Education

Location
University of Konstanz, Germany. Room F 0425

Topic & Aim:
The symposium will bring together international scholars and educational practitioners who are interested in the nature, relevance and education of moral competence.

Discussion Theater:
Symposium program here.

You are also invited to participate for free in the Discussion Theater performance on Thursday morning (July 25th) from 9:00 to 11:30 a.m. in the building of the "Katholische Studentengemeinde Konstanz," Werner-Sombart-Str. 11 in Konstanz. For this you need to register until July 14th by writing to Georg.Lind [at] Uni-konstanz.de.

Participation

Program:

**Thursday**

1.00 pm - **Opening** by apl. Prof. em. Dr. Georg Lind (University of Konstanz).
   Long version: [Why do we need to foster moral competence and how?](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQw4w9WgXcQ)

1.15 pm - **Welcome** by Prof. Dr. Malte Drescher, vice-rector for teaching of the University of Konstanz.

1.30 - 2.15 pm - Invited lecture by Dr. Marcia Schillinger (University of Weingarten):
   Co-Authors: Prof. Dr. Daniel Tello (University of Concepción, Chile) and Christoph Lindenfelser (University of Weingarten).
   Break

2.45 - 3.00 pm - Invited presentation by Prof. Roma Kriauciūnienė (University of Vilnius, Lithuania):
   Application of Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion (KMDD) in Foreign Language Teaching at Universities

3.00 - 3.15 pm - Invited presentation by Dr. Kay Hemmerling (Arbeit und Leben e.V., Dresden, Germany):
   How Teachers Should be Trained to Be Able to Foster Moral Competence (working title)
   Break

3.45 - 4.00 pm - Aida Molhakami (Allameh Tabataba’i University, Teheran, Iran):
   The Effect of Moral Competence on Conformity Behavior.

4.00 - 4.15 pm - Asli Akin (Medical School Berlin; Germany):
   Break

4.45 - 5.00 pm - Dr. Kay Hemmerling (Arbeit und Leben e.V., Dresden, Germany):
   How the Konstanz Method of Dilemma-Discussion Could Help Criminals to...
Solve Conflicts Without Using Violence and Deceit. (working title)

5.00 - 5.30 pm - Dr. Malgorzata Stec (Ignatianum University, Kraków, Poland):
The Discussion Theater by Georg Lind and the Theater of the Oppressed by Augusto Boal (working title).

7.00 - 10.00 pm - Dinner and live music by Notker Homburger in the restaurant "Wessenberg Cafe", across the cathedral in the old town of Konstanz. How to get there: Bus lines 9A, 9B, 12, 2, 1, Bus stop "Schottenplatz" (first stop after crossing the river Rhein bridge). By car: parking structure "Untere Laube", then cross street "Untere Laube" and walk into Old Konstanz toward cathedral. Notker Homburger is a well-known singer and songwriter. He combines old tunes with new music, local lyrics with own humouresque texts.

Friday

9.00 - 9.45 Invited lecture by Prof. Dr. Ewa Nowak (Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland):
Constitution or Political Arbitrariness? With or Without the EU? MCT Survey with Law Students in Six Countries (2019).
In collaboration with Tomasz Bekrycht (Lodz), Birden Güngören (Istanbul), Yulia Khrutsik (Minsk), Roma Kriauciuniene (Vilnius), Ilija Manasiev (Skopje), Pawel Mazur (Poznan), Lukasz Pohl (Szczecin), Natalia Danilkina (Groningen), Renetta Bos (Utrecht), Malgorzata ?bikowska (Szczecin).

Break

Short presentations (15 min)

10.00 - 10.30 am - Nick Surdel (University of Florida, USA)
Why do American University Students Have Low Moral Competence? Impact of Culture or Education?

10.15 - 10.30 am - Prof. Dr. Susana Otero (Buenos Aires, Argentina): - cancelled -

10.30 - 10.45 - Daniel Garcia (Universidad Veracruzana, Veracruz, Mexiko):
Moral competence in emerging adults of engineering and psychology and the influence of first person presented dilemmas.

Break

11.00 - 11.30 am - Dr. André Schmiljun (Berlin und Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Polen):
The Turing Triage Test – A Moral Dilemma for Machines?

11.15 - 11.30 am - Mikel Garcia (Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, Spain):
- cancelled - Research on Moral Trauma and Peace to Design Work Strategies with Groups.

Break

12.00 - 13.00 Reflection on the symposium by all participants. Outlook for 2020.

13.00 End of the 13th International Symposium

Optional

13.00 - 14.00 Lunch in the mensa of the university.

