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# The Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion (KMDD)

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# 1. Presentation

## 1.1. Introduction

Georg Lind<sup>1</sup> (born 1947), former professor of psychology at the University of Constance, is known for his contributions on the moral development of children to young adults, as a further development of Lawrence Kohlberg's older work, and for their practical pedagogical implementation through the "Konstanz Method of Dilemma Discussion" (KMDD).<sup>2</sup>

"The KMDD can be used in all educational and training institutions. It has found its way into schools, universities, advanced vocational training, armed forces, prisons and old people's homes, at home and abroad."<sup>3</sup> The KMDD is mainly used in schools of higher education, but also in settings as diverse as penal institutions<sup>4</sup> and social work. In Baden-Wuerttemberg, biology teachers are familiarized with the KMDD for the Bioethics project. Outside Europe, one hundred teachers were trained in a district of Colombia, whose Ministry of Education recommends the program to all teachers in the country. In Mexico, universities have trained their ethics professors through the KMDD, in particular medical ethicists.<sup>5</sup> A Polish university has included the KMDD in its training program.<sup>6</sup>

In 2007, the Bundeswehr commissioned Lind to train its officers, psychologists and military chaplains to become KMDD teachers. A discussion following my lecture on ethics training at the Academy for Communication of the Bundeswehr in Strausberg<sup>7</sup> prompted me to take a more fundamental look at the subject.

In practice, so-called dilemma sessions<sup>8</sup> are the main tool of the KMDD. Lind specifies 80-100 minutes as the optimum length of a dilemma session. The dilemma is explained in the first 15 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of sample voting and group formation. Afterwards, small groups of three or four participants are formed in each opinion camp to exchange their arguments. This is followed by 40 minutes of plenary debate, after explanation of the debating rules for "argument ping-pong," in which each speaker selects the next one. Each group then places their arguments in rank order for 10 minutes. There are 5 minutes each for the final vote and for concluding questions.

<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/> and [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg\\_Lind\\_\(Psychologe\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Georg_Lind_(Psychologe)) [Status of cited websites: 4/22/2011].

<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Kay Hemmerling, Matthias Scharlipp, Georg Lind: *Die Konstanzer Methode der Dilemmadiskussion für die Bildungsarbeit mit Risikogruppen*, pp. 303–311 in: Klaus Mayer: *Huldreich Schildknecht: Dissozialität, Delinquenz, Kriminalität: Ein Handbuch für die interdisziplinäre Arbeit*, Zürich: Schulthess: 2009.

<sup>5</sup> See e. g. [http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/pdf/Hernandez-2005\\_Medicine-Professionalism\\_short.pdf](http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/pdf/Hernandez-2005_Medicine-Professionalism_short.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> All according to Lind's own specifications. I found the most recent compilation in Georg Lind: *Die Förderung moralisch-demokratischer Kompetenzen mit der Konstanzer Methode der Dilemma-Diskussion*, pp. 285–301 in: Brigitte Latzko (ed.): *Moralische Entwicklung und Erziehung in Kindheit und Adoleszenz*, Göttingen: Hogrefe: 2010, p. 288.

<sup>7</sup> „Sicherheitspolitische Expertenrunde der Informationsarbeit, Umsetzung der Ethischen Aus- und Weiterbildung in der Informationsarbeit der Bundeswehr“ from March 18th–20th 2009 at the AIK Strausberg“, see also: <https://www.bucer.org/en/resources/resources/details/bonner-querschnitte-122009-ausgabe-96-eng.html>.

<sup>8</sup> See the table with the "Process Description" in Georg Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, EGS-Texte, Munich: Oldenbourg, 2nd ed., 2009, p. 83–84.

## 1.2. Basic Principles

Lind's two major works have very similar titles. The more general one is called "Morality Is Trainable,"<sup>9</sup> and the more scientific one is called "Is Morality Trainable?"<sup>10</sup> In addition, some of his more recent essays are of importance.<sup>11</sup> Lind's fundamental conviction is that a moral action as the result of moral decision making does not arise statically through the knowledge of moral positions, but through conscious discourse involving different moral possibilities during a concrete situation. "Whenever we speak of moral judgement, we therefore always mean moral discursivity."<sup>12</sup>

The KMDD based on the moral step-by-step development scheme of Lawrence Kohlberg<sup>13</sup> and Moshe Blatt<sup>14</sup> (which will be discussed in more detail below), but alters its practical implementation. Through controlled interaction between guided groups regarding dilemma situations, a procedure for in-depth discussion and reflection on moral conflicts was developed.

Lind raises two main criticisms of the Blatt-Kohlberg method.<sup>15</sup> The first is that moral development does not simply go up the six steps in Kohlberg's theory automatically, but can go up and down.<sup>16</sup> Second, Kohlberg's discussion method, due to its authoritative element in the evaluation and classification of contributions, does not lead to a development of moral abilities from within<sup>17</sup>—a problem that Lind thinks he has solved better.

Against the cognitive development theory of morality according to Jean Piaget and Kohlberg and the socialization theory contrary to it, Lind therefore puts an educational theory as the third way of education.<sup>18</sup> According to his view, the development of moral judgment stagnates if it is not stimulated by education. Educational theory is based on cognitive development theory,

<sup>9</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*. In this 2nd edition you will find some smaller but essential changes of the KMDD, see pp. 149–158.

<sup>10</sup> Georg Lind: *Ist Moral lehrbar? Ergebnisse der modernen moralpsychologischen Forschung*, Berlin: Logos, 2nd ed., 2002.

<sup>11</sup> The latest printed publications are: Georg Lind (ed.): *Moral Judgements and Social Education*, New Brunswick (NJ): Transaction, 2010; Lind: *Förderung*; Hemmerling, Scharlipp, Lind: *Methode*; cf. also Georg Lind: *Gewissen lernen? Zur Konstanzer Methode der Dilemmadiskussion*, pp. 101–112 in: Anton A. Bucher (ed.): *Moral, Religion, Politik: Psychologisch-pädagogische Zugänge*. Berlin: Lit, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 19 (italic omitted).

<sup>13</sup> esp. *ibid.*, pp. 46–47

<sup>14</sup> Moshe Blatt, doctoral student of Kohlberg, added the so-called 'Blatt-effect' to Kohlberg's method; cf. Detlef Garz: *Lawrence Kohlberg: Zur Einführung*, Hamburg: Junius, 1996, pp. 132–134. New in pedagogy was Kohlberg's and Blatt's view of how moral judgment develops, whereby two definitions were central: 1. only a cognitive conflict allows a child to develop higher-stage judgments; 2. moral statements and judgments only allow a child to develop a higher-stage judgement if these judgments come from a higher stage.

<sup>15</sup> See the early discussion with Kohlberg in: Georg Lind, Jürgen Raschert (ed.). *Moralische Urteilsfähigkeit: Eine Auseinandersetzung mit Lawrence Kohlberg*. stage Weinheim: Beltz, 1987. On Lind's criticism of Kohlberg, cf. Helga Scheibenpflug: *Die höchste Stufe der Moral: Adäquate Beschreibung anhand des Stufenmodells der Moralentwicklung von Lawrence Kohlberg unter Weiterführung der Kritik der praktischen Vernunft Immanuel Kants*, Kovač: Hamburg, 2007, pp. 102–106, 268–269, in general on critics of Kohlberg p. 87–119.

<sup>16</sup> Lind: *Förderung*, p. 289; cf. on Kohlberg's fixation of the sequence: Alexander Schimmel: *Die Theorie der Entwicklung des religiösen Urteils (Fritz Oser & Paul Gmünder): Darstellung und Diskussion eines multidisziplinären Ansatzes*, Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Müller, 2008, p. 12–13 and William Crain: *Theories of Development*, Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice Hall, 1992<sup>3</sup>, p. 143–144.

<sup>17</sup> So esp. in Lind: *Förderung*, p. 286.

<sup>18</sup> See above all the habilitation thesis Georg Lind: *Eine sozialpsychologische Untersuchung zur Veränderbarkeit der moralischen Urteilsfähigkeit durch Bildungsprozesse*, habilitation thesis Catholic University Eichholz, Konstanz, 1992.

but modifies it at crucial points. On the other hand, Lind regards socialization theory as clearly refuted.<sup>19</sup>

Lind also independently follows Jürgen Habermas, John Dewey and other great constructivists, as well as the communicative ethics of Habermas and the discourse method of Fritz Oser.<sup>20</sup>

Lind sees constructivism primarily in two respects as a guideline for his method: (1) learning takes place from within<sup>21</sup> (the world must be actively constructed by everyone), and (2) there are always several different perceptions of a dilemma itself, not only different opinions about how to solve it.<sup>22</sup>

Lind has compiled and numbered the basic principles of his view differently in various publications. In “Is Morality Trainable?” they appear as follows:<sup>23</sup>

“The solution to moral problems actually depends in a similar way on acquired skills (and not only on the right attitude or motivation) as the solution to other types of action problems does.”<sup>24</sup> Intention and will alone are not enough to act morally.

