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En esta sección se publican electrónicamente los avances de los proyectos de investigación, así como las discusiones y resultados de los eventos académicos organizados por el Comité Norte de la UNESCO. Se trata de una serie monográfica con avances dentro de la agenda en investigación educativa de esta oficina. Las contribuciones son en su mayoría elaboradas por miembros del Comité, aunque podrán participar por invitación otros investigadores en diferentes áreas de conocimiento afines a la labor de la UNESCO con artículos de investigación y ensayos que iluminen la dirección del trabajo de esta área.

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NÚMERO I

FORO ELECTRÓNICO: “EL DESARROLLO DE UNA CONCIENCIA ÉTICA LAICA”

Organizado y moderado por el Dr. Juan Manuel Fernández Cárdenas y la Mtra. Ma. Cristina Moreno Gutiérrez

La discusión se llevó a cabo del domingo 22 de mayo al domingo 12 de junio de 2005

Participantes:

Dr. Rupert Wegerif (University of Southampton, Reino Unido), Dra. Darcia Narváez (University of Notre Dame, Estados Unidos), Dr. Georg Lind (Universität Konstanz, Alemania) y Dr. Emilio Martínez (Universidad de Murcia, España)

1. Invitation (English version)

By Juan Manuel Fernández y Cristina Moreno

Dear Dr. Wegerif, Dr. Narvaez, Dr. Lind, and Dr. Martínez:

We would like to invite you to participate in the electronic forum with the subject "The Development of a Lay Ethical Conscience". In order to introduce this forum, it is useful to begin by exploring the nature of the debate in terms of the most recent events associated to the election of Pope Benedict XVI. These events have triggered the expression of some arguments in the media concerning the problem to be discussed in this forum. For instance, during the previous days to the election of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as the new Pope of the Catholic Church, the Cardinal argued in a public speech addressing the other 114 Cardinals summoned to the conclave in favor of the doctrine of the Church for the development of an ethical conscience, and defended it against the "fashions of thought" which impose a "dictatorship of relativism". In this sense he indicated that "Marxism, liberalism, libertinism, collectivism, radical individualism, atheism" and the "vague religious mysticism" threaten Catholicism and the development of moral (Agencies, 2005).

On the other hand, in agreement with groups defending laicism (e.g. ILEC, 2005) the development of an ethical conscience implies "the will to construct a just, progressive and fraternal society, equipped with impartial public institutions which need to be responsible of the dignity of the person and its human rights; assuring to each individual the freedom of thought and expression, as well as the equality of all citizens in the use of the law, without distinction of sex, origin, culture and/or conviction, and considering that denominational or not-denominational options correspond exclusively to the private sphere of the people". This position of laicism agrees totally with the universal declaration of human rights of the United Nations (1948) which vindicate the fight for these guarantees.

Similarly, on this exigency for the respect of human rights, UNESCO has declared: "the universal breadth of human rights agrees with the simultaneously material and spiritual construction of an authentic human community that includes all the humanity. It implies to meet, for all the people, the conditions of a free life from hunger, from poverty, from the anguish of the future, from the ends of ignorance and exclusion, from the fatality of neglect and desperation; it involves then, the development of all nations and also their independence in cooperation and the mutual recognition of their dignity "(Regulation of the Convention of The Hague, Art. 6, mentioned in Moreira).

Thus, following the goals of the UNESCO institutional agenda, it is relevant to discuss the nature of the development of an ethical conscience taking as a departure point the role that religions and society have claimed as holders of this right. We invite you to contribute with your position in this sense answering the question: "How a lay ethical conscience is developed?" We look forward to receive your participation; so that we expect to organize your contributions conformed in 3 rounds of exposition from participants and answer from the moderator. The log of this conversation in the forum will be published in the

monographic series "Footpaths: Occasional Research Papers of the North Regional Committee for Cooperation with UNESCO" We will be sending you further instructions about how to access the forum in the website of our office.

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Moreira, M. E. Derechos humanos y socorro internacional, [Web Page]. Moreira, M. E. Available: [2005, 28/04].

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Responsable: Dr. Juan Manuel Fernández

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## 5. Moral Judgment Competence and Religiosity.

By Georg Lind

Dr. Martinez and Dr. Fernandez discuss the relationship between religion and morality. This discussion has been triggered by Pope John Paul's who taught that morality cannot be without religion, and by Pope Benedict who teaches that all evil stems from moral relativism and subjectivism, against which the Roman Catholic Church has to take a strong stand. This teaching prompts the question whether religion is really a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for moral competence, or whether, as critiques maintain, both religion and morality are unrelated if not partially antagonistic.

What is their relationship? Both seem to be similar in many ways, but also show some remarkable differences. The word "religion" means originally to restrict or control something, namely our behavior. Similarly, morality means that we do not always do what comes in our mind but that we set ourselves limits. Religion must legitimize itself in terms of origin and validity: What or who determines our religious believes? Why should we believe

what we believe and what enforces the restrictions? Similarly, we can ask, who sets the moral principles and why should we go by them? And, who or what should control whether or not a person is faithful to his/her moral principles? Up until here, it seems that both means the same and that we actually do not need two different words. If religion is the same as morality, and religious problems are the same as moral problems, we would need to find only one kind of solution and one kind of competence to live a religious/moral life.