16.00 - 17.00 Meeting for preparing a new association (Verein): "Fostering Moral-Democratic Competence" (MoDeCo). Topics: Discussing a draft of the bylaws;
planning next steps: letting a layer and the bureau of revenues check the bylaws, becoming a supportive member and setting the time line for the foundation of the association. Language: German.

Interested? Please contact me for the location: lindgeorg[@]posteo.de

Reviewers
(Note: Reviews have all been open for both sides so that they could have exchange.)

Asli Akin MA, Medical School Berlin.
Friederike Felske, Konstanz, Germany
Prof. Dr. Lei Kang, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, PR China
Prof. Marina Klimenko PhD, University of Florida, USA
Prof. Dr. Roma Kriauciūnienė, University of Vilnus, Lithuania
Aida Mofakhami M.Sc., Allameh Tabataba’i University, Teheran, Iran
Prof. Jairo Ordonez, Universidad Santo Tomás, Bogota, Colombia
Prof. Dr. Pučėtaitė Raminta, University of Kaunas, Lithuania
Dr. Marcia Schillinger, University of Education, Weingarten, Germany
Prof. Daniel Tello, University of Concepcion, Chile
Prof. Shaogang Yang PhD, Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, PR China

Tourist Information Konstanz
Accommodation
Konstanz is a beautiful city, surrounded by an inviting countryside (Lake of Constance, Swiss Alps, mediaeval monasteries and castles etc.), all easily accessible by walking, by bike and by public transportation (bus, train, ship). Switzerland, Austria, France, and Italy are nearby.

Travel
Nearby Airports with train connection to Konstanz, distance in hours:
Zürich (1 hr), Basel (1.5 hr), Friedrichshafen (1 hr), Baden-Baden/Karlsruhe (2 hr), Frankfurt (4 hrs), Munich (4 hrs.). Check whether a cheap Flixbus to Konstanz is available. All times are approximately.

Trains run usually every hour. The airports are well connected. For schedules and prices click here.

Buses: The university can be reached with bus lines #9A and 9B from the railroad station and #11 from Wollmatingen. Bus run about every 15 minutes.

A bike-rental is next to the train station: kultur-rädle.

Program coordination
Georg Lind (georg.lind [@] uni.konstanz.de

Dates
- Call for papers: March 31, 2019 - closed
- Final program: April 30, 2019
- Confirmation of presentation: May 5th, 2019
- Confirmation of the symposium: May 5th, 2019
- Registration for the symposium: June 30, 2019
- Symposium: July 25 - 26, 2019

Presentations: In order to allow many presentations, sufficient time for discussion, and a good basis for future contacts with colleagues, we will restrict most presentations to 15 minutes, and four slides. These may be titled, for example, as (1) Question(s), (2) Method(s), (3) Finding(s)/Discussion. (4) References.

These slides should be readable (minimum font size: 18), and not contain too much information or abbreviations.

In addition, we require each presenter to bring along a handout of 1 - 2 pages handout (double-sided) which contains the slides (in reduced size) plus its back side abstract and contact information (see example).

The online journal "ethics in progress" invites all presenters to submit the full paper to this journal. In order to help you writing a contribution I offer some guidelines in the paper "Art of Experimental (Moral) Psychology." See also my poster which summarizes the findings from studies on the relevance of moral competence for living together in a democracy. For more in-depth search of relevant studies for your topic, see the lists posted here in the left column.
Note: Before the symposium I will also offer a KMDD-Workshop (July 22 - 26, 2019) which includes this symposium. If you attend the workshop, no extra registration for the symposium is necessary.

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## Participants

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Most, if not all people want to live together peacefully and solve problems and conflicts on the basis of commonly accepted moral principles—like freedom, justice, cooperation (in old times called “brotherhood”) and truth—through deliberation and discussion instead of through violence and deceit. This quest for a democratic form of living is a high moral ideal which people hold everywhere in the world. People are not very outspoken about it when they feel that these ideals are largely achieved, but they raise their voice when they experience a gap between their ideals and the reality they see. In order to pay tribute to these ideals many countries have incorporated them into their names. They call themselves republic (res publica, Latin for everyone’s matter), democratic (Webster dictionary: self-ruling, self-government by the people), people’s republic (people’s matter of everyone), or people’s democratic republic (people’s self-rule of everyone’s matter). The power and proliferation of this ideal is also demonstrated by the people who sacrifice their health and their lives for it.