Moral *abilities* and moral *attitudes* are not two separate components, but aspects of the same thing. Thus the *cognitive* and *affective* aspects of moral behavior can be distinguished, but not separated.

For pedagogy, this means that teachers and parents are not simply faced with the alternative of either not giving their children moral guidelines or *indoctrinating* them, but rather that they need to promote their moral competence as a whole.

Elsewhere, Lind says, “The theoretical foundations are the *two-aspect theory of moral behavior and the educational theory of moral development*.”<sup>25</sup> In addition, there are four practical foundations for the KMDD<sup>26</sup>:

The principle of the “equality” of all participants in the discussion;

The principle of learning as “construction”;

The principle of “affect regulation,” according to which moral affect is the basis of all moral behavior, but often also an obstacle to non-violent, reasonable solutions; and

The principle of self-determined course evaluation—constant control of the method.

### 1.3. Verification

Almost all literature on the KMDD was either written by Lind himself—beginning with his dissertation in 1985<sup>27</sup>—or includes him as co-author or co-initiator. The books and essays

<sup>19</sup> Lind: *Ist Moral lehrbar?*, pp. 18–21, 251.

<sup>20</sup> Fritz Oser: *Moralisches Urteil in Gruppen – Soziales Handeln – Verteilungsgerechtigkeit. Stufen der interaktiven Entwicklung und ihre erzieherische Stimulation*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1981; Fritz Oser, Maria Spychiger: *Lernen ist schmerzhaft. Zur Theorie des Negativen Wissens und zur Praxis der Fehlerkultur*, Weinheim: Beltz, 2005; Roland Reichenbach, Fritz Oser (ed.): *Die Psychologisierung der Pädagogik. Übel, Notwendigkeit oder Fehldiagnose*, Weinheim: Juventa, 2002; on Oser: Schimmel: *Theorie*.

<sup>21</sup> Hemmerling, Scharlipp, Lind: *Methode*, p. 304.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 305

<sup>23</sup> Georg Lind: *Ist Moral lehrbar?*, pp. 11–12, 65.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 11

<sup>25</sup> Lind: *Förderung*, p. 285.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 292–294; similar, but without point 4, in Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, pp. 12–155.

<sup>27</sup> Georg Lind: *Inhalt und Struktur des moralischen Urteilens: Theoretische, methodologische und empirische Untersuchung zur Urteils- und Demokratiekompetenz bei Studierenden*, Diss. University Constance, 1984. newly typeset online-edition, 2000. [http://www.unikonstanz.de/psychologie/ag-moral/pdf/Lind-1985\\_Inhalt-und-Struktur.pdf](http://www.unikonstanz.de/psychologie/ag-moral/pdf/Lind-1985_Inhalt-und-Struktur.pdf).

overlap strongly in terms of content and fairly strongly in terms of text. Unfortunately, there is hardly any independent literature about the KMDD.<sup>28</sup> Lind mainly quotes studies in which he was involved or which he co-initiated, but which since the early 1980s have comprised an impressive number and range of topics.

Lind continually points out that “The KMDD is one of the few teaching methods that have been experimentally tested and which we know (and not only suspect) to be very effective.”<sup>29</sup>

The enthusiasm is clouded by the fact that many of the experimental verifications use the Moral Judgement Test (MUT), which was also developed by Lind and is closely connected with the KMDD method, which means that many things to be proved are already presupposed as given. If you look through the studies compiled and presented by Lind himself,<sup>30</sup> they are quite impressive, but rarely truly independent. This includes above all a Thai study. Lind writes concerning it:

“The high effectiveness of the Constance Method has now been confirmed in a carefully designed intervention experiment with university students in Thailand, in which the participants were randomly divided into the experimental group and the control group (Lerkiatbundit et al., 2006).”<sup>31</sup>

## 1.4. Education

Lind states, “First of all, it should be noted that the findings are clear: the extent and quality of general education show the strongest correlation with the stage of the moral competence to judge. This applies regardless of the research method.”<sup>32</sup>

But Lind then asks why highly educated people are often morally overstrained or even criminal. First, according to Lind, moral demands and temptations are greater for educated people, as they confront more complex moral problems.

Second, Lind sees a difference due to the quality of education. He writes:

“Of course, education in general also promotes moral-democratic abilities ... , although mostly to a lesser extent than is possible with methods such as the KMDD. New studies show, however, that not every kind of education is conducive, but only high-quality education is capable of doing so. A good indicator of the quality of education are the opportunities for accountability and for guided reflection it offers to the learners.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Unpublished is: Ingo Wetter: *Die Frage der Messbarkeit moralischer Urteilsfähigkeit. Die Konstanzer Methode der Dilemmadiskussion*, Lecture at the Academy for Information and Communication of the German Armed Forces in Strausberg on 9/26/2006 (unpublished manuscript), which I use with friendly permission of the author.

<sup>29</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 155 (in the appendix to the 2nd edition, with supporting material), also under <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>.

<sup>30</sup> In graphics compiled in Georg Lind: *How Effective is the Konstanz Method of Dilemma Diskussion (KMDD)?* Powerpoint-presentation with graphics ca. 2010. cf. [http://www.comitenorte.org.mx/ciudadania/docs/taller3/6\\_kmdd\\_effectsize.pdf](http://www.comitenorte.org.mx/ciudadania/docs/taller3/6_kmdd_effectsize.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 155 (in the appendix to the 2nd edition, with proofs), also under <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>, on Sanguan Lerkiatbundit u. a.: Impact of the Konstanz method of dilemma discussion on moral judgment in allied health students: a randomized controlled study. *Journal of allied Health* 35, 2006, pp. 101–108 (wrongly cited by Lind).

<sup>32</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, pp. 121–122.

<sup>33</sup> Lind: *Förderung*, p. 295.

Although general education promotes “moral democratic capacities,” this is true only for “quality education, which includes, above all, continuous and balanced opportunities for accountability and guided reflection.”<sup>34</sup>

## 2. Assessment, especially from a secular point of view

### 2.1. Not only, but also

A core statement of Lind is as follows:

“A mature moral-democratic behavior depends not only on the moral ideals and intentions of a person, but also or above all on his or her ability to apply these ideals consistently and in a complex way in everyday life.”<sup>35</sup>

One cannot help but fully agree with this statement. In my opinion, the central problem with the KMDD is, however, that often the “not only ... but also” (i.e., values/ideals on the one hand and their application on the other hand) first mutates to “above all” (application) and finally to “only,” inasmuch as it doesn’t really matter anymore which values are applied; the thought is missing that there are fundamental and inviolable values and that there are counter-ideal values. (The fact that Lind strongly presupposes values in the form of democracy and its values—such as private non-violence—will be discussed below.)

One could also phrase it differently—and here, of course, the ethicist speaks in me: Despite all the importance that a psychologist acknowledges in the psychological process of ethical decision making, from which we can learn much, there is a danger that ethics will become a purely psychological process that has less and less to do with legally, philosophically or theologically justifiable and derivable contents.

Thus he continues by saying that the central problem of adolescents is “the lack of ability” to “correctly apply moral values and principles in everyday life.”<sup>36</sup>

It is right that this is a big problem and that the KMDD is a good training method. But the central problem of adolescents today is not only that they lack the ability to apply values, but that they often have no conscious and confirmed values at all to apply. Now in turn the missing practical exercise certainly leads to not developing values or taking them seriously. And the practical exercise often helps to make young people aware of their shortcomings, to rediscover buried values, or to take an interest in and decide on certain values for the first time ever.

But if you want to educate young people to become morally competent citizens in a democracy, you need more than exercises. You need to engage in explaining and deriving ideal- and counter-ideal values, making values palatable in conversation and discussion, and then practicing their application.

“Lind points out that in his experience, many children and young people have never in their lives talked to anyone about their problems. When asked, the parents say that they are overstrained by their children’s desires to talk.”<sup>37</sup> This is of course correctly observed by Lind, but here also the issue is not only (but also, of course!) the fact that the parents do not mediate or

<sup>34</sup> All *ibid.*, p. 295.

<sup>35</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 18.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18–19.

<sup>37</sup> Wetter: *Messbarkeit*.

discuss the decision-making routes, but that they often only have a vague foundation of values themselves, do not dare to present their values as “better,” or do not exemplify their few existing, comparatively firm values as role models.