However, both terms have also been dissociated from one another by various philosophers, for example by Voltaire (1694-1778), who argued in favor of religious tolerance, and the Prussian king Frederic II, who announced that everybody should become inspired in his own way (“Jeder soll nach seiner Facon selig werden!”). Especially, in the age of Enlightenment, morality has been clearly distinguished from religiosity, sometimes in the name of pluralism, sometimes out of anti-church sentiment. The deeper reason for this distinction has been articulated by Immanuel Kant, who argued that all evil stems from the citizen following the dogma’s of others rather than to think for themselves and use his or her own judgment. Therefore, he urged all citizens to use their own reason: *sapere aude!* Kant was convinced that everyone could have the capability of judgment but that laziness of thought and lack of educational experiences would restrict or even diminish this capability.

Is this the real difference between morality and religion, the degree to which a person uses his own mind to solve his problems rather than let others (experts or priests) solve them?

Obviously, this question cannot be answered in the same way for all religions or denominations and probably not even for all members of the same church. A prominent church man like Martin Luther would have rejected this form of differentiation. He believed that every believer has a direct contact with God through the means of prayer, and that prayer is nothing else but some form of reasoning. He would also say that a non-believer is never a solipsist but his reasoning is always a form of interaction with a real or a imagined person or society, the society of believers. If two persons have gathered in my name, taught Jesus, “I am amongst them.”

As a secular version of this teaching we could take Habermas’ concept of “constitutional patriotism:” All people who share a strong believe in the same constitution, can be called compatriots. Thus, all human who believe in the Bill of Rights and the universal Declaration of Human Rights, can be considered to be world citizens. Antanas Mockus, the ex-mayor of the District of Bogotá, himself originating from Lithuanian parents, says that in world in which most countries are inhabited by many different nationalities and by members of many different churches and by pantheists and atheists, the constitution is the only common groundfor defining a community.

So both the ability to use one’s own judgment and the ability to participate in a moral

discourse with others, even with opponents and non-believers, are the essential prerequisites for living together peacefully in one country and on one planet, and for solving inevitable conflicts which people encounter in a non-violent way. In the past century we have learned a lot about this ability due to the seminal works of Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, Jim Rest and many others. How can it be measured in an objective manner? How relevant is this ability for our life? Can it be fostered through education and if so, how can we improve our teaching methods to keep pace with the ever greater demands for moral judgment competence?

In Konstanz, we have developed a reliable, valid and economic measurement method in order to assess moral judgment competence, the Moral Judgment Test, which has now been translated and validated in more than 30 international languages.<sup>1</sup> With this instrument we can also study the relationship between religious and moral development more closely. From research with other instruments (e.g., Rest's Defining Issues Test) we now know that the preference for post-conventional (principled) moral reasoning is indeed related differently to different forms of religiosity. It is positively correlated with liberal religiosity, but negatively with dogmatic religiosity. From research with our instrument on moral judgment competence, we have indication that liberal, non-dogmatic religiosity is favorable for the development of judgment competence, but that dogmatic religiosity, which does not allow the individual to reason for him- or herself, hinders the development of judgment competence. Especially in Latin American countries, we found what we call "moral segmentation," meaning that even highly competent reasoners suspend their thinking about controversial issues if their church has a pronounced opinion on it. "You must submit to God's will without any thinking or reasoning," taught me my Catholic grandmother.

How do these findings help us to develop our debate? Well, I think that they clearly show first that we must not equate "thinking by oneself" with moral relativism and lack of moral orientation. Both are two completely different things. Secondly, they show that morality and religiosity are neither opposites nor do they necessarily depend on each other. A pantheist believer can be seen as the religious counterpart to a constitutional patriot, divided only by linguistic differences. In contrast, authoritarian morality, that is, a morality which requires people to blindly follow orders by others, is hardly distinguishable from dogmatic church ruling.

People who adhere to universal moral principles necessarily have to use their own judgment when they encounter a moral dilemma, that is, a situation when all available solutions require the actor to transgress a principle. In authoritarian societies, such dilemmas are solved by letting the ruler or the priest decide. In a democratic society, in which the king and the religious leader have been substituted by moral principles, the individual member must find a solution alone or together with others. This is good news and bad news. The good news is

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/>

that we are free to decide by ourselves. The bad news are that we have to decide by ourselves.

Obviously, in a democratic-moral society the individual is not free to decide completely irrationally or on the basis of his or her spontaneous feelings but must follow also some moral principles like the principles of law-abiding, justice, social benevolence etc. But with a very few exceptions, moral principles cannot be followed through without making exceptions. Exceptions are necessary because otherwise these principles would not work. Sometimes, moral principles even contradict themselves, as in the case when one life can be saved only if another life is sacrificed. Another case for exceptions is the principle of freedom. The individual's freedom is never absolute but is always constraint by the freedom of others. This is not a question of relativism but a well-balanced system of system of moral principles of a first order which is itself following some second-order principles like logical consistency, coherence, truth, tolerance, and adequacy. That is, all exceptions have to be well-reasoned and have nothing to do with moral relativism. A case of moral relativism is when moral principles do not apply equally to all. For example, moral relativism is when some people claim direct access to moral truth but deny it to others."