But, why then is there so much unfreedom, injustice, corruption, and violence in our world? Why are existing democracies far from perfect? Why do some “people’s democratic republics” not even grant the most basic democratic rights like free and secret voting to their people? Why is even in the most “developed” democracies, the power of decision-making concentrated in a small elite, freedom restricted by many laws, justice imperfect and cooperation threatened by corruption and exploitation? Why do many people vote against democracy by electing anti-democratic parties and politicians?

Some say that the answer to this question is to be found in the “system.” They argue that a better world can be achieved only through a change of the system and a replacement of the ruling elites. But this argument, I believe, is invalid. Replacing the elites may change the slogans but usually does not change the system. Democracy, the rule by the people, depends foremost on the people. If the people are not prepared for living in a democracy and for taking up responsibility for their own life and for the public good, they easily overburdened by it. If people lack the ability to solve problems and conflicts themselves on the basis of moral-democratic principles through deliberation and discussion with others, then they can solve them only through violence and deceit, or through submitting to some authority. (Lind 2019)

Moral competence is needed because moral ideals or principles, on which we base our every-day decisions are very general and vague. They are mostly unconscious, rooted in our feelings rather than in our conscious thinking. We think about them consciously only when we encounter a conflict, dilemma or problem, that is, when our moral feelings collide with each other, or when others ask us to defend our decisions. Then we give reasons. In both cases, there is a complex “translation” of our unconscious feelings into words involved. This process takes

1 This text is taken from my “Discussion Theater & KMDD Training Manual—DKTM”, which can be downloaded from https://tinyurl.com/yyq67p6z

2 Contact: georg.lind@uni-konstanz.de
time and effort. It can fail: “Oh, sorry, I did not mean to say this! I used the wrong word,” we sometimes exclaim. It fails the more, the less time we have, the less experienced we are in doing this, and the less familiar we are with the “others” whom we explain our moral feelings.

Moral competence is needed because our moral feelings are too broad and undifferentiated. “People cannot be trusted,” we may think when we read in the news about the verdict of a corrupt politician. Especially when we feel morally excited and feel under pressure of time and of other people, it is often hard to make our reason and emotions agree. Emotions are essential for human life. They energize our behavior. They store our own experiences and collective experiences of our community. Yet, if we are not able to control our emotions through our reason, we can become destructive to others and to ourselves. This is why we need the ability to critically reflect on our moral emotions. Moral competence helps to fine-tune our moral emotions and make them more productive. For example, when we feel very upset about an unfair decision, we feel how our emotion take control of our behavior. We try to use brute force to correct the unfairness, use deceit to cover up any failure, or call on the authority to act on our behalf, or we look the other way. Only when we had the opportunity to develop moral competence, we can guide our decisions on the basis of our moral ideals and principles, and can discuss with others the right course of action. The better we can do this the more we make external control of our emotions and external solutions of our problems and conflicts superfluous. If all people had been given an opportunity to use and develop their moral competence to that level, there might be no need for police officers, courts and prisons anymore.

Moral competence is also needed because they require interpretation. It is not easy to judge in concrete situations what “justice” means and . We may feel that something is “not just.” But when we try to explain why we feel so, that is, when we need to put our feelings into words, and when we need to respond to questions in a debate with others, we soon discover that the process of articulation and discussion requires certain abilities.

Last but not least, moral competence is needed because our moral ideals often come in conflict with each other and confront us with a dilemma. We want to safe the environment but also want to use its resources. We want freedom but also want security. We want low prizes on our food but also the producers to be paid fairly. We want free communication but also protected our privacy, and so on. Thus we are continuously confronted with moral dilemmas: Which course of action should be take? Which is less wrong? This means that we must be able to deal with difficult problems and conflicts, and must weigh one ideal against the other. We must endure opposing thoughts and opponents. We must learn to take all consequences of our decisions into account. And often we must do all this within short time. Often problems cannot wait.

Hence a lack of moral competence seems to be the true reason for the gap between the moral ideals of the people on the one side and the amount of evil that exists on the other side. The level of moral competence among people varies much, but overall it is much too low for living together peacefully in a family, neighborhood, town or in a democracy. For this people do not need to be perfect but they need to develop at least some moral competence. Experimental studies suggest that for this all citizens should achieve at least a test score of C = 20.0 on the Moral Competence Test (MCT), which ranges from 0 to 100, or a Stage score of 3 on the Kohlberg moral stage development scale, which ranges from Stage 1 to 6. Only when people’s scores reach this level, they seem to be able to control their behavior through their moral principles and do not be controlled from outside.