Mutually discussing moral cases is absent everywhere, especially in the parental home. Also, in discussions with children and adolescents, (1) fictitious situations, (2) real cases in the vicinity not affecting oneself, and (3) such cases from one’s own life should be discussed. Such discussions are essential for children and adolescents to develop their own canon of values and/or to accept the values of their parents from their own perspective and conviction, and to implement them in their own way. And such discussions can also continue to be helpful if the canons of values of parents and children have drifted apart.

But is that really all? Don’t parents also have to possess, explain, derive, defend, and exemplify a set of values, and also make clear in conversation how difficult it can sometimes be to implement them?<sup>38</sup>

Besides, it is also possible to apply and practice a lot of morality and, by doing so, still cause damage, because it’s the wrong morality. To put it bluntly, practicing dilemma situations would hardly have changed anything among SS members in the concentration camps, since there was largely no sense of injustice, especially since the SS of course did not provide for an independent opinion anyway. In the Third Reich, too, much was moralized and morally “applied”<sup>39</sup> by the rulers as well as by their opponents, for example in the USA. Those who were morally right could not be recognized by the amount of moralizing.

Of course, this is exactly the opposite of what Lind wants to achieve, as his taking sides for democracy and non-violence time and again makes clear; but can one really learn morality while largely ignoring—at least in the selection of a method and goals—any discussion about the contents of morality as it has been conducted by philosophy and theology for centuries?

Do we directly choose non-violence as an example? Is it of unqualified validity? Isn’t there an ethic of violence that supports the state’s monopoly on the use of force for the protection of all? Can non-violence not also be immoral in certain situations?<sup>40</sup> Shouldn’t the question specifically be the subject of a dilemma discussions that considers when situations characterized by non-violence, even democratic voting procedures, harm other people? And can non-violence be prescribed in dilemma discussions without a discussion of how to react if confronted by unsolicited violence?

This is a further example of the danger that “both/and” becomes “only.” Lind writes:

“The desire to act morally therefore presupposes more than moral ideals and values. It also presupposes the ability to apply these ideals in concrete situations in a consistent and differentiated way, i.e. also to think for oneself about how a dilemma can be solved, and to discuss and argue with others about the solution. We call these capabilities morally democratic capabilities.”<sup>41</sup>

Well, these abilities are indispensable, but they are just the “more ... than moral ideals,” so they still presuppose the need for certain moral ideals!

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Thomas Schirmacher: *Moderne Väter*, Holzgerlingen: Hänssler, 2007.

<sup>39</sup> See Thomas Schirmacher: *Hitlers Kriegsreligion*, Bonn: VKW, 2007, vol. 1.

<sup>40</sup> See hereto Edwin R. Micewski. *Grenzen der Gewalt – Grenzen der Gewaltlosigkeit: Zur Begründung der Gewaltproblematik im Kontext philosophischer Ethik und politischer Philosophie*, Studien zur Verteidigungspädagogik, Militärwissenschaft und Sicherheitspolitik 4, Frankfurt: Lang, 1998 and Edwin R. Micewski: Ethics and Politics, in: idem a. o. (ed.): *Ethik und internationale Politik. Ethics and International Politics*, Wien: Literas, 2001, p. 1– 17.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>.



## 2.2. The KMDD requires a set of values after all

In my opinion, the KMDD, despite all affirmations that it does not presuppose a certain morality and is not interested in certain fixed moral values, presupposes, especially in a Western democratic society, an instinctively existing mixture of Jewish-Christian and enlightened-humanistic values, as it is typical for many (but by no means for all) countries. Would the KMDD also work out with a group of suicide bombers whose values are determined by Islamism? Or doesn't the dilemma discussion here lead to helping criminals to become better criminals? (Though I would love to be proven wrong by further studies.)

In other words, the KMDD requires much more ethical content and ideals than it officially concedes. Its success is not only due to the method, but also because it is used by Lind and others to propagate a peaceful, democratic society based on human dignity and law. For Lind is concerned with the "ability to resolve conflicts and differences of opinion by weighing them up and discussing them reasonably with others rather than by violence and the exercise of power."<sup>42</sup>

This becomes clear when Lind writes, "Morality, democracy and education are closely linked. Modern democracies are based on the idea that the coexistence of people in a society is not regulated by kings or tyrants, but by the people themselves on the basis of moral principles to which everyone is committed. Democracy is essentially a moral institution. Conversely, modern morality is democratic. It is not a compliant instrument in the hands of a ruling class, as it is still discernable in terms such as sexual morality, moral majority and double standards. Rather, moral principles form the basis, acceptable by all, for the possibility of non-violent, communication-oriented and just solutions to conflicts."<sup>43</sup>

For Lind, democracy is "based on moral principles and procedures on how conflicts are to be settled and decided."<sup>44</sup> Now, in my opinion, these are just as much moral contents as a certain view of family or economy is. Moreover, the Basic Law, for example, is not just about principles and procedures, but about concrete contents and ideals whose protection these principles and procedures serve, which are therefore not an end in themselves. It is the so-called "eternal values" of the Basic Law, i.e., the sections on human dignity and central human rights that cannot be changed by Parliament itself, that the "democracy" procedure is intended to defend and—according to historical experience—can also defend best. Democracy is not a value in itself, but the best way to protect fundamental values, such as the protection of minorities, which mathematically contradicts the majority principle, but is superior to the majority principle in terms of value.<sup>45</sup>

Among Lind's values, only "moral principles and procedures" such as "respect for human dignity, the rule of law, social justice, freedom of opinion and political responsibility, etc." can be found.<sup>46</sup> But isn't that already a predetermined morality? Social justice is not a pure principle or procedure, but first of all a clear value!

<sup>42</sup> Hemmerling, Scharlipp, Lind: *Methode*, p. 303.

<sup>43</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 31 (with references to books by Habermas and Kohlberg).

<sup>44</sup> [http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag\\_moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm](http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag_moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm).

<sup>45</sup> Cf. for more detail Thomas Schirrmacher: *Ethik*, Vol. 6, Hamburg: RVB, 2011. p. 56–172; Thomas Schirrmacher: Demokratie und christliche Ethik, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (supplement to *Das Parlament*) 14/2009 (30/3/2009): p. 21–26, also under [http://www1.bpb.de/publikationen/N6VK9L,0,Demokratie\\_und\\_christliche\\_Ethik.html](http://www1.bpb.de/publikationen/N6VK9L,0,Demokratie_und_christliche_Ethik.html); Christianity and Democracy, in: *International Journal for Religious Freedom* 2, 2009, H. 2, pp. 73–86.

<sup>46</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 42.



And isn't the goal of making one's own decisions and standing up for the good from within also already a set of values in itself which not all cultures and worldviews share?

And why should just these principles be preset and not others, even ones that are opposed to them? Where do they come from and how are they justified? Furthermore, why aren't they also open to discussion and disposition? Yes, are not the principles and procedures values themselves, and are not thereby certain (and welcome!) values fixed? Why is the question discussed as to whether other values would not be just as worthy to be named or incorporated in advance?

Let's take an example. Lind refers to Immanuel Kant, according to whom the morality of an action does not exist if it "coincides" with divine commandments, but only if it arises from good motives.<sup>47</sup> There is a certain validity in this claim, but it is (1) of course a value system of its own, which would first have to be discussed, and (2) a statement related only to the individual, because from the other person's point of view, the good action deriving from "bad" motives (he does not beat me because he is afraid of punishment) is better than a bad action deriving from "good" motives (he beats me because he thinks he can serve justice or achieve an educational success by doing so).

### 2.3. No fixed set of values, but democracy?

Lind says that there can be no fixed set of values in a democracy and that the KMDD only wants everyone to bring their values into the discourse. And in fact, the KMDD's repeated emphasis that each participant should only represent what corresponds to his view should be welcomed. In the good tradition of the movement named after the year "1968", we learned to debate at school by counting off and forming two groups randomly, so that one had to learn to defend positions that contradicted one's own view.

"The close connection between morality, education and democracy"<sup>48</sup> is a given fact for Lind:

"The core objective of the KMDD is therefore to apply the basic moral principles of democracy in everyday life (including the learning process!) and thereby motivate learners to apply their own moral principles and offer them concrete behavior patterns for practice and imitation."<sup>49</sup>

But isn't that a set of values that is seen by many Muslim leaders see quite differently? Lind often becomes very clear on this point:

"Democracy is a very demanding moral idea about how people should regulate and shape their coexistence. In democracy, power is not based on persons (like the king in the kingdom and the tyrant in the dictatorship), but on moral principles and procedures for resolving conflicts. Certain people (politicians, judges, etc.) are given the mandate to care in a special way for the observance and interpretation of these principles, but these people must be legitimized by direct or indirect election. They cannot acquire this power themselves or have it transferred by a religious authority. Law and order in a democracy are determined on the basis of universal moral principles through a free discourse of all members of a society and are not based on arbitrary decisions of a power holder. Conflicts are not resolved by power and violence, but by democratically determined laws and by the discourse of free citizens."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>48</sup> Lind: *Ist Moral lehrbar?*, p. 265.

<sup>49</sup> <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

This becomes most apparent when Lind, referring to the sixth and highest stage of moral development in Kohlberg and to international studies of his own Moral Judgment Test, points out that there is a worldwide consensus that dilemma discussions should be “oriented toward universalist moral principles.”<sup>51</sup>

## 2.4. Indoctrination

Lind has adopted Kohlberg’s idea of locating his method between moral relativism and moral indoctrination. But Kohlberg has simply declared any mediation of morality, in which a result was considered good from the outset, to be indoctrination. Lind nowhere discusses this issue directly, but his line of argument seems to come to the same conclusion.

At this point, a fundamental debate would have to take place, since this is a core question of moral psychology, which Lind leaves out. Since children, when adopting the language, culture and values of their ancestors and environment, always—despite their independent interaction with them—ie simply adopting or varying substantial elements, the question is also a central question about cultural mediation in general. Do all humans have to reinvent every value from scratch, or is it permissible to adopt values and gradually make them their own?

According to Kohlberg, “indoctrination” occurs when the content of moral education and its method are determined by the teacher’s intention.<sup>52</sup>

I contend that Kohlberg and Lind themselves are practicing indoctrination according to their own definition, for the values and goals they want to achieve—the achievement of which is only quantifiable in the test, because the test stages are specified—and even the best method, are predefined. Lind would certainly not be pleased if a person participating in KMDD sessions became a mass murderer by doing so. The path to universal justice and democracy is according to Lind more subtle, more practicable and more meaningful in a pluralistic society, but it remains a pedagogical method with a target dictated not by the children and young people involved but rather by the pedagogues. (One might even say that this pedagogical method is predetermined for the KMDD teachers, who are allowed to teach the KMDD only if they have taken certain courses and adopted the method.)

According to Kohlberg, indoctrination seems to have taken place automatically when a child adopts moral values and decisions shared and taught by his or her educators. But since there is not a limitless number of moral views in this world, almost every one of us winds up with attitudes and decisions that others have had before him or her.

However, in my opinion it is not a case of indoctrination when I am taught moral attitudes and positions, then debate them in interaction with other positions, refine them, test them in practice, and finally adopt them as the position chosen of my own volition.

This is precisely the Christian view.<sup>53</sup> Paul, for instance, wants us to follow the divine commandments (such as the Ten Commandments) not as slaves, not even as children, but voluntarily, as mature heirs (see for example Gal 4:1–7). It is said of Jesus that he always obeyed his Father, but always acted of his own free will (John 10:11, 17–18; Phil 2:8; Heb 9:14). This is

<sup>51</sup> Lind: *Förderung*, p. 289.

<sup>52</sup> So in Lawrence Kohlberg: *Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Moral Education*, in: Brenda Munsey (ed.): *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg. Basic Issues in Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Education*, Birmingham (AL): Religious Education Press, 1980, pp. 15–98, here: p. 27.

<sup>53</sup> The best presentation of indoctrination is: Elmer John Thiessen: *Teaching for Commitment. Liberal Education, Indoctrination and Christian Nurture*, Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993.

the Christian ideal: the mature personality who does the good and the righteous embodied in God, not because she has to, but because she wants it out of her own deep conviction; not because she is afraid of punishment, but because she considers it in itself to be the best for all (see Rom 13:5, for example).

### **Excursus: stages of moral development according to Kohlberg**

“The cognitive development theory of moral judgment by Lawrence Kohlberg<sup>54</sup> is based, inter alia, on John Rawls’s moral philosophical theory of righteousness<sup>55</sup> and represents an advancement of Jean Piaget’s theory of moral development. Conceptually, Kohlberg’s theory is based on Jean Piaget’s development model of cognitive development.<sup>56</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of the development of moral consciousness in humans is based on his dissertation (1958), followed by a longitudinal analysis running almost 30 years. Throughout his life, Kohlberg worked on his theory of moral judgment development and constantly revised and expanded it. The theory assumes that the moral consciousness of humans develops gradually in the same sequence, whereby not all humans reach the higher stages of moral consciousness.”<sup>57</sup>

Kohlberg’s stages are philosophically predetermined by him and then only afterwards were empirically demonstrated, but only up to the fourth or fifth stage. Kohlberg himself has made this clear time and again.<sup>58</sup>

Kohlberg wanted to derive philosophical statements from empirical-psychological and anthropological data and to use philosophy to define and interpret such data.<sup>59</sup>

Kohlberg himself states that he found stages 1 to 4 in 50 cultures, but the fifth stage only in urban environments.<sup>60</sup> The actually tracable studies refer to fewer cultures.<sup>61</sup> For Kohlberg, the main evidence that the fifth and sixth stages are not a product of Western ideologies were kibbutzes in Israel.<sup>62</sup> This is not very convincing, because the basic ideas of kibbutzes have already been developed in Europe and by European immigrants in Israel.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. on Kohlberg generally Brenda Munsey (ed.): *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg. Basic Issues in Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Education*, Birmingham (AL): Religious Education Press, 1980; Detlef Garz: *Sozialpsychologische Entwicklungstheorien. Von Mead, Piaget und Kohlberg bis zur Gegenwart*, Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwiss., 3rd ed., 2006, esp. pp. 88–115; Garz: *Kohlberg*.

<sup>55</sup> Compare concerning John Rawl’s theory of justice Dwight Boyd: The Rawls Connection, 185–213 in: Brenda Munsey (Hg.): *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg. Basic Issues in Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Education*, Birmingham (AL): Religious Education Press, 1980.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. on Piaget: Crain: *Theories*, pp. 100–133 and Garz: *Entwicklungstheorien*.

<sup>57</sup> [http://www.d-stift.de/\\_Stufentheorie\\_des\\_moralischen\\_Verhaltens\\_8927.de](http://www.d-stift.de/_Stufentheorie_des_moralischen_Verhaltens_8927.de) (1.4.2011). Cf. Lawrence Kohlberg: *Zur kognitiven Entwicklung des Kindes*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974; Lawrence Kohlberg: *Die Psychologie der Moralentwicklung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996; Lawrence Kohlberg: *Die Psychologie der Lebensspanne*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007. A good presentation of the stages can be found in Schimmel, *Theorie*, pp. 31–34.

<sup>58</sup> E. g. Lawrence Kohlberg: My Personal Search for Universal Morality. In: *Moral Education Forum* 11, 1986, H. 1, pp. 4–10; German: Meine persönliche Suche nach universeller Moral, in: Lisa Kuhmerker, Uwe Gielen, Richard L. Hayes (ed.): *Lawrence Kohlberg*, München: Kindt, 1996, pp. 21–30; Lawrence Kohlberg: Stages of Moral Development as a Basis for Moral Education, in: Brenda Munsey (ed.): *Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg. Basic Issues in Philosophy, Psychology, Religion, and Education*, Birmingham (AL): Religious Education Press, 1980, pp. 15–98, esp. pp. 56–62, see also his definition of righteousness, pp. 62–66.

<sup>59</sup> Lisa Kuhmerker, Uwe Gielen, Richard L. Hayes (ed.): Lawrence Kohlberg, München: Kindt, 1996, p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> Kohlberg, Personal Search, 28. Cf. on Taiwan Kohlberg: Stages, pp. 62–66.

<sup>61</sup> Siehe Garz: *Kohlberg*, pp. 94–100.

<sup>62</sup> Hereto *ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

Ulf Peltzer has briefly compiled Kohlberg's nine basic moral-philosophical assumptions<sup>63</sup> and discussed and refuted them in detail.<sup>64</sup> I will not delve into these details here, but I do wish to highlight the fact that we do not have a strictly empirical science before us, but a philosophical-ideological guideline, which then finds empirical confirmation within the framework of narrowly limited investigations.

### **Lawrence Kohlberg's 6 stages of moral development<sup>65</sup>**

#### **Level A: Preconventional (most children under 9 years)**

##### *Stage 1: The heteronomous stage*

The good is blind obedience to regulations and to authority in order to avoid punishment and not to endure physical suffering.

“Might is right” (a slogan attributed to the Nazis)

##### *Stage 2: The stage of individualism, of end-means thinking and of exchange*

It is good to serve one's own or other's needs and to treat each other fairly in the sense of concrete exchange.

“You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours!” (folk wisdom)

#### **Level B: Conventional (most adolescents and adults)**

*Stage 3: The stage of mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships and interpersonal conformity*

It is good to play a good (nice) role, take care of others, be loyal and reliable to partners, and be willing to follow rules and live up to expectations.

“Do to others as you would have them do to you!” (the Golden Rule; cf. Luke 6:31)

##### *Stage 4: The stage of the social system and the lost conscience*

It is good to fulfill one's duties in society, to maintain social order and to take care of the welfare of society.

“Peace is the citizen's first obligation” (from an announcement posted on the street corners of Berlin on October 17, 1805, after the battle at Jena)

#### **Level C: Postconventional (some adults over age 20)**

##### *Stage 5: The stage of the social contract or benefit for all and the rights of the individual*

It is good to support the fundamental rights as well as the fundamental values and contracts of a society, even if they collide with the concrete rules and laws of a social subsystem.

“Property entails responsibility. Its use should at the same time serve the common good.” (Art. 14 II of the National Constitution of Germany)

##### *Stage 6: The stage of universal ethical principles*

It is good to regard such ethical principles as normative, which should be followed by all humanity.

“Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law!” (Kant's categorical imperative)

<sup>63</sup> Ulf Peltzer: *Lawrence Kohlbergs Theorie des moralischen Urteilens*, Beiträge zur psychologischen Forschung 10, Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986, pp. 32–33.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., pp. 32–55.

<sup>65</sup> According to Werner Stangel, Fernuniversität Hagen, under <http://www.stangltaller.at/arbeitsblaetter/moralischeentwicklung/KohlbergTabelle.shtml>, in the following order: Stage – Definition – Exemplary maxim. Cf. overall the excellent page of the Fernuniversität Hagen, Kurs Einführung in die Psychologie, Abschnitt „Die moralische Entwicklung“: <http://www.stangl-taller.at/arbeitsblaetter/moralischeentwicklung/>. By Kohlberg himself: Lawrence Kohlberg: Stages, pp. 91–96.

**Stages of Moral Development according to L. Kohlberg<sup>66</sup>****6***Orientation toward universal ethical principles*

“Universal and solidary perspective”

It is morally right to respect ethical principles which all humanity should follow.

**5***Orientation toward the social contract*

“All of us, me too”

It is morally right to weigh up all interests and to decide in such a way that one acts in the interest of the common good.

**4***Orientation toward authority and social environment*

It is morally right for Jutta’s right to privacy to be protected and for her social family order to be maintained.

**3***Orientation toward harmony and reference group*

“Me and you and our group”

The privacy of the child is taken into account by the parents. However, it is morally justified for them to take care of their child and reliably fulfill their duties as legal guardians.

**2***Orientation toward purpose and interaction (usefulness)*

“Me and the other one”

It is morally right to look at the needs of the child and, as parents, to fairly meet their concerns.

**1***Orientation toward punishment and obedience*

“I”

As legal guardians, the parents have done what’s morally right.

**Concerning the sixth stage**

In principle, Lind retains the stages of Kohlberg’s moral development, even if, unlike Kohlberg, he considers up-and-down movement to be possible and adjusts the pedagogical means for advancement differently. This is particularly evident from the fact that the sixth stage of development, although hardly ever achieved, nevertheless remains the ideal target to be met.

Surprisingly, a discussion of these stages or at least a reference to the intensive literary discussion about them<sup>67</sup> is largely missing in Lind’s works, in particular a discussion about the philosophical foundations of the stages.

<sup>66</sup> Freiheit! (L(i)eben!?, edition April 2010, [http://www.sembbsrp.de/uploads/media/Freiheit\\_L\\_i\\_eben-April\\_2010\\_01.pdf](http://www.sembbsrp.de/uploads/media/Freiheit_L_i_eben-April_2010_01.pdf).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. as an older and a younger example among the immense literature on Kohlberg: Fritz Oser, Reinhard Franke, Otfried Höffe (ed.): *Transformation und Entwicklung. Grundlagen der Moralerziehung*, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1986; Ulf Peltzer: *Lawrence Kohlbergs Theorie des moralischen Urteilens*, Beiträge zur psychologischen Forschung 10. Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1986; Garz, *Entwicklungstheorien*, pp. 168–176.

Joachim Detjen writes:

“For the theory receives its prescriptive character not so much by the fact that the next stage of development, due to the fact that it expresses a higher cognitive performance, can be described as better, than rather by the analogizing parallelization of development with a gradual convergence to what philosophical ethics dictates. Every diagnosis of a developmental stage below the sixth one at least implicitly expresses a negative assessment, for it refers to a moral philosophically deficient status of the encountered level of reflection.”<sup>68</sup>

Detjen further notes, “Moral stages 5 and 6 are philosophical constructs; in fact they represent a reception of moral philosophies that are considered modern in the European-American context and are generally recognized in the discourse of Western philosophers. We could say more pointedly that they spring from the ideas of rationalism and individualism and are politically oriented towards liberalism, and we could therefore object to Kohlberg that he advertises certain ideals which are bound to the cultural sphere and not universal, as the theory claims.”<sup>69</sup>

William Crain has also shown that stage 6 can hardly be distinguished empirically from stage 5, but that it is a philosophical guideline in the tradition of Kant and Rawls, portraying how moral behavior should be.<sup>70</sup> To cite Joachim Detjen once again:

“Kohlberg’s philosophical authorities for stage 6 are above all Immanuel Kant, John Rawls and Kurt Baier. Decisive for this stage is that here judgement must be made according to universal principles valid for all human beings (humanity). Culturally relative aspects must therefore play no part here. This exclusion makes the above-mentioned philosophers attractive due to their thinking which aims at the generalization of principles and maxims and largely renounces any predefinition of what is contentually good. Kant’s demand for autonomy and his categorical imperative, Rawls’s concept of justice as the result of a fair decision under conditions of uncertainty, and Baier’s view of morality based on impartiality fulfil Kohlberg’s requirements for a stage 6 moral judgement.”<sup>71</sup>

“It is no exaggeration to say that Kohlberg even believes that he has discovered the pedagogical royal road. For he gives his educational approach the credit of avoiding the dangers of other concepts of value education, which either stop at value relativism or moral laissez-faire or indoctrinate the pupils with prefabricated value convictions and educate them, as he says, to an arbitrary ‘bundle of virtues’”.<sup>72</sup>

This statement applies precisely to Lind. He also considers his way to be a kind of happy medium, which avoids a fixation on concrete values as well as value relativism. Ingo Wetter even

<sup>68</sup> Joachim Detjen. *Werteerziehung im Politikunterricht mit Lawrence Kohlberg? Skeptische Anmerkungen zum Einsatz eines Klassikers der Moralphysikologie in der Politischen Bildung*, in: Gotthard Breit, Siegfried Schiele (ed.): *Werte in der politischen Bildung*. Schwalbach: Wochenschau-Verlag; Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2000, 303–335, here p. 307–308 Text unter [http://www.lpb-bw.de/publikationen/did\\_reihe/band22/detjen.htm](http://www.lpb-bw.de/publikationen/did_reihe/band22/detjen.htm) und in *Freiheit! (L(i)eben!?) Unsere Kultur der politischen Bildung*, Ausgabe April 2010, [http://www.sembsrp.de/uploads/media/Freiheit\\_L\\_i\\_eben-April\\_2010\\_01.pdf](http://www.sembsrp.de/uploads/media/Freiheit_L_i_eben-April_2010_01.pdf). pp. 2–18.

<sup>69</sup> Detjen: *Werteerziehung*, p. 308.

<sup>70</sup> William Crain: *Theories of Development*, Englewood Cliffs (NJ): Prentice Hall, 3rd ed., 1992, pp. 134–153, esp. pp. 140–144.

<sup>71</sup> Detjen: *Werteerziehung*, p. 309.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 311.



has the feeling that Lind thinks he has “found an all-encompassing approach to the problems of mankind.”<sup>73</sup>

But also disputable is the question of whether the associated philosophical-ideological foundation can really claim universal validity and is in itself sufficient to put concrete value systems such as Christianity, Kant’s or Alevi out of contention. Another key question is whether a construct is being pursued here that Kohlberg himself was hardly able to empirically determine, nor have others ever attached it to concrete persons. Ralf Gesellensetter states accordingly:

“It has already been mentioned that empirical research has not been able to detect any stage 6 representatives in the normal population. Even utilitarianism ... pursues a moral-philosophical goal which manages with the characteristics represented by stage 5.”<sup>74</sup>

At the same time, the stages of Kohlberg’s and Lind’s moral development contain—albeit mediated by Kant, Habermas and others—a hard core of Western Christian notions, by ethics at all being attached to an ideal (though it is no longer identified with God), and by the idea of a personality that does good completely voluntarily and thereby thinks of the welfare of all mankind being the ideal par excellence. If we, for example, replace Thomas Aquinas’s term God with “the good”—and after all, he considers God to be the good or rather the good par excellence—the personality already appears that recognizes the good given by God independently with her intellect and does it voluntarily, not because she is forced but because it is good.

Typically, and much more obviously than with Kohlberg and Lind, this tendency appears in the writings of all authors who describe or justify the sixth stage in greater detail. Helga Scheibenpflug for instance (in *Die höchste Stufe der Moral: Adäquate Beschreibung anhand dem Stufenmodell der Moralentwicklung von Lawrence Kohlberg unter Weiterführung der Kritik der praktischen Vernunft Immanuel Kants* [The highest stage of morality: Adequate description on the basis of Lawrence Kohlberg’s step-by-step model of moral development, in continuation of the critique of practical reason by Immanuel Kant]) describes the sixth stage as the “principle of love,” although defined in terms of Kant and Viktor Frankl.<sup>75</sup> To be sure, God is here no longer identical with the primordial principle of love, but the primordial principle continues to work like a divine value as the ultimate ideal, without there being any empirical justification for it.

Fritz Oser has taken a critical look at the sixth stage<sup>76</sup> and sees particularly the last stages as more philosophically presupposed than evidenced. They are part of a “theory system that *constructs* the stages a priori through philosophical-logical analyses of ethical judgements and only then verifies them through empiricism.”<sup>77</sup> He sees this most clearly in Kohlberg’s speculations about a seventh stage, a kind of pantheistic faith orientation in which universal principles are combined with an “ultimate meaning” of life.<sup>78</sup> Oser writes, “I don’t believe that Kohlberg has

<sup>73</sup> Wetter: *Messbarkeit*, p. 4.

<sup>74</sup> Ralf Gesellensetter: *Moralentwicklung*. <http://www.stangl-taller.at/arbeitsblaetter/moralischeentwicklung/Gesellensetter.shtml#f13>.

<sup>75</sup> Helga Scheibenpflug: *Die höchste Stufe der Moral. Adäquate Beschreibung anhand des Stufenmodells der Moralentwicklung von Lawrence Kohlberg unter Weiterführung der Kritik der praktischen Vernunft Immanuel Kants*, Hamburg: Kovač, 2007, pp. 213–220.

<sup>76</sup> Oser: *Moralisches Urteil in Gruppen*, p. 337–342.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.



solved the problem of religious implications in moral judgment with the draft of stage 7.”<sup>79</sup> Oser also sees the priority of philosophical desires over empiricism in Jürgen Habermas’ re-definition of a seventh stage.<sup>80</sup>

## 2.5. Only applying, not changing?

Lind writes:

“The KMDD focuses on promoting moral judgement and discourse. Whereas other programs are usually concerned with changing moral attitudes, values and ways of thinking, this program is about skills in the area of moral-democratic behavior.”<sup>81</sup>

On one hand, it has to be said that most programs do not have the modification or the application, but purely the (theoretical) mediation of values or instructions. The change only comes into play inasmuch that the participants may have previously held different values and positions, but it is mostly aimed at those participants who, on many issues, do not have a real opinion or who—at least officially—share or should share the learned set of values.

On the other hand, I think Lind underestimates the potential of the KMDD to change moral attitudes and values. Since many participants think about the consequences of their values and attitudes for the first time and since many participants expose their values to criticism from others for the first time, they often change their views on this occasion as well. I find this fact very positive, but this effect is hardly described or appreciated by the KMDD itself.

Once again: All this should not diminish the merit of the KMDD in pointing out that pure knowledge and representation of values does not yet ensure that one can live by them and apply them concretely. *Ethics must always include engaging in dialogue with oneself, with others and with society.*

Experiments, Lind points out, show that a morally good decision is more likely to come about if you first concentrate on the dilemma and then have time for discourse.<sup>82</sup> The only way to examine this claim is through experience.

First, there are hardly any other methods of ethical education available for comparison.

Second, this, after all, presupposes that one can judge objectively whether a decision was good or not.

And third, the experiments on the question of whether the statistically more frequent good ethical decision also leads to better action should be expanded. Of course, this is incomparably more difficult to research if one does not want to rely solely on the self-assessments of the persons concerned (for example, “How often have you beaten someone in the last two weeks?”), and it would also be necessary to compare this with the previous life and behavior of the persons concerned. But only reality is morally informative in the end.

## 2.6. Evil

Lind asks again and again: Why is it that moral ideals don’t lead directly to morally good action, as Socrates and Kant hoped? Lind believes that moral action must be practiced by going through

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> On Habermas: *ibid.*, pp. 342–344.

<sup>81</sup> <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>.

<sup>82</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 58.

possible situations and discussing them with different minded persons. But is that all? Wasn't that also the natural thing to do for Socrates and Kant, who were so fond of discussing things?

In my opinion, the category that Lind completely ignores, even if it does not contradict his statement but complements it, is the question of evil or the motivation for evil. Why do some people love to torture, cheat or even kill others? Why are there crimes against humanity, racism or slavery?

According to the KMDD, when people decide on something that really harms others, the cause always seems to lie in their missing ability to discourse or in the fact that in a minority situation, one has too little courage or is simply too lazy.

The problem that man also knows a motivation for evil, yes, that the KMDD—like everything in this world—when in the hands of evil men with evil goals could be a tool to practice malice better, is completely ignored.

We find Paul's classical description of the dilemma in Romans 7:18–19, 21: “For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. . . . So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me.” This is not a problem only presented by Christians, but occupies the entire history of philosophy and ethics.

“Lind starts from the assumption that no human being is born fundamentally evil. Basic moral concepts in humans are very similar, regardless of age, gender and social status. But one must learn morality as early as possible. The ability to live moral ideals in everyday life can only be trained through the constant accompanied learning process. The gap between theoretical ideas and actual action must be bridged.”<sup>83</sup>

### 3. Evaluation, especially from a Christian point of view

#### 3.1. Commonalities between KMDD and Christian ethics

Let us ask in particular about the relationship of Christian ethics to the KMDD, an issue already mentioned in section 2.5, keeping in mind that the KMDD's intention is neither to promote nor to criticize Christian ethics per se.

On one hand, the KMDD includes central elements of Christian ethics in its story. Yes, I would like to claim that it could only develop and can come to full development in our once-Christian culture, but this does not mean that it is not comprehensible by people of good will.

1. The KMDD and Christian ethics have in common the idea that the question of how I really decide and what I really do is much more important than the question of which values I theoretically represent. It rightly assumes that one's moral attitude does not say anything about how one actually decides and how one actually behaves. But Paul already teaches this, for instance several times in the Epistle to the Romans (Rom 2: it is not those who are righteous who fulfill Scripture, but those who do what is right; Rom 7: I want the good, but do not perform it), and Jesus explains the same thing in the parable of the two sons. The one son agreed with his father and then never did what the father wanted; the other contradicted the father, but then later changed his mind and still

<sup>83</sup> Wetter: *Messbarkeit*, p. 1.

fulfilled the father's desire. The latter, Jesus said, despite his contradiction, did better in the end (Mt 21:28–31).

2. The KMDD and Christian ethics have in common the idea that ethics must be practiced and is not simply a matter of head knowledge of certain values. For “the perfect,” according to Hebrews 5:14, are “those who have senses practiced through use, and therefore can discern good from evil” (see also Eph 4:14). “Ethical virtues do not arise by themselves. Rather, they are the product of constant practice and habit.”<sup>84</sup>
3. The KMDD and Christian ethics have in common the significance of inner motivation for our moral action and the goal of acting morally out of conscience and therefore of knowing why one acts a certain way, and not to be just “obedient,” conformist and lazy in thought (see Rom 12:1–2). This also includes the awareness that there is a moral maturing of the child into an adolescent and adult, and thus from a pure acceptance of given commandments to independent decision making (Heb 5:11–14; Eph 4:13–14). A good example here is Paul, who requires Christians to follow the state when it punishes evil and protects good, not out of fear of punishment like others (as inevitably the state cannot exist without punishment), but “for the sake of conscience” (Rom 13:5).
4. The KMDD and Christian ethics have in common a belief in universal, worldwide, accepted moral principles – see Lind's quotes above. No matter whether we think of the Catholic “natural law,” the Protestant “moral law” derived from the Bible or fundamental transcendental philosophical principles according to Immanuel Kant, for the Christian West this thought is fundamental and was the prerequisite for the triumphal march of the idea of human rights. It is assumed that the revealed or metaphysically justified morality is identical with a morality that is reasonably accessible to and debatable by everyone.<sup>85</sup>
5. The KMDD and Christian ethics have in common the idea of the dilemma that was negotiated in theology for centuries under the keyword “conflict of duties,” which Lind expresses as follows: “if a person is stuck in a moral dilemma, that is, if the moral principles which he feels obliged to bring him into a purpose in which he has no other alternative than to transgress at least one of the principles.”<sup>86</sup>  
Thomas Aquinas and many others knew that the core of ethics is the ability to decide in the event of conflict, i.e., conflicting obligations. Thanks to Lind, this has once again become the focus of attention. It's always easy to make armchair decisions, because you can concentrate on one difference, or the one switch, so to speak. But complex reality creates unexpected ethical dilemmas, whereas one can learn in advance to reckon with them and work through possible solutions.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Christian Walther: *Im Auftrag für Freiheit und Frieden. Versuch einer Ethik für Soldaten der Bundeswehr*, Berlin: Miles, 2006, p. 77.

<sup>85</sup> However, such a universal ethics must not be confused with a concrete and casuistically detailed guideline like the Islamic Sharia; see Christine Schirmacher: *Die Scharia*, Holzgerlingen: SCM Hänssler, 2009.

<sup>86</sup> <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. my account of the conflict of duties in the Bible and the history of Christian ethics, in: Thomas Schirmacher: *Ethik*, vol. 3, pp. 60–76.

6. Lind has compared many intervention studies and comes to the conclusion that moral judgement is “very effectively teachable.”<sup>88</sup> Christian ethics agrees with him here in principle, since it assumes that ethics is fundamentally a question of teaching, education, example and application (for example, 2 Tim 3:14–17). This is the Old Testament educational concept (embodied, for example, in the Book of Proverbs) that Paul in particular adopted.  
The qualification that the tendency to evil cannot simply be removed through education has already been mentioned, but does not change the fact that ethical decision making does not simply arise out of the blue.
7. Christian ethics agrees with Lind that education in Western countries is very one-sided and neglects non-visible aspects like ethical values. “But it is above all the one-sided promotion of technical and economic education that makes our society unstable.”<sup>89</sup>

### 3.2. Differences between KMDD and Christian Ethics

In my opinion, the KMDD, on the other hand, deviates from the tradition of Christian ethics at six points.

#### ***Evil***

1. On one hand, the KMDD overlooks evil as a power that leads us to immoral actions even when we know the right way.  
Here the KMDD follows the classical view of the Enlightenment, that the problems of man lie solely in the lack of enlightenment and that therefore education, discourse and reasonable decision alone will liberate man from his misfortune. Christian ethics means to exclude none of all this, but nevertheless Christian ethics regards it as proven that even then people often still decide for evil, and so more than reasonable arguments is needed to free people from the inclination or even addiction to harm themselves and others.

#### ***Guilt and responsibility***

2. Closely related to this point, the KMDD does not raise the question of responsibility for one’s own actions and thus ignores the question of guilt. Now, Lind would surely say that this is not his issue at all and that he has a democratic attitude toward the different ways of defining guilt and dealing with guilt. And if a participant of the KMDD were to bring in his or her view on the matter, he or she might as well do so. However, a preliminary decision has been made not to bring these variables into the real dilemma discussion at all.  
Ingo Wetter comments: “The KMDD also helps only to a very limited extent, for example with the question of the self-protection of soldiers in an attack by ‘civilians’ (e.g. terrorists, women, child soldiers). The dilemma cannot be solved and the soldier must, left to his own, reckon with the possibility of a wrong decision. Guilt is always possible and he must be prepared for it in the best possible way. Here, with the KMDD is no

<sup>88</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 67.

<sup>89</sup> Lind: *Ist Moral lehrbar?*, p. 261.

approach of help recognizable to digest wrong decisions (firing on a kindergarten or hospital from which the fire on the convoy is opened).”<sup>90</sup>

### **Political Correctness**

3. How is political correctness prevented? Do students really honestly articulate their opinion? Or do they parrot opinions from the media or social media or schoolyard debates? Will students in dilemma discussions really express views such as hatred of Turks or homosexuals? And will the teacher really always let that expression go without comment if no classmates violently disagree?

The same applies to group dynamics. Since the KMDD works only with specially trained teachers, this is certainly taken into account, but nevertheless Christian ethics probably estimates the tendency to tell others what they want to hear or to provoke others in such discussions to be greater than the KMDD does.

### **Decline in values**

4. “We do not live in a world of ‘value decay.’ Rather, rarely has ever been so much and so strongly been ‘moralized’ as today.”<sup>91</sup>

Surely, here there is a distinction to be made. If you ask whether values are missing today, the answer quoted above is correct: never before has official and unofficial moralization been so frequent as today. Every week, for example, *Der Spiegel* magazine offers hundreds of morally self-righteous commentaries on everything and nothing, politicians are outdoing each other with presenting their own proposals as moral and those of their opponents as completely immoral, and a military operation without ethical cover from politics, media and churches is no longer conceivable today. But this statement is banal, because people cannot live together without values and without a certain consensus on values.

But those who speak of a decline in values do not usually mean the assemblage of values of any kind, but rather certain values that are predetermined for them, such as honesty or willingness to make sacrifices for children and family. And of course there are always values that are more strongly preset and implemented today than in the past, and others that are decaying compared to the past.

The extent of forced prostitution compared to 50 years ago has increased incredibly, and that reflects a decline in values. (This may not be the case, however, in comparison with more distant times, such as times of war.) At the same time, society is comparatively uninterested in it. Almost every murder is solved, whereas forced prostitution—which always includes kidnapping, deprivation of liberty, rape, torture and the formation of criminal organizations—hardly interests the masses.

### **Measurability?**

5. Another problem from a Christian point of view is the factor that makes the KMDD so interesting for the Bundeswehr, the prison system and other fields of government: the measurability of morality, regardless of which moral values someone represents.

According to Lind, the Moral Judgement Test (MUT), which determines a “target

<sup>90</sup> Wetter: *Messbarkeit*, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Lind: *Moral ist lehrbar*, p. 32.

value,” was designed for scientific purposes to evaluate programs, not for individual diagnosis.<sup>92</sup> Nevertheless, it is now being used to prove that concrete groups of people who have participated in the KMDD are making moral progress.

“Moral judgment becomes measurable through psychological tests. Within these tests, the discussion behavior of the participants, along with the nature and quality of their arguments and counterarguments to certain questions, is analyzed and empirically recorded. Lind argues that moral judgment begins ‘when someone is willing to look critically at reprehensible arguments, even if they support one’s own decision.’ The key to solving the problem he sees in the fact that people must in principle be able to distinguish the quality of arguments.”<sup>93</sup>

### ***Universal remedy?***

6. And finally, from a Christian point of view the optimistic expectation of what can be achieved through the KMDD has to be criticized. Christian ethics, which in its different variants nevertheless connects itself with a claim to truth, is still substantially more realistic about the success of a Christian ethics education. Forgiveness and reconciliation are so much at the center of the Christian faith, because acting against one’s own principles and against the good is so “normal”—that is, omnipresent—and because then the question must be solved how man can come clean again with God, with himself and with others. Ingo Wetter writes about this:

“In dealing with the KMDD, one gets the feeling that Lind, starting from the original target group in schools, has found an all-encompassing approach to solving the problems of humanity through continuous development. For a more simple mind, the question arises of a form of ‘claim to absoluteness’ that Lind could claim for his method. It is questionable whether it is really possible to ‘accept’ only the quality of the better argument. There are always cases in which a weighing of goods, values or interests is necessary. At this point, at the latest, the KMDD could reach its limits. Absolute values such as life, human dignity or human rights are not debatable quantitatively or qualitatively. With the ‘measurability’ of moral judgement, Lind could—certainly unintentionally—make these irrevocable values, in the end, questionable. A further point is, without going into details here, his approach that the majority of people have the same basic moral ideas. Moral values are, inter alia, strongly influenced by religion.”<sup>94</sup>

## **4. Could or should the KMDD be used in the training of theologians?**

As a method, the KMDD is very good, and in view of the de facto pluralism in our environment, independent of possible differences from the Christian view, it could be recommended in many places, if one wants to discuss and introduce ethics at all.

But what if you want to use the KMDD when starting from a value foundation, or to convey a certain value foundation—for example, in the field of ethics in a Christian theology course?

Let’s start with a more general discussion and then return to KMDD after that.

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 49–52.

<sup>93</sup> Wetter: *Messbarkeit*, p. 1–2.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

## 4.1. General discussion

Klaus Ebeling has pointed out that “ethics as crisis management”<sup>95</sup> is not a “complete special knowledge about values and norms”<sup>96</sup> that could be communicated authoritatively, but is also “ethical competence of consideration.”<sup>97</sup> I would agree with him in principle, but I would still question the contradiction between the two; I can’t even see whether that is intended by him.<sup>98</sup> Where there are no fundamental values and norms from which to start the considerations—and if one is pondering only the decision process—there is neither a binding decision nor one that can be communicated to others. But that is precisely what the Bundeswehr wants. Looking at the situation in reverse, however, it is true that binding values and norms (such as the first paragraphs of the Basic Law) are, taken on their own, unsuitable for everyday use and that the challenge of life does not consist in reciting these norms at the crucial moment, but in the ability to weigh and implement them in crises and complex situations, or to achieve insofar as possible ideals that are not fully attainable.

In my opinion, there is a complementarity between more theoretical considerations of what is right and good in itself and more practical exercises involving procedures and ways of arriving at viable decisions in concrete conflicts.<sup>99</sup>

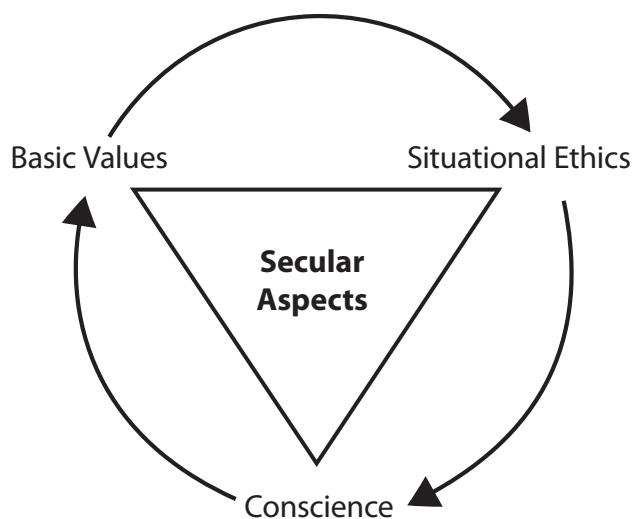
In my book *Führen in ethischer Verantwortung: Die drei Seiten jeder Entscheidung*<sup>100</sup> [Leading with ethical responsibility: The three sides of every decision], I try to make clear that in theology and philosophy, three sides are complementary to each other. The three terms normative, situational and existential stand for classical positions of

ethics. They are based on the assumption that human beings are guided by norms and commandments as to how they are to act, that they can only grasp what is best in a situation, or that the ethical decision takes place in our innermost being as a struggle for our existence, so that it can hardly be comprehended by anyone else.

I think all three positions are wrong if they stand alone and are played off against the other focal points. I consider all three positions to be justified if they see themselves as an important link in an overall decision.

The normative aspect is expressed in the Bible in the meaning of the unchangeable commandments of God.

In ethics in general, we find it most strongly in the fundamental values.



<sup>95</sup> Klaus Ebeling: *Militär*, pp. 10–12 (headline).

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57, 65 speaks rather against it and in favour of complementarity between the two aspects.

<sup>99</sup> Zur Methodik ethischer Urteilsbildung in Fallstudien cf. *Friedensethik im Einsatz*, pp. 357–362.

<sup>100</sup> Thomas Schirmacher: *Führen in ethischer Verantwortung. Die drei Seiten jeder Entscheidung*, Brunnen: Gießen, 2nd ed., 2008.



The situational aspect is expressed in the Bible in the meaning of wisdom, which is weighed on the basis of experience and the concrete situation.

In ethics in general, the so-called conflict of duties, situational ethics and cultural adaptation play a role here.

The existential aspect is expressed in the Bible in the meaning of the heart and conscience, within which the actual decision is made on the basis of normative and situational considerations.

In ethics in general, conscience and motives are spoken of here.

The fundamental values of a society cannot simply emerge from a consensus, especially as an important question is what consensus our society can still find today. If consensus were the only thing that counted, National Socialism should have been accepted, at least as long as it could claim the enthusiastic support of large sections of the population. However, the precise lesson from the National Socialist era was that there must be inviolable values above the state. That is why the UN created the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and why the fathers and mothers of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) established some fundamental rights and rules concerning human dignity for all times and unalterably. These human rights and human dignity are not created or conferred by the state but are given to the state, because man is God's creature. This inviolable order, of which man is conscious, is above all power and majority relations.<sup>101</sup>

In the *Grundgesetz* this is expressed by the so-called "eternity clause," which states that the basic human rights in the constitution may not and cannot be changed by parliament.

In addition, the *Grundgesetz* contains a situational ethics, which should make it possible for the future to make sensible decisions. The whole parliament is part of this permanent decision-making process.

At the other end of the spectrum, the *Grundgesetz* stipulates that every member of the Bundestag is free in his decision and only responsible to his conscience. Of course, this does not mean that he accepts only his private desires and inclinations, but on the contrary that he weighs values and reaches a well-considered decision. Of course, this decision is not made in a vacuum, but also within the framework of the respective constructs of government, parties and other restraints. But in the final analysis, no legislator can pass the responsibility for his decision on to others, but must be prepared to bear full personal responsibility for it and, if necessary, to suffer internally for his decision or to accept external consequences.

All this applies in particular to the so-called conflict of obligations, also known as weighing of goods, which is actually a term from criminal law for the not unlawful breach of obligation by an action if this action was the only means of fulfilling another, higher-ranking legal obligation and if the actor has decided on the basis of a weighing of obligations. Within Christian ethics, especially in Catholic theology, one speaks of a conflict of duties when several commandments of God come into apparent conflict. No ethics can work without a weighing of goods, i.e., without the view that the individual values and non-values have different ranks and that in the case of a conflict of duties, the higher value has priority.

Sitting in an armchair, you can discuss every commandment and every value detached from reality and come to quick solutions. In reality, however, innumerable questions are simultaneously pouring in on us and we face all values simultaneously. Often the question is not which

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<sup>101</sup> Siehe ausführlicher Thomas Schirmacher: *Menschenrechte. Anspruch und Wirklichkeit*, Holzgerlingen: SCM Hänssler, 2012.

values we want to follow, but in which order we do them justice. Questions of priority presuppose a hierarchy of values that does not simply answer what is in itself good and what is not good, but also what has priority.

If you have no values, you have nothing to weigh. But even those who stand up for values still need a hierarchy of values and an awareness of how to make evaluations in the event of conflict. Certain values are normally inviolable and therefore certain actions are taboo for the weighing of goods. But other values can be taken into account only by balancing them with other values. The weighing of goods is therefore not a dilution of values and goals, but a necessary prerequisite for a good, holistic decision.

By the way, it must be emphasized for military ethics that a conflict of duties is particularly problematic when there is hardly any time available. This is precisely why there must be “sandbox games” beforehand, to make people aware of how difficult some decisions are even when you have a lot of time, so that then they can understand how difficult, if not almost impossible, they are when you only have a very short time to react. This is all the more true as the media today, in their reporting and assessment, then later pretend that military personnel had all the time in the world or even possessed the information that becomes available afterwards. When a security guard in Afghanistan has to decide at lightning speed whether children approaching the guard gate are as innocent as children or meant to distract or are being abused as suicide bombers, that is something quite different from the media’s ability to research afterwards exactly who the children were or how else the soldier could have reacted.

## 4.2. Should the KMDD be used in theological training?

First of all, as for the extent to which the KMDD is to be used (for example, in theological training), one must state that this question can apply only to the principles, not to the KMDD itself, which is legally protected and can be used only if one is trained as a KMDD teacher.

“The Constance Method of Dilemma Discussion (KMDD) is protected by the German Patent and Trademark Office as a text brand (confirmation). It may only be used as advertising for courses, events and the like with the written permission of the owner of the trademark, Prof. Georg Lind. The running of KMDD lessons requires the teacher to hold a valid KMDD Teacher Certificate. KMDD courses may only be conducted by certified KMDD trainers. Intervention studies that use the KMDD as a method may only claim to have investigated the effects of the KMDD if the interventions have been carried out by a certified KMDD teacher (see flyer) and have been measured, among other things, by the Moral Judgment Test (MUT).”<sup>102</sup>

Theological training programs that want to make Lind’s experiences usable for ethics training must therefore either go the official way of training their ethicists to become KMDD teachers or take up the basic principles independently.

Notwithstanding the above, I consider a discussion of concrete examples of conflicts of duties with theology students—based on the KMDD’s principles—to be an important supplement to classical ethics education.

This claim is also supported by experience, which has shown that the range of positions and opinions on individual topics among theology students (and lecturers!) can also be very broad, even if the group holds similar theological positions. All the more does this concern for the

<sup>102</sup> <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/moral/dildisk-d.htm>.

range of opinions apply with theoretically equal foundations of values when it comes to the assessment and “solution” of conflicts of duties, i.e., in dilemma discussions.

The fact that the ethics lecturer then analyzes and evaluates the discussion and brings in his or her own views does not affect the fact that it is good to have these different views be perceived, expressed and discussed. A formal framework with fixed rules is very helpful for this purpose.

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