Responsible: Georg Lind

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## 6. Religion (comment on Lind)

By Rupert Wegerif

I am not sure you are quite fair on religion. Some interpret the root etymology to be a bond (ligare) between the sacred and the profane, not simply a constraining of behavior. Some would argue that legitimation - meaning in life - ultimately must come from beyond the merely human. Our understandings are internal differentiations of field of possible thoughts. The spiritual instinct points beyond this to the context of merely human thought constructs - to the infinite context of all identity (the noumenous or transcendent in Kantian terms). For many religions and religious people the ultimate has no form or name but is more an infinite call beyond their own constructs. Listening to this call can lead to seeing the infinite potential of everyone (indeed every moment) and so real religion could perhaps ground a universal ethics.

## 11. Response to Prof. Wegerif

By Georg Lind

Given my constraint of time, I need to restrict my comment to the "challenge" by Prof. Wegerif. He writes "Prof Georg Lind ... refers to the value of objective tests of moral reasoning based on the developmental theories of rationalists like Piaget and Kohlberg as if morality was an intellectual faculty. However, as many have pointed out the masterminds behind appalling atrocities often have no shortage of intellectual ability. I am convinced in my own mind that had Prof Lind managed to get the poet and gifted psychiatrist, Dr Radovan Karadzic, to sit his 'objective test of moral maturity' Dr Karadzic would have shown a high level of moral judgement – despite this, as leader of the Bosnian Serbs he is alleged to be a war criminal responsible for mass murder. My main question for Professor Lind is one asked by Carol Gilligan, who worked with Kohlberg but was critical of the rationalist and, perhaps also, masculinist bias in his work. That question is: 'where does 'care' come from? How do we feel enough empathy for other human beings to care for them and want to help them?'"

Well, this quite a challenging argument. Yet is based mainly on the difficulties arising out of the constraints of an interdisciplinary discourse among strangers. A philosopher obviously understands the word 'cognitive' differently from a psychologist (emotion, the psycho-neurologist Damasio observed, is just another form of knowledge), and someone knowing Piaget, Kohlberg and my work would never come to think that any of these persons disregard affect and emotion and community in the making of a moral person.

I can assure you that Dr. Karadzic would have got a very low score on our Moral Judgment Test (MJT) because it tests the ability to maintain a rational moral discourse in spite of a high emotional commitment for one's own (political) position. In our Dual-Aspect theory of moral behavior, we call this ability moral judgment competence, and consider it an affective-cognitive competence because, as Piaget always asserted, one cannot separate affect and cognitive into two components of mind though one can distinguish them as different aspects or characteristics of behavior. Modern neuro-science (e.g, Damasio) agrees with Piaget.

In two laboratory experiments (one by myself and my students and one by Wolfgang Wasel) the participants were instructed to simulated their score upward. While in similar experiments with other tests, this was easily possible for the participants to do so, none of the subjects in these two experiments using the Moral Judgment Test were able to pretend to have higher

moral judgment competence than they actually had.

In our studies, being done over a range of thirty years, political activists in general are clearly divided into a small group of "universalists" and a large group of narrow-minded single issue people (incidentally, with low scores on the MJT). Moreover, people arguing in favor of the use of violence as a means of politics get very low MJT scores. All evidence seems to show that the use of violence and power for political reasons is an expression of low judgment competence. By the way, this is not a linguistic competence, as Prof. Wegerif seems to understand this concept. The scores of the MJT correlates more strongly with grade in mathematics than in German (i.e., the mother tongue).

I fully concur with Dr. Darcia Narvaez' observation that you cannot stimulate moral development by merely reading "moral literature". Again, we need to be cautious about possible misunderstandings. Knowing Dr. Narvaez' research, I am sure that she has meant to say that this refers only to the teaching of children and to "moral literature" which tries to teach moral values directly by using simplistic black and white moral stories. Therefore, Prof. Wegerif is also right when he points out that certain literature had a great impact on the moral development of mankind. I assume that he thinks rather of an adult audience and of unobtrusive moral literature like "Of mice and men" by John Steinbeck, or truly philosophical texts like the Bill of Rights, but not the kind of moral children literature that Dr. Narvaez has been researching.

Finally, I welcome Rupert Wegerif's fine description of people for whom religion is "an infinite call beyond their own constructs." This is the kind of people who seem to get relatively high MJT scores. However, for most church goers (like my grandmother) religion is a rather finite call within the limits of their church's dogmatic teaching. At present, my research group is doing studies on this topic, trying to pin-point these different kinds of religiosity so that we can study the relationship between various kinds with moral judgment competence.

Let me apologize for the selectivity of my reading. In Germany, we are in the middle of the teaching term, and the humid heat makes you want to go for a swim rather than to deliberate about religion and morality.

Best regards

Georg Lind

Responsible: Georg Lind

Further readings: <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/>