My estimate of a minimum sufficient level of moral competence is based on many experimental and correlational studies on the impact of moral competence on various democracy-related behaviors. These studies have used different measure of moral development, which tap moral competence more or less. (See Lind 2019 for more details) The Moral Competence Test
(MCT) is an objective tests of moral competence as manifested in a person’s judgment behavior. This is operationalized as the ability to rate arguments for and against the protagonist’s decision in regard to the arguments’ moral quality instead of their opinion agreement or other qualities (C-score from 0 to 100). The Kohlberg’s Moral Judgment Interview (MJI) assesses the participants’ Stage of reasoning in an interview on three or more dilemma stories (Stages 1 to 6). In the Defining Issues Test (DIT) people’s moral competence is indirectly assessed by the degree to which participants prefer statements which express principled moral reasoning over lower Stage statements (P-score from 0 to 95). The list below contains all experimental and correlational studies which I could find. Even though these studies have used different methods of measurement and have been conducted in very different populations, they all show a very similar picture. They show—without exception—a strong impact of moral competence on these behaviors which are essential for living together peacefully in a self-governed community.

The threshold of 20.0 may look somewhat arbitrary and indeed it is a very crude estimate based on a crude mixture of experimental and correlational studies. But it is the best evidence we have and I am sure that more and better designed studies will not falsify our estimate. The curve which I added in the graph summarizes the findings from many studies regarding the distribution of moral competence world-wide. Unfortunately there are no representative surveys. But because there are so many studies done in many different populations, we can be sure that our overall impression is valid: most people do not reach the minimum moral competence level of 20.0, required for living together in a democracy. If people are not able to solve problems and conflicts though thinking and discussion they will have to use violence and deceit or submit to autocrats. Thus when the people’s moral competence is low a “strong” government and law-enforcing authority is needed to curb criminality and fights between the people. But the government itself can become a source of criminality and violence, namely if people’s moral competence is too low to be able to judge the moral competence of politicians. Eventually, these will turn a “strong democracy” into a autocratic dictatorship. Dictators, however, feel that they owe their position to the low moral competence of their supporters. They are not interested in changing this. They replace democratic education by indoctrination. Thus a society is caught in a vicious cycle which is hard to interrupt.

We should not wait until it is too late. If we want to preserve freedom and democracy then we must prepare people better for democracy by fostering their moral competence. We must provide each and every people with sufficient opportunities to develop their moral competence. We must, as I have indicated with the arrow in the graph, move all people’s moral competence above a C-score of 20.0.

Mission impossible? Not at all. With the Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion and its sister method the Discussion Theater, it is possible to foster moral competence very effectively without the need of changing any curriculum. However, these methods work only if applied by thoroughly trained teachers. And we can achieve this goal only if institutions of higher education install teacher training programs in the field of moral competence development.
Living together in a democracy requires moral competence of all people

Moral competence (C-score)

High: Solve conflicts through deliberation and discussion.

Low: Use violence, deceit, or submission under others to solve conflicts.

Threshold C = 20.0

Living together democratically is possible

An autocratic government is needed

Moral competence impacts these behaviors:
Findings from correlative und experimental (in italics) studies.

- **Freedom:**
  - Refusing to obey immoral orders, Milgram-Experiment (MJI) 11
  - Making autonomous judgment, Ash-Experiment (MCT, MJI, DIT) 18, 26
  - Rejecting violence as a means of politics (MCT) 14
  - Engaging for democratic rights (MCT, MJI) 5, 6
  - Doing open classroom teaching (MCT) 14

- **Justice:**
  - Keeping the law (MJI, MCT) 1, 8, 24
  - Keeping a contract (MJI, DIT) 12, 9
  - Being honest, resist cheating (MJI) 11, 21
  - Blowing the whistle (MCT, DIT) 21, 25

Measurement instruments:
- MCT - Moral Competence-Test
- MJI - Moral Judgment Interview
- DIT - Defining Issues Test

- **Cooperation:**
  - Helping people in distress (MJI) 17, 11, 22
  - Saving Jews under great own risk (MCT) 4
  - Sizing up the moral competence of others (MCT) 23

- **Social and individual competence:**
  - Making decisions swiftly (MCT) 16, 20
  - Behaving well in the classroom (MJI, MCT) 1, 10, 3
  - Learning well and getting good grades (MCT) 7, 13, 19
  - Avoiding drug consumption (MCT) 13
  - Tolerating ambiguity (MCT) 15
  - Showing ego-strength (MCT) 15
  - Supporting peace movements (MCT) 5
References for the shown studies: