

ETHICS AND ARMED FORCES

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Between Personality Development and Skills Acquisition: Ethics for Soldiers

SPECIAL

Lebenskundlicher Unterricht:
“Character Guidance Training” in Practice

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EDITORIAL

According to a definition by social ethicist Thomas Bohrmann, the ethical field referred to as military professional ethics aims to investigate ethical principles – such as human dignity and justice – that are relevant to society as a whole and prioritised in the military domain, and to investigate them under the conditions prevalent in the military as a particular sphere of action and experience.

What does this mean for ethical education in the armed forces?

The conscience, which is shaped by personal experience, represents the final resort in the decision-making process and forms the foundation of soldierly behaviour. Given the moral challenges that can face soldiers in conflict situations, the conscience requires continuous education.

Soldiers, however, are responsible not only to their conscience, but for it, which is why the military chaplaincy needs to provide orientation for the development of the conscience.

What does this mean for the educational formats offered by zebis?

It is important to respond promptly to current and urgent issues with which soldiers are confronted, which means getting involved in the latest debates around peace and military ethics, and even initiating them.

Working across disciplines to combine the perspectives of ethics, international law, politics, and the military is as important as ensuring obvious internationality in this age of foreign deployments.

Both of these aspects shape the educational work of zebis, which includes seminars and podiums across Germany as well as an international workshop for career officers in Auschwitz.

As an ecclesiastical education provider to the German armed forces, zebis develops its educational formats on the basis of a theological peace ethic, that of “just peace”, an approach based to the highest degree on the prevention of violence, but which does not seek to avoid the questions of an age so permeated by it.

The foundational ethical educational work of the military chaplaincy is provided first and foremost in *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (LKU, or character guidance training), which zebis supports by regularly training military chaplains.

Key to this is our Online Teaching Portal which is being expanded step by step, with its integrated media library. The working materials available there for LKU are fed by the latest academic discussions as well as the practical experience of military chaplains.

Our international e-journal *Ethics and Armed Forces* represents the third of zebis’ working areas alongside training events and the Teaching Portal. To complement the latter, which supplies content specially to be imparted in LKU, our e-journal provides a broader readership with access to the latest discussions on peace and military ethics, as well as security policy.

This issue, entitled *Between Personality Development and Skills Acquisition: Ethics for Soldiers*, discusses key issues: what are ethics and why do soldiers in the German armed forces require ethical training? How do military professional ethics relate to peace ethics? How can and should ethics be taught, and what role does *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* play?

This publication largely avoids the discussion of concepts and positions from outside Germany for reasons of space. We plan to treat this subject in another edition.

I would like to express my thanks to the authors of the contributions and to all those who were involved in the production of this issue. As always, I wish you, dear readers, an informative read of *Ethics and Armed Forces*.

Dr. Veronika Bock
Director of zebis



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PEACE ETHICS, MILITARY ETHICS AND SECURITY POLICY

Author: *Bernhard Koch*

If the participants in a careful and serious public debate (including the audience) seek real insights and knowledge – instead of just playing a strategic game in which they try to make themselves look as good as possible – then as one requirement the discussion partners should ideally use the same terms. “The same terms” means not simply the same words or sounds, but using expressions that have the same semantic content. Although it is possible to learn from differences in meaning – consider translation processes, for example – nevertheless a stringent and precise usage of terms is more effective in a public and usually mass-media debate. This has been known ever since ancient times – hence the Aristotle commentator, Porphyry of Tyre, developed a conceptual structural model (based on Platonic *diairesis*) that distinguishes between generic terms and species terms, the latter separated by a specific difference from the generic term. Since every species term can itself become a generic term for other species, a hierarchical model emerges. In graphical form, this model has the appearance of a “trunk” of species and generic terms, while specific differences form various “branches”. In the 13th century, Peter of Spain named this structural model the “Tree of Porphyry” (*arbor porphyriana*).¹ In compound words of the German language, the generic term usually appears at the end, while the respective differences are identified in the introductory term. Thus “Rohmilchkäse” is a type of cheese (*Käse*) – the generic term – which is made from unpasteurized milk (*Rohmilch*) – the difference.

Security policy

Let us now turn to the three terms in the title of this essay. We can see that two share a generic term – namely “military ethics” and “peace ethics” – while the third is the odd one out. Even on the websites of institutions and organizations that have the term “security policy” in their name – the German Federal Academy for Security Policy (*Bundesakademie für Sicherheitspolitik*, BAKS), Association for Security Policy (*Gesellschaft für Sicherheitspolitik*, GSP),

Abstract

Starting with the analysis model of the “arbor porphyriana”, Bernhard Koch investigates the three concepts mentioned in the title of his essay. Security policy comprises all measures that serve to protect or defend a state against external threats – though the term security covers more than territorial defense today. At the same time, he says, the existence and possible defense of security interests – especially by means of (the threat of) physical force – require ethical legitimation. This also applies to members of the armed forces who, as potentially violent actors, are not exempt from accountability. For a long time, the question of the legitimation of military force was strongly focused on legal aspects and the distinction between ius ad bellum and ius in bello. More recently, however, soldiers have been required to “ensure they are aware of the ethical reasons for their deployment”. This legitimation model is based on a human rights ethos that rests on a Christian understanding of peace. With reference to Thomas Aquinas, the author outlines this understanding as “an integral unity between man and his creator God – both within the individual human being and thus also between human beings”. Even if that seems obsolete in pluralistic societies, he continues, Aquinas’ assertion can still be understood. Starting with a state of affairs that transcends a mere legal definition of peace, peace ethics deals with questions of the legitimate use of force and statehood, and so in turn influences military ethical and security policy considerations. Finally, Koch argues that the importance of inner attitudes should be recognized in the didactics of ethics, and that to a significant extent peace ethics should be understood as a virtue ethics.

Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy (*Institut für Friedensforschung und Sicherheitspolitik*, IFSH) etc. – “security policy” is not explicitly defined. There are two possible reasons for this: either the term is so self-explanatory that it seems not to require a definition, or alternatively the term is kind of vague and imprecise so it cannot be captured by any handy definition. Kersten Lahl and Johannes Varwick also skirt around the question of definition in their new book *Sicherheitspolitik verstehen*.² Porphyry would have a simple answer: security policy must obviously be a sub-area of policy that is concerned with security. But now the tree model shows us that such first-degree definitions are perhaps not as explanatory as we thought, since further definition questions can still be asked: What is policy? What is security?

Politike technē takes its name from the *polis*, the Greek “city-state” of antiquity. It is the “art” relating to public order in this city-state. In the ideal case of democracy (rule by the people), all of the state’s subjects are involved in the constitution of this order – and in so far as this is the case, politics is a social act. By contrast, the concept of “security” is a delicate and nebulous concept. Security is a state, but what defines this state can be described almost exclusively in a negative way and in distinction to other states: the least possible danger, the least possible threat, the lowest possible risk.³

Security policy therefore basically consists of all policy decisions that concern security.⁴ But whose security? If it were a matter of the individual’s security and his protection against danger, the vast field of domestic policy would be included, as would transport policy and occupational safety. *De facto*, however, another conception has become established, in which it is assumed that the object of concern is the security of the political community as such (which in our times means: the state). In this conception, threats from outside the state again become the object of security policy in particular. Security policy today is therefore primarily located in the field of foreign and defense policy.

To elucidate these relationships and preliminary conceptual decisions is by no means as trivial as it may appear. For Plato and Aristotle,

for example, internal order is primary particularly from a “security policy” perspective. A political community that is internally well ordered will also be able to assert itself externally, whereas all external protection amounts to nothing if the community itself is without values internally.⁵ There are indications of a first “ethical” imperative here: from an ethical point of view, not every state is “entitled” to security policy in the same way.⁶ From the perspective

From the perspective of political ethics, an unjust totalitarian state has no claim to “security”

of political ethics, an unjust totalitarian state has no claim to “security”. In such a case, security policy action is fundamentally illegitimate. The situation is similar with a term like “state interest”. The *existence* of a particular interest says nothing about the *claims* one can make to fulfillment of that interest. Here the descriptive reality does not prescribe a normative reality. Only *legitimate* interests can have an entitlement to fulfillment. If states as individual parts of the world community have interests that affect other states and people outside of the state concerned, then it must be specifically shown that such interests are legitimate.

The foreign policy focus in the current conception of security policy combines this field, which in itself is practical, with academic theories of international relations (“IR theories”). The best known of these is “political realism”, which assumes that states can never stop seeking superiority and power over other states in order to safeguard their security needs and “interests”. Since other states act similarly, the only way to protect oneself against their seizure of power is through one’s own striving for power. However, this build-up of mutual striving for security and power leads to the “security dilemma”⁷, which is seen particularly in the form of the arms race. The power advantage that A obtains through an armaments upgrade becomes worthless as soon as B attains the same or higher level. This in turn seems to force A to keep upgrading its weapons. So for practical

reasons alone, which are not yet any special ethical reasons, it seems obvious to avoid such unilateralism in security policy. Ultimately it will result in high costs for everyone, including one's own community. In this sense, today more than ever, security policy is a form of "world domestic policy". Even distant conflicts and threats can easily affect one's own political community and the territory it inhabits, as has been seen particularly in the case of global migration movements.

Thus the concept of security underlying security policy has become much more multi-layered and complex than pure, outwardly directed, territorial defense. As a result, we can distinguish a factual dimension ("Which problem area are security threats located in?"), a

Although it is not the soldiers themselves who decide on the deployment of the armed forces, this does not mean that military action is no longer in any way attributable to military personnel

reference dimension ("Whose security does this concern – that of the state, of society or of individuals?"), a spatial dimension ("Which geographical area is affected?") and a danger dimension ("What vulnerabilities or risks are we talking about?").⁸ All of these dimensions have protectors of security who have to act as individuals or institutions. Many of these actions are performed in the civil sphere by civilian actors. Yet military forces still play a special role (especially in normative considerations) because they contribute the factor of physical force – both potential and actual – which is particularly problematic for peace ethics.

Military ethics

The threat or use of physical force is the *ultima ratio* of security policy considerations. Almost all countries of the world have signed the Charter of the United Nations, which in principle prohibits the threat or use of force in international relations (Art. 2 [4]). However, this does not affect the "inherent right" of a

member of the United Nations to "individual or collective self-defence" – at least until the UN Security Council has taken action necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security (Art. 51). The Security Council can also authorize its members to use armed force in this context (Art. 42). Hence the vast majority of countries still maintain their own military forces. The profession of soldier still exists – many political scientists and security policy practitioners would add: necessarily. Since the military takes action, the question of the right course of action also has to be asked. Along with the law, here morality comes into consideration as an authority for judging actions. Ethics is philosophical reflection on morality. Hence military ethics is the form of ethics that deals with actions in the military and in the military context. It is therefore predominantly a special form of professional ethics, and in this sense it is similar to media ethics or medical ethics. As an ethics that also and in particular asks about the legitimacy of violent acts, it is related to police ethics.

Despite the fact that an army has a very strict and well-established institutional structure,⁹ the individuals who belong to it – the soldiers – are not freed from the obligation to ethically examine their actions. Although it is not the soldiers themselves who decide on the deployment of the armed forces, but rather the makers of security policy (or political leaders in their role as security policymakers), this does not mean that military action is no longer in any way attributable to military personnel. Even in wars and armed conflicts, action is accountable. The law in armed conflict – referred to as *ius in bello* – plays a central role in the justification of such actions. In his book *Just and Unjust Wars*¹⁰, which has long been treated as a standard work of military ethics, Michael Walzer clearly separates the tasks. (Security) policymakers have to decide on the deployment itself, on the *ius ad bellum*. Military personnel, however, must adhere to the "rules" of *ius in bello*. Since this applies in the same way to all parties in a conflict, all combatants (of whatever party) are morally on an equal footing – unless they commit or have committed war crimes. The central re-

quirement of *ius in bello* is that the violence of armed conflict may only be directed against military targets – including enemy combatants – but never against civilians.

Particularly in recent times, key authors have fundamentally criticized this moral division of tasks. They claim that this “logical” distinction (Walzer) between *ius ad bellum* and *ius in bello* does not exist. In a way similar to defense contexts in non-war circumstances, in armed conflicts too there is a need to pay close moral attention to the question of which party to the conflict is using force with what right. Accordingly, military personnel have a basic duty to refuse participation in any military deployment that is not morally legitimate. If they do not refuse – for which they may have exculpatory reasons such as external pressure or ignorance – then they are not on an equal footing with an enemy who is fighting with moral legitimacy. Military personnel must therefore ensure they are aware of the ethical reasons for their deployment, and cannot simply shrug off their moral responsibility as a question of command and obedience.

The analogy of civilian defense situations is used frequently in the current military ethics debate, but it also entails further consequences. In this model, it is no longer possible to sustain the strict separation of combatants who can be legitimately attacked in armed conflicts from civilians who at most are allowed to be foreseeably but in no case intentionally affected by the use of force. Combatants may have been forced into their role against their will, in which case it is either hardly or not at all morally legitimate to attack them. Conversely, large-scale illegitimate acts of violence may be committed at the behest of persons who would qualify as “civilians” under international law. Whether, in case of doubt, one should attack civilians who are responsible for the use of illegitimate force rather than many perfectly innocent combatants is a moral question that has to be answered. The problem is not just one of theoretical military ethics approaches. In asymmetric conflicts involving many violent non-state actors, whose fighters no longer even identify themselves, it has long become a practical challenge.

Anyone who offers justifications on the grounds of military ethics ultimately does so against a wider backdrop of ethical argument. The legitimization model oriented to defense situations assumes fundamental individual rights that must not be violated. One can even go so far as to say that it is based on a definable and definite human rights conceptualization. But from where can this in turn take its own legitimization basis? This question leads to the third term in our title, namely peace ethics.

Peace ethics

“Peace ethics” is not a field of sectoral ethics as the term might suggest. It is not a kind of ethics that only “applies” in peacetime. The concept of “peace” as a philosophical or theological term is not meant to single out one segment of ethics, but to present political ethics or social ethics with a *telos* – a goal or purpose. Therefore the concept of peace in peace ethics cannot simply be a “cosmic concept” (a *Weltbegriff*, in the Kantian sense), which contains only a description of an empirically verifiable state. If the concept of peace in peace

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ethics were an operationalizable and hence descriptively comprehensible state of the world, peace ethics would shrink to a mere instrumental consideration of the best possible way to achieve the goal. Ethics, however, is a science of reflection that must always question itself. Hence for peace ethics considerations, the question of which concept of peace is taken as a foundation cannot be regarded irrelevant in any way.¹¹ There is a fundamental basic distinction between a negative peace, denoting the absence of specific violence, and a positive peace of people and communities in fruitful cooperation. The most concise systematization is found in Thomas Aquinas, who distinguishes between “concord” (*concordia*)

and “peace” (*pax*). Concord can be achieved if everyone adheres in their actions to the prescribed norms. In this way, the regulatory function of law ensures that conflicts and confrontations are small. But this is not sufficient for positive peace, for *pax*. This requires a prior orientation toward a common good. At the same time, social peace requires individuals to be at peace with themselves. Well ordered concord consists in “one man agreeing with another in respect of something befitting to both of them” (*Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 29, a. 1, ad. 1). But *pax* means that people direct themselves toward what is truly good – for the theologian, ultimately to God. Theologically, therefore, a further distinction is necessary: “Since true peace is only about good things,

seems to be appropriate for a pluralistic society. But it is still possible to share the assertion formulated by Thomas Aquinas: agreement on the most important goods and an affirmation of the legitimate claims of others are essential for peace. Religious positions bring a different degree of understanding than secular models – this fact should not be brushed aside. After all, even the old Hebrew term *shalom* goes far beyond a mere non-aggression pact and emphasizes an integral unity between man and his creator God – both within the individual human being and thus also between human beings.¹³

Starting from an ethical concept of peace, peace ethics unfolds into various complexes of questions, in which the problem of the conditions for the legitimate use of force plays a special role. It is not so much the notion of conflict that is opposed to the concept of peace, but rather the notion of *violence*, because – as in democracy – conflict resolution processes can be orderly and peaceful. Hence it is not surprising to see many people who are particularly concerned about peace rejecting violence as a matter of principle and viewing themselves as pacifists. But we also know that situations can arise in which an ethos of non-violence is put to a harsh test, even to the point where the renunciation of violence becomes implausible from the perspective of justice and humanity. Christian peace ethics devoted to a “paradigm of just peace” also has to contemplate the possibility of using force as an *ultima ratio*.

The manner in which such questions are dealt with – including considerations of legal ethics – has direct impacts on military ethics and security policy. Roughly speaking, military ethics tends to be influenced more by peace-ethical considerations relating to *ius in bello*; the ethical requirements for security policy relate to *ius ad bellum*, which today is perhaps better termed *ius contra bellum*.

Regarding the relationship between ethics and security policy, one can say that for a just state, state security is certainly a task that, *prima facie*, has ethical weight. There are various ways of explaining the ethical significance of a state. One way is via freedom. States enable

Even the old Hebrew term shalom goes far beyond a mere non-aggression pact and emphasizes an integral unity between man and his creator God

as the true good is possessed in two ways, perfectly and imperfectly, so there is a twofold true peace. One is perfect peace. It consists in the perfect enjoyment of the sovereign good, and unites all one's desires by giving them rest in one object. [...] The other is imperfect peace, which may be had in this world” (*Summa theologiae* II-II, q. 29, a. 2, ad. 4).

Today, even theologians feel uneasy about introducing such a theological concept of peace into the public debate.¹² It no longer

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freedom because they protect the life, limb and property of their people through a mutual agreement. However, the area that is protected and secured must remain restricted. Unrestricted immigration into the state or violent attacks from outside make it impossible for the state to guarantee the protection and security of these goods. This applies not only to the present moment in time, but also particularly to the diachronic passage of time, so that people can make and implement plans. But if it is no longer possible to defer present consumption opportunities to the future or pass them on to other people, then individual freedom of action is enormously restricted. Therefore, it is ethically legitimate to ensure the security of the state, which guarantees these freedoms. Nevertheless, the state as a form of political institutionalization is also ambivalent, particularly when it reduces social relations to technical patterns of interaction and so to a “machine” (Nietzsche) – even if it is a “justice machine”.

Teach ethics – but how?

Security policy as such is not a field of ethics and thus it isn't a field that could be dealt with in a didactics of ethics, either. But of course, security policy action, like any human action, is subject to ethical judgment. Here ethics presents a different perspective than that of security policy, and accordingly the criteria and language used are also different. From an ethical perspective, security policy has to be judged by ethical criteria that cannot be taken from security policy itself. So, for example, in ethical respects the (ethical) concept of (positive) peace is primary over that of political security. Benchmarks for justifiable security policy should be developed and reflected upon in peace ethics accordingly.

The didactics of ethics plays a particularly prominent role in professional ethics, such as military ethics. But the scope of didactics in ethics is itself a topic for ethics. If we assume that an important ethical focus of human decision-making is not simply on the “external effects” of actions “in the physical world”, such that ethics could be easily modeled by tech-

nology, but instead concerns factors that are situated in the actors themselves – attitudes, beliefs, virtues – then we must recognize that education, habituation, role models and social sanctions are often “didactically” much more effective elements of teaching than lectures or study seminars. Even for military ethics, crucial prerequisites are formed in the communal life of a family, then in school and in further civil social relationships. Comradely life and interaction within the military then do the rest. The attitude of gratitude that is so fundamental for any human social relationship, for example, cannot be created merely by being taught. Recognition and understanding also presuppose a particular attitude: the sound argument in military ethics requires a sounding board on which it can first be acknowledged as an argument.

Peace ethics as virtue ethics

Peace ethics is often conceived only as legal ethics, which is already insufficient, as law is not the only normative order that can promote a (negative) peace. The fact that peace ethics to an eminent degree must be a virtue ethics only became more visible again through the recent work of Alexander Merkl.¹⁴ Military ethics too cannot do without virtues such as bravery, since soldiers rarely fight only for themselves but instead, they act in institutional responsibility for others as well.¹⁵ In security policy, virtues are essential if a continuous build-up of mutual threats is to be avoided. One of the most fundamental imperatives in peace ethics, which should guide both military action and, in particular, security policy, can be formulated like this: you should always consider your – real or only supposed – enemies in the situation they are in, and approach them with fundamental peaceableness¹⁶ in all specific confrontations.¹⁷ If the didactics of peace ethics is successful in this respect, then it will have achieved something great.

- 1 Cf. Baumgartner, Hans Michael (1999): "Arbor porphyriana, porphyrischer Baum." In: *Lexikon des Mittelalters (LexMA)*. Stuttgart/Weimar, columns 889 f.
- 2 Lahl, Kersten/Varwick, Johannes (2019): *Sicherheitspolitik verstehen. Handlungsfelder, Kontroversen und Lösungsansätze*. Frankfurt am Main. Elsewhere Varwick offers this definition: "Security policy encompasses all political goals, strategies and instruments that serve to prevent war while maintaining the capacity for political self-determination." (Johannes Varwick [2009]: "Einleitung." In: by the same author (ed.): *Sicherheitspolitik. Eine Einführung*. Schwalbach am Taunus, pp. 7–14, p. 7; translated from German.) But this bypasses the concept of action, which is what makes politics accessible to ethics in the first place.
- 3 The list of terms against which "security" is delimited is not complete here. In everyday language these expressions are not clearly distinguished either. "Danger" tends to be based more on (natural) objective conditions, while "threat" is usually understood as the "work" of a human person that threatens. The concept of risk is usually used "when alternatives are available in a decision situation that involve probabilities of (net) damage" (Nida-Rümelin, Julian/Rath, Benjamin/Schulenburg, Johann [2012]: *Risikoethik*. Berlin/Boston, p. 7; translated from German). The reference to the actor is thus inverse to "threat".
- 4 Decisions are understood here to be fundamental to goals, strategies and instruments (see endnote 2), as both the policy objective and instruments are dependent on decisions.
- 5 Cf. e.g. Plato, *nomoi* (laws), 627a (Plato [2016]: *Laws*. Edited by M. Schofield, translated by T. Griffith. Cambridge).
- 6 At times, ethically speaking, even a "desecuritization" is required. Cf. Floyd, Rita (2019): *The Morality of Security. A Theory of Just Securitization*. Cambridge.
- 7 Herz, John H. (1975): "Technik, Ethik und internationale Beziehungen." In: *Frankfurter Hefte. Zeitschrift für Kultur und Politik* 30/8, pp. 11–20, pp. 14 f.
- 8 Taken from Christopher Daase (2010): "Der erweiterte Sicherheitsbegriff. Working Paper 1/2010". <http://www.sicherheitskultur.org/fileadmin/files/WorkingPapers/01-Daase.pdf> (accessed September 10, 2019).
- 9 Institutional ethics considerations can also be considered part of military ethics. Cf. on the dimensions of ethical practice: Gutmann, Thomas / Quante, Michael (2017): Individual-, Sozial- und Institutionenethik. In: Werkner, Ines-Jacqueline/Ebeling, Klaus (eds.): *Handbuch Friedensethik*. Wiesbaden, pp. 105–114.
- 10 Walzer, Michael (1977; 2015): *Just and Unjust Wars. A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, New York.
- 11 Cf. Koch, Bernhard (2019): "Friedensethik." In: Gießmann, Hans-Joachim/Rinke, Bernhard: *Handbuch Frieden*. 2nd, revised edition. Wiesbaden, pp. 147–162.
- 12 In his letter "To the Pilgrim People of God in Germany" (of June 29, 2019) Pope Francis expressly stated that "to want only to be in 'order and harmony'" (translated from German) – that which "peace through law" can achieve – is not a sufficient perspective for the Christian community. https://www.dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/presse_2019/2019-108a-Brief-Papst-Franziskus-an-das-pilgernde-Volk-Gottes-in-Deutschland-29.06.2019.pdf (accessed October 22, 2019).
- 13 Cf. Schockenhoff, Eberhard (2018): *Kein Ende der Gewalt? Friedensethik für eine globalisierte Welt*. Freiburg im Breisgau, pp. 410–412; pp. 501–514.
- 14 Merkl, Alexander (2015): *Si vis pacem, para virtutes. Ein tugendethischer Beitrag zu einem Ethos der Friedfertigkeit*. Münster.
- 15 Cf. the articles in: Koch, Bernhard (ed.) (2019): *Chivalrous Combatants? The Meaning of Military Virtue Past and Present*. Baden-Baden.
- 16 Cf. Overbeck, Franz-Josef (2019): *Konstruktive Konfliktkultur. Friedensethische Standortbestimmung des Katholischen Militärbischofs für die Deutsche Bundeswehr*. Freiburg im Breisgau (Herder), pp. 84–87; Koch, Bernhard (2019): "Der Raum dazwischen. Hybride Kriegsführung und die 'Revisionistische Theorie des gerechten Krieges'". In: *Wissenschaft und Frieden* 3/2019, pp. 29–32.
- 17 Cf. Thomas Nagel's call for directness and immediacy in all violent attacks. Nagel, Thomas [1974]: "War and Massacre." In: *War and Moral Responsibility: A Philosophy & Public Affairs Reader*. Edited by Marshall Cohen, Thomas Nagel and Thomas Scanlon. Princeton, pp. 3–24. German version: Nagel, Thomas (2008): "Massenmord und Krieg." In: *Letzte Fragen. Erweiterte Neuausgabe*, edited by Michael Gebauer, pp. 83–109. Hamburg.

VALUES AND NORMS: DON'T "TEACH", ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT ACQUISITION!

Author: Gerhard Kruip

In a world that is becoming increasingly complicated and ever more plural, not everything can be prescribed by laws and regulations. Furthermore, as individualization progresses, ties to conventions and social control become weaker. For these reasons, personal moral consciousness has to play a major role in our actions, if they are to be guided by moral rules. Professional ethics is therefore becoming more and more important, especially in areas that are literally a matter of life and death – such as medicine, but also the military. Though it may sound old-fashioned, “virtues”, meaning acquired moral skills, remain indispensable today. Moreover, since it is important that in any democratic society, members of its armed forces should regard themselves as “citizens in uniform” and conduct themselves accordingly, it is essential for military personnel to acquire a high level of ethical competence. Germany’s past renders this necessity particularly obvious. In extreme cases, military personnel should even be capable of refusing to carry out orders that violate human rights, based on the decision of their own conscience. In the German armed forces, this is to be achieved by putting into practice the concept of “*Innere Führung*”¹ (leadership development and civic education), accompanied among other things by “character guidance training” (*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*). While the latter is provided by military chaplains, it is explicitly not “religious education”.

But what is ethical competence – and how can we help people to acquire it?²

Moral action cannot simply be equated with abiding by the law or following passed-down conventions or traditions. While neither are necessarily morally wrong, according to a demanding understanding of morals it is central that actors do not act on account of the prospect of a reward, nor out of fear of punishment, nor through conformity to a regulation or order, but based on their own moral conviction. As Kant says: “Nothing in the world, indeed nothing even beyond the world, can possibly be conceived which could be called good without qualification except a good will.”³ Thus

Abstract

Gerhard Kruip explains why ethical competence is indispensable for military personnel. Firstly, as a result of individualization, the individual’s moral awareness is increasingly important, and secondly, expectations concerning the moral judgement of “citizens in uniform” are generally high. Kruip believes that this conflict between subjectivity and the claim to universal validity of moral norms can be resolved from a cognitivist perspective: only a rationally justifiable morality can be acknowledged as right by each individual and at the same time by all. In other words, the justification must not rely solely on the individuals themselves, or on traditions or authorities.

From this starting point, one can sketch out the dimensions of ethical competence. The first of these, according to the author, is a cognitive, argumentative dimension. It consists of the ability to examine norms to determine whether they are right, as well as to analyze specific situations and the moral legitimacy of actions. The author outlines various suitable methods. However, it is essential that these partial competences be complemented by emotional and motivational aspects – in a sense, the “moral drive” that precedes any reflection.

This moral drive depends on internalization through the setting of examples, encouragement and recognition; classroom teaching of content and methods will not help to develop it. The corresponding learning processes should be based on “open communication oriented toward understanding, without coercion or discrimination”. Especially in an organization like the Bundeswehr that is strictly regimented and subject to everyday practical constraints, Kruip argues that it is important to create and enlarge islands of freedom to allow reflection on ethical issues away from day-to-day pressures of the job.

morality is necessarily something highly individual, highly personal. But how does that fit with the notion of common moral standards, which are also necessary? We generally understand morality to mean a fabric of norms that by definition is not different for every actor, but has a claim to universal validity. Kant, too, formulates his categorical imperative in this way: “[...] act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law.”⁴ For example, to assert as a moral demand that one must not commit murder only makes sense if it means that nobody anywhere at any time is allowed to commit murder – while acknowledging the

The concept of “autonomy” does not just mean a more or less arbitrary subjective self-determination

difficulty that not every act of killing is murder (e.g. self-defense). But if moral norms are “general laws”, this can only be reconciled with the subjectivity of moral norms mentioned above if we simultaneously assert that morality must be rationally justifiable. Only then can one argue on moral questions and ask that others also engage argumentatively with the moral demand in order to understand that it is right (or possibly wrong) and act accordingly. Thus, the moral understanding that emphasizes the individual’s “good will” is associated with the choice in favor of a rational morality. It is a choice against conceptions of morality that trace the validity of moral norms back to feelings, intuitions or authorities of any kind. If the concept of “autonomy”, i.e. “self-legislation” (*Selbstgesetzgebung*), is central for Kant in this context, then this does not just mean a more or less arbitrary subjective self-determination – the meaning that has now mistakenly become established in everyday German. Rather, it means the orientation of one’s own good will to the moral demands that one has recognized as being right.

Justify norms, form judgments

This fundamental insight has impacts on our understanding of ethical competence. It must at least imply the ability to examine proposed norms with the aid of arguments to determine whether they can be considered morally right. There are various methods for doing this. In my experience, John Rawls’ thought model is particularly well suited to this task. It can be used without having to adopt his “theory of justice”⁵ in its entirety. Rawls proposes a thought experiment: he invites us to imagine an “original position”, where members of a future society meet to reach a consensus on the rules that will govern their future lives in that society. At this constitutional assembly, not only do all parties have the same right to speak and express their opinion, but they also make their choices from behind a “veil of ignorance”⁶. In other words, the participants at the meeting in the “original position” do not know what social status they will have in the future society. For instance, they do not know whether they will be an employer or wage-earner, black or white, rich or poor, male or female. This veil of ignorance has a very important effect on the moral quality of the consensus that is reached. Faced with a proposal for a norm, all parties in the original position ask themselves what it could mean for them in the various possible situations. They try to avoid possible disadvantageous outcomes for themselves. Thus the veil of ignorance forces everyone to picture themselves in every possible future situation, with the result that they adopt a “moral point of view” independent of possible selfish minority interests. Under this veil of ignorance, unjust norms that one-sidedly favored only certain persons would not be accepted. Participants in the meeting know that they could be among those who benefit least or not at all, so they will reject this norm. It is often possible to try to solve morally controversial issues by actually playing out a thought experiment of this kind (in a group, possibly also with shared roles).

But ethical competence certainly has another dimension, too. That is, if we wish to derive individual conclusions for action from moral norms, we have to apply those norms to specif-

ic situations and also analyze these situations as best we can. Just as a prescription cannot be derived from a mere description, nor can moral norms be usefully and correctly applied if we do not have sufficient clarity about the application situation. To obtain clarity, the Toulmin method has proven helpful as an educational “tool”.⁷ First we need information about the situation (“data”), which we then have to connect to a moral norm or to a value (“warrant”), via which we arrive at a “conclusion” about what to do. Furthermore, this norm or this value is based in more extensive value systems or moral theories (“backing”), which form the background for the validity of the applied norm. In moral controversies, the Toulmin method helps to identify exactly where disagreement lies. Participants in the debate may differ in their perception of the situation, or they may have different norms. This can occur both within one and the same system of norms, or they may come from different theoretical or cultural backgrounds. For this reason, every moral judgment must be justified with reference to the situation in which action is to be taken, with reference to the norms being applied, and with reference to the theoretical or cultural backgrounds of these norms. Exploring these distinctions can contribute significantly to making sure that in a discussion, everyone always knows exactly what everyone is talking about. This can then facilitate reaching an understanding, or at least provide a clearer view of why there is no agreement. One example of where this is helpful is in the case of an intercultural debate on the validity of norms.

A purely theoretical approach with situational analyses and moral arguments – a sort of ethical “dry run” – has its limits, of course. Things are more exciting and motivating if moral disputes between members of a learning group can be addressed. For-and-against discussions provide an opportunity to hone and examine the individual arguments, for example.⁸ Such debates take on a particular relevance when the participants find themselves in an actual situation that requires them to analyze and reflect on possible morally legitimate options for action. Ideally one would be able to take the time to do this at the moment in question. Al-

ternatively, it can also be useful to run through relevant considerations subsequently or based on a real example that has affected other actors. This would suggest that ethics teaching should be more closely integrated with other subjects in the overall educational or training context, at least at times.⁹

Moral sensitivity

The two cognitive dimensions discussed so far – analysis of the situation requiring action and the argumentative justification of moral correctness – are not sufficient for a complete description of ethical competence. There are two further dimensions, which are more emotional and concern the depth dimension of personality. One is the sensitivity to morally relevant aspects of a situation through which one allows oneself to be “affected” and challenged. This is often associated with empathic capacity, and requires receptiveness to the suffering of others. This sensitivity is closely linked to the fundamental willingness to be moral at all, to see oneself as a moral subject. Without this willingness, you do not even let things touch you in the first place, you do not want to be more

***Without the fundamental willingness
to be moral at all, to see oneself as
a moral subject, any description of ethical
competence remains incomplete***

accurately aware of the situation, and you do not take the trouble to reflect on whether the relevant prescriptive expectations are right or wrong.

In the case of the first two, more cognitive, dimensions of situational perception and moral argument, it is still relatively easy to imagine how the corresponding skills can be taught as a form of classroom “instruction”. The other two dimensions, however, can hardly be “taught” as a simple transfer of knowledge. At best, one can encourage and supervise learning processes – processes which certainly cannot remain extrinsic to the learners, but rather have a great influence on their personal development and

identity.¹⁰ Everyone will probably bring along some degree of moral sensitivity and moral motivation as a result of their upbringing and socialization. Yet development of the personality is surely not complete when we reach adulthood. Ethical learning should still continue after that time. Moral sensitivity and moral motivation are strengthened by people's experiences of receiving recognition in their environment as empathic and morally motivated individuals. For educational contexts, this means that the teacher as a personality and the learning group as a supportive environment gain particular importance. Recognition within a moral community, which the learning group can also represent, being confronted with personal stories, and the role model set by people who are

group reflects together on its learning process and possible disturbances or obstacles, analyzing and criticizing any possible hidden abuse of power, tabooization or threats of exclusion that may come either from the teachers or from the learning group. As part of such a feedback culture, teachers should also be willing to expose themselves to criticism, and sometimes even demand it, so that they can then attempt to improve their teaching practice and the associated appreciative and supportive attitude towards the learners. To encourage people's development into more reflective and motivated moral subjects requires a teacher who imposes the same demands on him- or herself, and who in this regard still sees him- or herself as a learner.

Of course, all organizations are influenced by practical constraints, command structures and specific rules that provide only limited room for communication oriented towards understanding. This is certainly true of the *Bundeswehr* with its strict hierarchy. Nevertheless, even there it could be possible, at least in training phases, to permit "interruptions"¹¹ in suitable moments, to allow context-based reflection on ethical questions. Jürgen Habermas uses a nice metaphor: "practical discourses, like all arguments, [are like] islands at risk of flooding in a sea of practice where the model of consensual resolution of action conflicts is by no means dominant."¹² When it comes to teaching ethical competence and its implementation, it is vital to protect these islands from being completely flooded. Instead they should be kept intact and, if possible, enlarged. Character guidance training offers the best opportunities for this if it enables at least a minimum "downtime" with critical distance from practice in the German armed forces. This would allow military personnel to establish relationships between their profession on the one hand and their personality and lifeworld on the other, without of course disconnecting themselves from their professional practice.

To encourage people's development into more reflective and motivated moral subjects requires a teacher who imposes the same demands on him- or herself

acting in the morally right way can mean that morality becomes more important to a person and their moral motivation is strengthened. However, such learning processes must not be manipulatively shaped. They should remain transparent so that participants can explicitly reflect on them. This in turn requires open communication oriented toward understanding, without coercion or discrimination. To enable such communication, it is recommended to regularly set aside times for meta-communication in a learning group. This is where the

The Author



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Photo: Peter Pulkowski

1 The 2016/1 edition of *Ethics and Armed Forces* was devoted to "Innere Führung", but it hardly touched on questions of teaching ethics. See http://www.ethikund-militaer.de/fileadmin/ethik_und_militaer/E-Journal_2016-012-Deutsch.pdf (accessed August 17, 2019).

2 In the following, I refer both to my own experiences in university teaching, general adult education and ethics training for managers in the private sector, and to a project that was carried out jointly with the Working Group for Catholic Adult Education (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Katholische Erwachsenenbildung): Gisbertz, Helga; Kruip, Gerhard; Tolksdorf, Markus (eds.) (2010): *Ethisches Lernen in der allgemeinen Erwachsenenbildung*. Bielefeld. Specifically on ethical competence, see also with a similar concept: Dietrich, Julia (2007): "Was ist ethische Kompetenz? Ein philosophischer Versuch einer Systematisierung und Konkretion." In: Ammicht Quinn, Regina et al. (eds.) (2007): *Wertloses Wissen? Fachunterricht als Ort ethischer Reflexion*. Bad Heilbrunn, pp. 30–51.

3 (Translated from German). The famous first sentence of the first section of Kant's "Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals". I recommend the following edition with its excellent commentary: Horn, Christoph; Mieth, Corinna; Scarano, Nico (2007): *Kant, Immanuel: Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*. Frankfurt am Main, here p. 18.

4 (Translated from German). Ibid., p. 52.

5 Rawls, John (1993): *Eine Theorie der Gerechtigkeit*.

7th ed. Frankfurt am Main. [Rawls, John (1971):

A Theory of Justice. Belknap.]

6 Originally, Rawls developed his thought experiment with the "veil of ignorance" to characterize the conditions of a just social order in the form of his two famous principles of justice. But it also provides a vivid method to check one's own moral convictions for their fairness (impartiality). Therefore, moral questions about personal values can also be elucidated from a convincing perspective, which is why the "veil of ignorance" is often used as a catalyst for moral-practical discourses in adult education.

7 This stems from Toulmin, Stephen Edelston (1996): *Der Gebrauch von Argumenten*. 2nd ed. Weinheim.

[Toulmin, Stephen Edelston (1958): *The Uses of Argument*. Cambridge.]

8 On this point, cf. Kruip, Gerhard (2015): "Moralische Konflikte – eine Chance zum ethischen Lernen?" In: *DIE – Zeitschrift für Erwachsenenbildung* 22 (1), pp. 45–47.

9 For this reason, in the Catholic adult education project mentioned above, we developed a concept for identifying implicitly existing ethical issues, initiating and monitoring a learning process in this regard, and then usefully concluding such an excursion into ethics in order to return to the original topic. See in particular the section "Vier Schritte zur Gestaltung ethischen Lernens" in Kruip, Gerhard; Winkler, Katja (2010): "Moraltheoretische, entwicklungspsychologische und andragogisch-konzeptionelle Grundlagen ethischen Lernens." In: Gisbertz, Helga/Kruip, Gerhard/Tolksdorf, Markus (eds.): *Ethisches Lernen in der allgemeinen Erwachsenenbildung*. Bielefeld, pp. 15–55, here pp. 32–47.

10 Because the concept of "inculcation of values" sounds very much like a heteronomous transmission of moral ideas, in which the "obstinacy" of the subjects is taken too little seriously, today the moral education prefers other models of moral education such as "values clarification",

"values development" and "values communication". See in detail Roebben, Bert (2011): *Religious Education of Hope*. Berlin, pp. 19–41, and also Ziebertz, Hans-Georg (2003): "Ethisches Lernen." In: Hilger, Georg/Leimgruber, Stephan/Ziebertz, Hans-Georg (eds.): *Religionsdidaktik. Ein Leitfaden für Studium, Ausbildung und Beruf*. 2nd edition Munich, pp. 402–419. However, the problem with this way of speaking is that the notion of "values" is notoriously blurred, which is why I tend to avoid it. Often it is more precise to speak of rights, duties, norms or principles or of attitudes and virtues, especially since the term "values" also plays a role in the non-ethical area, when talking about economic values.

11 Ralph Bergold made the interesting suggestion that ethical education could be conceptualized in the context of adult education as a "break": Bergold, Ralph (2005): *Unterbrechende Ethik. Ein neues religionspädagogisches Konzept für ethische Bildungsarbeit mit Erwachsenen*. Frankfurt am Main.

12 (Translated from German). Habermas, Jürgen (1996): "Diskursethik – Notizen zu einem Begründungsprogramm." In: by the same author: *Moralbewußtsein und kommunikatives Handeln*. 6th ed. Frankfurt am Main, pp. 53–126, p. 116.

ETHICAL EDUCATION – A CENTRAL COMPONENT OF TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT IN THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES

Author: **Friedrich Lohmann**

Ethics and ethical competence

When we ask about the aims, relevance and methods of ethical education in the German armed forces (*Bundeswehr*), then on a basic level we first need to be clear what we are talking about. So what is ethics, exactly? Over millennia of human history, many definitions of ethics have been put forward. I would like to start with a definition taken from a recent introduction to ethics written by the Danish theologian Svend Andersen: “Ethics is a critical reflection on our ideas about the right or good ways for humans to act or conduct their lives.”¹

Ethics is therefore about human action and life, from the perspective of what is good and right. Ethics is a normative discipline that makes judgments about what is right and good. All of us frequently make value judgements of this kind in our everyday lives. Do I choose sustainable products when I shop? Do I park in a disabled bay to save time? Is it a good thing that the German government is taking part in the sea rescue operations in the Mediterranean? We also make longer-term decisions, such as career choices, by weighing up different values. In this sense, we all have moral ideas about how we should live our lives. Individual and collective, simple and complex decisions – morality is part of everyday life. The special feature of ethics is that it examines these moral ideas in and of themselves, in their own right. So ethics is a reflective science, and this reflection takes place with critical intent: Is what I consider to be morally right still right when considered in a wider context? All human beings have moral intuitions that shape their thoughts and actions, but these do not always stand up to critical scrutiny. The criterion most central to ethical reflection is that of generalizability. To take one of the above examples: If I were a disabled person, how important would it be to me to have an accessible parking space? Can I cite good reasons that give me the right to take that person's parking place? Does my own conscience accept these reasons, and would I be able to defend them in conversation with people close to me, or even before the general public? The “Koblenz Decision Check” (*Koblenzer Entscheidungs-Check*)

Abstract

What exactly is ethics and how does it affect our actions and the way we live our lives? In his essay, Friedrich Lohmann asks these questions from a general point of view, before examining what they mean specifically for military personnel and their daily service.

Lohmann sets out his understanding of ethical competence and explains how ethical education works at a cognitive and emotional level and as a key element in human personality development. With regard to the Bundeswehr and its institutional commitment to values as the army of a “democracy able to defend itself”, the author emphasizes the importance of ethical education for its soldiers.

At the same time, he suggests that soldiers of the Bundeswehr occasionally smile at ethical education or express functionalist reservations against it, instead of pondering without prejudice the sense and purpose of ethical reflection and education for their profession. Although ethics needs to free itself from arguments about its functional rationale, in discussions with soldiers it is important to point out that the ethical justification of military service goes hand in hand with the quality of mission fulfillment. This is an aspect to which particular attention is given in Innere Führung, as the self-image of the Bundeswehr. Not least, ethical education can protect military personnel by showing them the special ethical challenges of the job during training. It also allows them to anticipate, at least in their minds, potentially extreme situations, which will inevitably put their morality to the test. If the “soldierly personality” is strengthened in this respect, disinhibition in the use of force during a deployment will become less likely.

developed at the Center for Leadership Development and Civic Education (*Zentrum Innere Führung*) of the German armed forces talks about the “fire of public opinion” through which every reflection and decision has to pass before it becomes an ethically legitimate act.²

Throughout its history, ethics has developed norms and values that usually pass this test. Ethical competence consists in (1) knowing, (2) internalizing (“embracing”) and (3) practicing ethically preferable ideas about the good life. The second point deserves particular attention, because those who have to think long and hard about their own ethical compass in every situation will tend to act unwittingly against moral norms in some situations. Moreover, ethical rules which have not been internalized tend to be violated out of opportunism. Someone whose only deterrent against theft is the fear of punishment is more likely to risk stealing as soon as no-one is looking than someone whose inner conviction tells them that stealing is wrong.

Aristotle spoke of attitudes practiced through habit as being that which constitutes the morally good life. This means that for the development of an ethical personality, it is the internalized ideas of the good life that matter – in other words, the values that give the persons as a whole their character and their “vision of life”. Ethical competence in this sense also means becoming aware that in many situations, ethically relevant norms and values may conflict with one another. Thus the moral duty to assist others in danger may challenge the principle of avoiding harming others wherever possible. Or the duty of obedience to one’s superiors may conflict with the principle of abiding by the law, if soldiers have been ordered to act unlawfully. Ethics cannot completely solve such moral dilemmas. But those who possess ethical competence will not be surprised to encounter these dilemmas in their work and everyday life, and will be better able to cope with them than those who rely solely on their moral impulses.

Ethical education

In light of the above, we now have a fairly clear idea of what ethical education is, how it should happen, and why it is a central aspect of human personality development.

The term “education”, in contrast to “training”, implies aptitudes and dispositions that already exist and “only” have to be formed or developed. Humans have moral intuitions, and this seems to be the case across cultures. Ethical education starts with these intuitions, but does not stop there. As already mentioned, ethics also involves a critical exploration of generalizability and possible contradictions in that which we intuitively

Those who have to think long and hard about their own ethical compass in every situation will tend to act unwittingly against moral norms in some situations

consider to be morally right. Ethical education therefore involves a strongly cognitive aspect. Ethical knowledge (What are the moral standards that have emerged throughout human history?) and knowledge of reality (What are the expected consequences in a typical scenario of choosing this or that course of action?) undergo a synthesis. It is only through such reflection that a moral impulse becomes a solid moral attitude.

Together with knowledge and reflection, however, the element of practice mentioned above is also important. Ethical education is aimed at human action in practice, and should therefore always refer to concrete action situations. This situational aspect of education becomes more obvious if we consider a more general insight from social psychology: affectively based attitudes are best influenced at the emotional level, whereas cognitively based attitudes are best influenced at the cognitive level.³ Since many moral ideas are originally affect-based, ethical education in the classroom also includes practice and exploration through the conscious creation of morally relevant situations in which the moral emotions come into play – whether through watching a film or through direct experiences in the sense of experiential education.

Ethical education therefore takes place both in the realm of emotions (affectively) and in the realm of knowledge (cognitively), in the form of criticism, confirmation and the further development of given moral intuitions. In this way, affects can be consolidated into values.

Relevance of ethical education in the German armed forces

The *Bundeswehr* has declared that the ethical competence of its members, in line with the values of the Basic Law, is a central part of its self-image. It aims to realize these values through the concept of *Innere Führung* (officially translated as “leadership development and civic education”): “*Bundeswehr* personnel fulfill their mission when they actively stand up for *human dignity, freedom, peace, justice, equality, solidarity and democracy* as the guiding values of our state, out of inner conviction.”⁴ Thus even at the time of the Himmerod memorandum, the greatest importance was attached to the teaching of ethics in the planned new institution. “The training of military personnel in the political and ethical sense should be given the greatest attention from the outset as part of their general service training. It must not be limited to purely military aspects.”⁵

As to the reasons why ethics should be relevant in this way, two lines of reasoning can be distinguished. The first reason for the importance of ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* is that it is where fundamental reflection on the *Bundeswehr*’s self-image and sense of purpose takes place. For this reason, education in the ethical

both forms of education, concrete scenarios are presented in which the *Bundeswehr*’s foundation of values and self-image are debated. Emotional engagement rather than a mere transfer of knowledge is an important learning goal, including in historical and political education.⁶ Ethical education also utilizes specific illustrative material.

The *Bundeswehr* is committed to certain values. Indeed, in keeping with the idea of “democracy able to defend itself” (*wehrhafte Demokratie*), it even sees the defense of these values as a justification for its existence. The *Bundeswehr* exists, and military personnel risk their health and their lives, because the democracy of the Basic Law and its binding values are subject to threats and have to be defended in and against foreign countries. It is the task of ethical education to explore this foundation of values and expose others to its persuasive force. In an important 1954 radio address on the concept of *Innere Führung*, Wolf Graf von Baudissin spoke of a “spirit [...] which is in full harmony with the moral foundations and essential forms of the free order of life.”⁷ Only those who have internalized these values – assisted by appropriate affective and cognitive educational efforts – can act on a sustained basis and “out of inner conviction” in accordance with the *Bundeswehr*’s self-image.

In this context, the Joint Service Regulation (*Zentrale Dienstvorschrift*) ZDv A-2620/3 on *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (or “character guidance training”) speaks of an “ethical justification” of service in the *Bundeswehr* as being a crucial task for professional ethics education.⁸ In other words, it is about the reasons one has for serving in the military and the meaning one attaches to this service. Obtaining clarity in one’s own mind about this meaning is the essential basis which allows every soldier to fulfil their mission in the right way with motivation and conviction. From time to time, in military circles, one hears a critical dig made against ethics teaching, to the effect that it teaches soldiers to think too much and gets in the way of their mission. This idea should be vigorously refuted. Reflecting on the valuable foundations of one’s own professional existence is a prerequisite for gaining the inner conviction for correct, assured and motivated action in accordance with *Innere Führung*. There may be occasional cases where soldiers reflecting together

Reflecting on the valuable foundations of one’s own professional existence is a prerequisite for gaining the inner conviction for correct, assured and motivated action in accordance with “Innere Führung”

field is prioritized over other educational efforts in specific areas. Ethical, historical and political education form a package and should not have to be played off against each other. Nevertheless, historical and political education rest on a foundation of ethical education. For example, if historical education is oriented toward an idea of tradition that we consider to be valuable, then it is oriented toward ethical standards. Explaining these standards is first and foremost the task of ethics teaching. One could almost regard historical and political education as examples of the situational form of ethical education mentioned above: in

on the core values of the *Bundeswehr* actually begin to doubt their own choice of career, as they feel unable to embrace the “ethical justification” of serving in the *Bundeswehr*. Yet in such cases it is good that these doubts surface as early as possible in ethics classes.

This brings us to the second line of reasoning for the relevance of ethical education in the *Bundeswehr*: the ethical competence of military personnel is crucially important for the quality of military mission fulfillment. In his review of the *Bundeswehr*’s Afghanistan mission, Rainer Glatz expressed this point as follows: “A high moral standard is thus – rightly – applied to the actions of military personnel. Misconduct by individual soldiers can be critical for the overall mission and lead to casualties.”⁹ In this context, he quotes from a memorandum that General Allen had written in response to the desecration of the bodies of Taliban fighters by U.S. soldiers: “We are guests in Afghanistan and partners of the Afghans. It is extremely important that we continue to gain their trust and understanding. It is paramount that we demonstrate the highest standards of professionalism, morality and ethics – at all times, in all our actions and in all places. There must be no exceptions.”¹⁰

Intercultural competence is particularly important in this regard. It is a sub-component of ethical competence in that it goes far beyond the kind of intercultural knowledge that can be learned in crash courses. Intercultural competence implies an integral attitude of the entire personality that is bound to moral values such as respect and tolerance.¹¹ Its increased relevance can be seen not only in overseas deployments, but also in multinational contingents, and even within the *Bundeswehr* itself, which is also a mirror of German society in as much as it reflects diversity of different cultures and ways of life.¹² Social scientists Sven Bernhard Gareis and Ulrich vom Hagen studied the Multinational Corps Northeast (MNC NE) in Szczecin, Poland, and reached the following conclusion: “One of the essential tasks for the political and military leadership therefore is to recognize and act upon the fact that investing in so-called soft skills to facilitate multinational interaction proves to be extremely valuable for achieving hard military goals.”¹³ Similar sentiments can be found in an essay by the psychologist Stefan

Kammhuber: “Compared to spending on (failed) military technology developments, investment in a sustained institutionalization of intercultural expertise is negligible. Ignoring intercultural expertise in the long run will result in losses – financial, and – much worse – human.”¹⁴

On an even more fundamental level, and before any intercultural component, the relevance of ethical education can be seen in individual cases of misconduct at *Bundeswehr* sites. The annual reports by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Armed Forces (*Wehrbeauftragter des Deutschen Bundestages*) show how what is often referred to as the “morale of the troops” is undermined by individual morally reprehensible

Ethical reflection might sometimes result in slower decisions and actions. But who would not want to pay this price, if it meant that mistakes and trauma could be avoided?

actions and a lack of moral leadership responsibility on the part of superiors: “Readers of the [Parliamentary Commissioner’s] report wonder why it is still [...] necessary to monitor the implementation of *Innere Führung* so closely and, above all, why it is still necessary, by means of the report, each year anew to impress the principles of *Innere Führung* on our military personnel. Yet it should also be asked what these and similar problematic behaviors by superiors and fellow soldiers mean for the people serving in uniform in the German armed forces. Their trust in the institution to which they voluntarily belong may be harmed, or they may even be traumatized by their experiences.”¹⁵

Ethical reflection might sometimes result in slower decisions and actions.¹⁶ But who would not want to pay this price, if it meant that mistakes and trauma could be avoided?

A passage from the 2006 White Paper provides a neat summary for this section: “New tasks demand new capabilities. Particularly in stabilization operations, a resolute and confident manner and assertiveness must be accompanied by a sense of ethical responsibility as well as social, intercultural and foreign-language skills.”¹⁷ The latest White Paper does not contain any such passage emphasizing an ethical sense of responsibility.

ity on the part of military personnel. Regrettably, overall it focuses more on the small details of specific current security policy scenarios rather than setting out more far-reaching statements.

Thus there are good practical reasons for ascribing central importance to ethical education in the *Bundeswehr*. In the narrower sense, however, these reasons are just considerations of usefulness. They do not touch on the question raised at the outset about the right and good way of life, so they can only be asserted in an accompanying capacity. Ethics, meanwhile, is about inner convictions whose validity is independent of the immediate practical benefit and may even contradict a strict functional logic. Nevertheless, in view of the previously mentioned critical digs at ethical reflection made in military circles, the purely functional rationale for ethical education is very important. Inner conviction cannot arise where practicability is called into question. If it is credibly demonstrated that the ethical education of military personnel is conducive to long-term mission fulfillment within the framework of values of the Basic Law, then the argument for ethical education is only strengthened.

Focus and dimensions of ethical education in the German armed forces

“*Bundeswehr* personnel fulfill their mission when they actively stand up for human dignity, freedom, peace, justice, equality, solidarity and democracy as the guiding values of our state, out of inner conviction.” This sentence quoted earlier from the Joint Service Regulation on *Innere Führung* names the core content of ethical education in the *Bundeswehr*. It can be summa-

rized under the keyword of human rights education, since with human dignity as the starting point, we can arrive at the other six terms via the idea of human rights and its three dimensions – civil, political and economic-social-cultural. The idea of human rights is incorporated into the Basic Law via its section on “Fundamental Rights”; in addition, we should also recall the various supranational human rights conventions, agreements and declarations to which the Federal Republic of Germany is committed. Citizens of the Federal Republic of Germany are responsible, mature adults endowed with rights. The idea of the “citizen in uniform” expressly embodies this notion of maturity and responsibility while characterizing the concept of *Innere Führung*.

Therefore, in addition to the values mentioned in the quotation, ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* will have to address human rights and specific human rights issues. It will need to consider their reciprocity – as rights to which one is entitled, but also as rights which one has to concede to others, even military enemies. The relevant declarations, including the agreements of international humanitarian law, should form a compulsory component of the ethical curriculum in the *Bundeswehr*.

To this we can add classes on the most important theories of ethics (virtue ethics, deontological ethics, teleological ethics), which should cover the more cognitive elements of ethics teaching in the *Bundeswehr*.

When it comes to ethical education specifically for soldiers (bear in mind that the *Bundeswehr* also has civilian staff), then we can also include education concerning particular ethical challenges in the military profession. Aspects that play a role here include weapons systems and ethical rules for their use, the responsible structuring of the hierarchy of superiors and subordinates, and, above all, ways of dealing with the existential burdens that can arise during deployment – and ultimately the question of killing and being killed. This is precisely where the affective dimension of ethics teaching comes into its own.¹⁸ Harsh deployment scenarios and the dilemmas often encountered in them can only ever be imperfectly imagined in the classroom – ideally with the aid of video presentations or reports by returnees. It is important to counter

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the banalization of violence, which is not uncommon in military jargon (e.g. “eliminate the target”), and to impress on soldiers the ethical and legal need to limit violence and protect human rights, even in an armed conflict. Even in a “fight for survival”,¹⁹ potentially deadly force and lethal weapons should never be used without inhibition but rather only if there is no other option for self-defense and mission fulfillment.

It is particularly when such “hard cases” are considered that the close relationship between ethical teaching in the *Bundeswehr* and *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* becomes apparent. In the latter, military professional ethics has always been taught with at least a connection to pastoral care and skills for coping with distressing experiences during deployment. These should not be left out in the classroom. However, it would be wrong to make deployment dilemma situations the main element of ethical education in the *Bundeswehr*, or even to infer from these situations a special ethics based on “hardness” required in deployment as the essential characteristic of military ethics.²⁰ Starting with the Battle of Solferino and culminating in the Geneva Conventions after the Second World War with their later Additional Protocols, the development of international humanitarian law shows the protection of human rights gaining ever greater relevance for the legal containment of action in armed conflict.²¹ Concrete “rules of engagement” are an attempt to comply with these legal requirements. An internalized ethical compass prevents violations of the law. Ethical education as general human rights education in the spirit of *Innere Führung* is therefore an essential facilitator of morally right military conduct, also with regard to the realities of deployment.

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3 Cf. Aronson, Elliot/Wilson, Timothy D./Akert, Robin M. (2014): *Social Psychology*. 6th edition. Boston, p. 214.

4 (Translated from German). Joint Service Regulation (*Zentrale Dienstvorschrift*) ZDv A-2600/1: *Innere Führung. Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur der Bundeswehr*. Bonn, no. 106 (emphasis in original).

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10 (Translated from German). Quoted in Glatz, op. cit., p. 192.

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ETHICAL EDUCATION IN THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES: EMBRACED VALUES AND MORAL JUDGEMENT

Author: Matthias Gillner

Germany's Federal Ministry of Defence is soon to issue a *Zentrale Dienstvorschrift* (joint service regulation; ZDv) on "Ethical Training in the German Armed Forces". This regulation, which is aimed at everyone who belongs to the *Bundeswehr* as well as military and civilian executives, aims not only to describe the general objectives of ethical training in the German armed forces, but also to lay down standards for the provision of training.

The military, of course, is known for its organizational principle of orders and obedience. Military superiors can give subordinates written, verbal, and other kinds of instructions to behave in a certain way, and are entitled to expect obedience (cf. § 2 (2) WStG (*Wehrstrafgesetz* – Military Penal Law)). However, the right to issue orders in the German armed forces does not imply blind obedience. A soldier may not carry out criminal orders or commit atrocities just because "orders are orders" – as was the case in the *Wehrmacht* at the time of National Socialism.¹ In military law, the authority to issue orders has clear limits set upon it (§ 10 (4) SG (*Soldatengesetz* – Law on the Legal Status of Soldiers)), and misconduct is deemed punishable (§ 32 WStG). Orders are not binding if they violate human dignity, if they are issued for reasons other than official ones, or if they are unreasonable. Subordinates do not have to follow them (§ 11 (1) SG). In fact, soldiers are obliged not to obey any order which would entail a criminal act. They become criminally culpable if they are aware that the ordered action constitutes a criminal offence, or even if they should have been aware (§ 11 (2) SG in conjunction with § 5 WStG).

In light of this legal situation and the fact that over fifty civilian legal instructors teach these limits on the authority to issue orders at academies, officer training colleges, and military schools – and given that, at a divisional level and higher, over a hundred legal consultants advise commanders and leadership groups in the *Bundeswehr* – one might well ask why a dedicated service regulation governing ethical training in the German armed forces is needed in the first place, especially since one has never before been deemed necessary in the sixty years of the *Bundeswehr*'s existence. Such doubts are

Abstract

Given the clear limits on the authority to issue orders, and given existing training formats such as "Lebenskundlicher Unterricht" (character guidance training), is there actually a need for a dedicated joint service regulation governing ethical education in the German armed forces? The "Innere Führung" joint service regulation already clearly encompasses the aim of imparting the fundamental values of our community along with a canon of soldierly values derived from them. Matthias Gillner clearly advocates the treatment of such character-building and community-forming questions regarding the leading a good life, along with the associated leanings and convictions, in the setting of Lebenskundlicher Unterricht, which is compatible with plurality, free of hierarchy, and un-assessed, and which provides a space in which to relive experiences and reflect beyond the confines of professional ethics.

The author places the focus of his article on moral judgement, i.e. the "application of standards to a situative context", which is to be differentiated from the above. But this professional ethical competence is by no means limited to knowing and following legal standards and rules of engagement, as Gillner illustrates using examples from real-life, international military operations. It consists precisely of applying a rule or standard to a concrete situation. This involves appraising the situation as accurately as possible, developing empathy, assessing the applicability of standards, identifying conflicts of duty, and selecting and justifying actions and omissions accountably through the categorisation of duties and the application of the rules of priority. There are various didactic methods available to impart this essential professional ethical competence.

Harmony between the embracing of values and convictions, and training in the capacity of perception, imagination, and judgement, does not render obsolete the conscience as a personal moral authority. On the contrary: it should be understood as a contribution towards the lifelong education and assessment of the conscience.

accentuated when one considers that the ZDv on “Political Education in the German armed forces” (A-2620/1) already formulates objectives of an ethical nature. That set of instructions aims “to enable soldiers to consciously advocate and defend the basic and human rights formulated in Germany’s Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*)” (No. 203 Par. 6), and “to develop and encourage a willingness and ability to reflect upon the fundamental questions of a military career – especially its ethical and moral dimensions” (Par. 3).

Furthermore, ever since it was founded, the *Bundeswehr* has provided *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*, or ethical life skills training, which is generally given by military chaplains, in which soldiers are encouraged to think about their own life orientation, and whose curriculum includes a variety of ethical themes (ZDv A-2620/3). Why, despite all this, do we need dedicated ethical training in the armed forces, and what content does it intend to impart?

Value orientation

Ethical training in the German armed forces is primarily about teaching values. First and foremost of these are “human dignity, freedom, peace, justice, equality, solidarity, and democracy”, which are also declared to be “the guiding values of our state” (A-2600/1, No. 106). Elsewhere in the current ZDv entitled *Innere Führung. Selbstverständnis und Führungskultur der Bundeswehr* (Leadership development and civic education. Identity and leadership culture in the German armed forces), it states that it is only the “value system of the Basic Law” that guarantees “human dignity, freedom, peace, justice, equality, solidarity, and democracy” (No. 304). It is “*Innere Führung* (literally ‘inner leadership’; more generally: leadership development and civic education)” which “puts into effect the values and standards of the Basic Law in the German armed forces” (No. 301), and from whose basic principles a dedicated “canon of soldierly values” can be derived, which helps soldiers become “brave, loyal, and conscientious, comradely and considerate, disciplined, competent, and willing to learn in their particular field, truthful to themselves and others, just, tolerant, open to other cultures, and able to form moral judgements” (No. 507). “Political education” aims

to impart and deepen the values and standards of the Basic Law (cf. No. 625), and the “*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* taught by military chaplains is designed to play a pivotal role” in ensuring that soldiers “always advocate and defend the values and standards of the free, democratic constitutional order” (cf. No. 508f).

The concept of values is not always used consistently, especially when it is hastily linked with the concept of standards; this indicates inadequate understanding. Standards and values are

Values are less likely to arise by our allowing ourselves to be led to something rationally. It is more likely that we will be emotionally attracted or even captured by something. Or, more often, that we are repelled and disgusted by its opposite

certainly related, but they do not mean the same thing. Human actions and state institutions are standardized and evaluated, yet standards obey a “logic of obligation”, whereas values follow the “logic of preferential choice”². Standards have compelling and limiting characteristics, whereas values possess an attracting, motivating quality. They both relate to different experiences: that something should be a certain way, or that we are enthusiastic about something, that we sense and recognize a duty, or that something provides us with orientation.

This brief sketch and delineation of what the concept means has implications for the way values come about and, therefore, how they are imparted. To begin with, values always relate to the evaluating person – to the subjective verdict that something is important to us. They are less likely to arise by our allowing ourselves to be led to something rationally; it is more likely that we will be emotionally attracted or even captured by something. Or, more often, that we are repelled or disgusted by its opposite. Rational appraisal often only happens retrospectively, as a kind of epilogue to values already embraced. Values do not only justify personal convictions, they can be shared collectively. For instance, “freedom, equality, fraternity (solidarity)” have been considered the foundational values of an equitable society since the French Revolution. Because values are embraced primarily through experience

and demonstrate a heartfelt yet by no means irrational personal certainty, any ethical training which claims to impart values cannot resort to lectures and presentations that seek to logically demonstrate their legitimacy, as is the case in the teaching of standards. It must instead facilitate an arena in which values can be experienced personally. The experience of attraction to values is perhaps most expressively conveyed through narration. (Maybe that is why Jesus himself chose narrative as a means of imparting his values: the value of compassion in the parable of the Good Samaritan [Luke 10:25-37] and the value of reconciliation in the parable of the Prodigal Son [Luke 15:11-32].)

The concept of value is very closely interlinked with the way we see ourselves, in the sense that “strong evaluations” (Charles Taylor) always articulate that which matters most in people’s lives

“Lebenskundlicher Unterricht”, in its own particular way, encourages character-building and personal development among soldiers

– who they want to be – so questions of value are always closely linked to the question of what constitutes a good life. And because, in the modern world, a good life can no longer be separated from that which people with a free will consider to be a good life (there are, in other words, many very different and equally good ways of living), these themes have to be treated in a pluralistic way, without hierarchy, in an open atmosphere, and non-judgementally. And the best way to do this is through *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*, which, in its own particular way, encourages character-building and personal development among soldiers, and, beyond the narrow context of professional ethics, aims to guide people towards a conscious way of life and a spiritual existence.

The same cannot be said about the formation of moral judgements and the application of standards to situational contexts. This is where soldiers are required to decide and justify which of those standards already accepted as valid is appropriate to a particular situation, in light of all of its relevant characteristics, which will hope-

fully have been appraised as fully as possible. Must soldiers have their own ability to form moral judgements for this, or is it enough to know the law that applies?

Knowledge of the law and moral judgement

Military deployments are governed by the terms of international humanitarian law. Soldiers of the German armed forces are also governed by the particular rules of engagement (RoE) that legally regulate the use of military force in national and multinational missions according to operative, political, and legal directives. The national pocket card is a clear and concise version of the RoE containing the most important basic rules on self-preservation, self-defense, and emergency relief, setting up protective areas, using military force without using firearms, and the use of firearms and weaponry with and without verbal warning procedures – and the rules of mission enforcement; but even all this, while it certainly safeguards behaviour, can by no means replace moral judgement. That is because the moral judgement of soldiers will be tested whenever conflicting rules and standards demand the personal interpretation of situations and the resolution of conflict.

A rule of engagement, for example, might permit military action that clashes with moral conviction. For instance, a military contingent from Zambia operating as part of a peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) fell into an ambush laid by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). The RoE allowed the Zambian soldiers to use proportionate force to defend themselves from attack. But by then, the rebels had moved in among civilians and were using them as human shields. Because of this, asserting the right to self-defense would have meant the death of numerous innocent women, men, and children for whose protection the soldiers had been ordered into the area of conflict. Were the soldiers to assert their right to defend themselves and instigate an inevitable bloodbath in the civilian population, or were they to forgo that right, surrender to the rebels, and exposing themselves to violence?³

Knowledge of a rule of engagement cannot replace its appropriate application. For instance, the amended rules of engagement issued in 2009

by Germany's Federal Ministry of Defence permitted soldiers in Afghanistan not only to exercise proportionate force to defend against an attack in progress, but also for pre-emptive purposes – in other words, to anticipate an imminent attack using military force (as opposed to prevention, which counters a potential attack as a precaution). Assessing a situation as an open, present, and serious risk remains, even after all the necessary checks, a subjective act on the part of a military leader. Demanding absolute objectivity reveals a technicistic misunderstanding of the way people reach verdicts. No definition of an imminent attack, however detailed, can replace the judgement of those involved, as is made clear by the following example. Two vehicles were stopped at a control point south-east of Kunduz in northern Afghanistan which was manned by German soldiers and Afghan policemen. Suddenly one of the cars, which contained five passengers, including a woman and two children, started its engine and raced towards the control point. Should the soldiers open fire on the car and risk killing innocent people, or forgo the use of force and risk a bomb attack which could kill some of their own?⁴

Finally, soldiers can find themselves in situations that are not described by any rules of engagement. On their peacekeeping mission to Sierra Leone, the aforementioned soldiers from Zambia were confronted with children bearing arms. On the one hand, these children enjoyed the general protection of minors formulated in the international Convention on the Rights of the Child (20.11.1989), but on the other hand they were classed as combatants. They were, from one point of view, unfortunate victims – often violently abducted, drugged, and exploited as compliant instruments by whoever was wielding power; from another point of view they are often particularly cruel offenders, as demonstrated by their unimaginable atrocities on women and children. Should soldiers use force against child soldiers in self-defense and situations of emergency assistance? Back then, there were no rules of engagement to standardize the way unpredictable child soldiers should be treated.⁵

These three types of conflict and the examples used to illustrate them show in no uncertain terms that soldiers of the German armed forces need to possess moral judgement, especially but

not only in the line of duty. It is needed to justify the trust vested in the *Bundeswehr's* soldiers by its leadership philosophy. This is because “the principles of *Innere Führung* demand that the requirements of military missions are reconciled with the cognitive and moral responsibilities of the citizen” (ZDv A-2600/1: *Innere Führung*, Guiding Principles for Leaders. Preliminary Comment).

Moral judgement

But what does moral judgement mean? In the classical, ethical discourse, there are four levels. Metaethical reflection concerns the basal question of whether morals can be rationally substantiated at all. In this discussion, emotivistic and decisionistic approaches compete with cognitivist theories insofar as the former reject an ultimate moral justification of standards or principles, since these can be traced back either to a moral feeling or an arbitrary decision, while the latter assert that moral claims to validity are demonstrable by reason. To be found at the second level – assuming the rational substantiation of morals – are those foundational moral principles such as Immanuel Kant's categorical imperative (“Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law”) and the Biblical command to neighbourly love (“Love your neighbour as you love yourself” [Mark 12:31]). These must then be considered the source of the moral standards and rules of limited reach which exist on the third level, such as “Do not lie” and “Do not endanger the life of your comrade”. On the final level – which can be viewed as the top or bottom stage – are those singular moral verdicts that apply a rule or standard to an actual situation, such as judging as indiscriminate the use of cluster bombs in a concrete military situation. And this especially is where one requires that inherent moral judgement upon which soldiers must rely, especially in military operations.

Teaching a skill like this should not be underestimated; it is “no subordinate business” (Klaus Ebeling). That is because moral judgement cannot always simply be derived from a rule and it does not merely mean subordinating a set of circumstances beneath the factual elements of a moral standard. Judgement also includes

empirical cognition of the situative context to which standards are supposed to apply. Somebody making a moral judgement must be able to demonstrate which of those standards already assumed to be valid is appropriate to a given situation, in light of all of its relevant characteristics, which will hopefully have been appraised as fully as possible.⁶

Moral judgements have to be able to be justified by soldiers, which means, in principle, being able to advocate them with good reasons to everyone concerned. But this can only be done by adopting

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an impartial point of view. An impartial point of view, in turn, can only be acquired by means of a demanding “stretching exercise” (Günter Anders), by placing oneself in the position of everyone affected by the consequences of an action, which may be a morally problematic one. This requires empathy as well as the cognitive ability to understand those involved, and also an emotional willingness to sympathize with the feelings of the people concerned. The more soldiers are able to empathize with the thoughts and feelings of others, the more likely it is that their judgement will be morally compliant.

Forming a moral judgement, however, involves not only knowledge of the situation and the faculty of empathy required for a change of perspective, it also demands knowledge of the various categories of standards and duties, the ability to recognize potential priorities when standards and duties collide, and to evaluate these priorities according to the rules.

In the fourth century, the church father Ambrose was already teaching the difference between obligatory regulations (such as the prohibitions from the Decalogue in Exodus 20:2-17) and mere counsels (such as Jesus’ instructions in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7). In the philosophy of the modern era, “perfect duties”, which are “enforceable” upon people, are distinguished from “imperfect duties”, which remain open to voluntary fulfilment

(Samuel Pufendorf), and duties of law are separated from duties of virtue, which are subject to the strong law of obligation and the weak law of goodness (Immanuel Kant). Today it is more common to speak of permissions – which apply to things like acts of compassion which can, although morally highly significant, be done or left undone at a person’s discretion – and duties relating to actions that are morally necessary (e.g. John Rawls).

We also have to differentiate between “natural” duties, which people owe to one another as equal moral subjects (such as “do not steal”) and obligations which result from things like written agreements that have been voluntarily entered into (such as the obligation to pay the negotiated purchase price when buying an apartment) and verbal promises (such as helping someone to move house), which normally only exist towards particular people. And finally, we differentiate between positive duties to do good, such as helping others in distress or danger, and negative duties to refrain from bad, such as not harming others and not doing them injustice.

And these duties can clash: the negative duty to refrain from stealing medicines can contradict the positive duty to heal a sick person, and the obligation to hold to an agreed meeting can contradict the “natural” duty to help the victim of an accident; and the duty to help a mother in an emergency can contradict the “permission” to help a friend move house. It is then a case of identifying, amid the general but not invariably applicable “prima facie duties”, the “actual duty” in a situation precisely recognised, by assessing tested rules of preference such as urgency, likelihood, and quantity.

Two slightly irregular examples from the reality of service in the *Bundeswehr* illustrate the conflict between “natural duties” and obligations. An Afghan warlord who was well-disposed towards the ISAF mission arrived at a German armed forces camp with his seriously ill wife. The doctor on duty examined the woman and diagnosed acute appendicitis with bowel perforation, which required immediate operation. Shortly after this diagnosis, the hospital company received an emergency call telling them that a helicopter would soon land with a seriously injured German soldier whose 4x4 had driven over a land mine. Again, immediate operation would be required to save the soldier’s life. But only one operation could be performed at the base hospital at any given time.

So the surgeon had to decide whether to operate on the seriously injured soldier or the woman with a life-threatening illness. Rules of priority did not help, since neither case was more urgent and neither could be said to be more likely to succeed. All that was left was to distinguish between “natural” duty and obligation. In this respect, the German military doctor was bound only by the general duty to provide life-saving help to the Afghan woman, whereas he had an obligation to the German soldier, because the soldier had a legal right to the life-saving operation. Unlike a general hospital, the camp hospital had been set up to provide medical help to soldiers. Emergency medical aid could only be extended to other people if it had the capacity to do so. All other things being the same (*ceteris paribus*), obligation – *pacta sunt servanda* – has priority over “natural” duty. So, from a moral point of view, the doctor had to operate on the soldier.

Things were somewhat different in the case of a German support unit in Somalia during the UNOSOM II mission.⁸ A rescue helicopter was stationed at a German camp so that, in an emergency, it could come to the assistance of the camp’s own soldiers who were travelling back and forth in convoys between Beled Weyne and Mogadishu to retrieve personnel and materials. One day, locals appeared with a pregnant woman in intense pain. The emergency doctor realised that the only chance of saving the mother and child was to relocate them immediately to a hospital. But the only means of transport that could be used was the rescue helicopter, and this would make it unavailable to provide emergency medical aid to injured soldiers for around two hours. The doctor decided to use the rescue helicopter, and he justified this on the basis of extreme urgency in the case of the pregnant woman, and the extremely low likelihood of an emergency medical situation for injured soldiers, since there was no convoy outside the camp at the time. When obligation and “natural” duty are no longer on the same level, because urgency (degree of injury or illness) and likelihood (death) are ascertained differently, it can be justifiable to give natural duty priority over obligation.

Educating moral judgement

Weighing up contradictory duties requires trained powers of judgement as well as knowledge of the situation, the ability to empathize, and imagination. An important part in this can be played by seminars on professional ethics at the various schools, universities, and the Military Academy of the German Armed Forces – and these can certainly count towards assessment. They can impart knowledge of the elementary theories and fundamental concepts of philosophical ethics, strengthen students’ ability to argue coherently, and promote a willingness for critical self-assessment. There are various ethical didactic methods that can be used, just two of which I will now introduce: ethical debating⁹ and the *Gedankenexperiment* or thought experiment.¹⁰

The method of debating is based on the conditions of a moral discourse (Jürgen Habermas) as an unconstrained form of communication in which one’s own particular interests are relinquished in favour of impartial appraisal, and the better argument is recognised. Consensus is reached once everyone is in a position to want a

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particular thing. Unlike discussion, in which people spontaneously exchange their controversial opinions, debate follows formal rules and is often applied to contentious, polarizing moral issues that can be supported and opposed. Seminar participants are told how the debate will proceed and what the rules are, informed adequately about the moral issue, and then divided into different groups (pro, contra, jury). In the first, consultative phase, the two opposing groups draw up coherent justifications of their points of view, while the jury draws up a catalogue of observations containing assessment criteria and their weighting. Speakers from both groups are given limited time to present their various arguments one after the other, and alternating between the groups. In the second, subsequent consul-

tative phase, the two groups attempt to pick up on and refute the arguments of those who have espoused the opposing point of view, and then present them once again. To conclude, the jury issues its verdict, which is based on the criteria previously drawn up and which evaluates the performance of the various speakers and their teamwork. This method promotes a discursive form of examination and, by encouraging participants to place themselves in the position of the others – promotes the cognitive aspect of empathy. But its particular strength lies in the development of argumentative faculties and speaking skills, which enable soldiers to appropriately justify their moral positions, including in public.

Another method is the *Gedankenexperiment* or thought experiment. For soldiers it is better to employ the kind of experiment that bears a genuine relationship to their everyday professional lives – experiments, in other words, that relate to military duty scenarios whose assumptions lie within the realm of what is actually possible. Participants in a seminar can be divided into different groups and confronted with the assumption that they have to take safety precautions for a military camp in a country whose religion is Islam. Special attention must be paid to a fuel depot inside the camp, which could become the target for intruders from the neighbouring civilian population, who seek to improve their extremely austere livelihoods by stealing petrol, or of terrorists operating in the area who wish to destroy the camp by exploding the depot. In this scenario, participants – always bearing in mind the moral perspective of minimum force – can clarify their own ideas and discuss common options such as equipping se-

curity guards with efficient and accurate firearms, but they can also develop their own creativity and imagination to propose measures that are, as it were, outside the box, and which make it unlikely that anyone will even try to break in – such as using dogs, which are considered impure by the Muslim population. The foremost strength of this method is that it enhances the imagination.¹¹

And what about the conscience?

So where does conscience fit into this concept of ethical education? One might quite rightly raise this objection. The conscience, after all, forms the centre of personal existence in which an individual experiences themselves, directly and without proxy, as somebody subject to the imperative of goodness; it is what destines them to a moral existence and what casts a “watchful eye” over the integrity of their life. Furthermore, the *Soldatengesetz* demands that a subordinate carries out orders not only fully and immediately, but also conscientiously (cf. §11 (1) SG), and that this conscientious carrying out of orders that is required must be interpreted not just as diligent, but as “an obedience which ‘considers’ the ethical ‘boundary markers’ of one’s own conscience”¹². And finally, Article 4 (1) of the Basic Law also protects the freedom of conscience of soldiers who refuse to obey a particular military order or an actual military operation. That is because orders do not need to be followed if carrying them out is something a subordinate cannot answer to their conscience (cf. BVerwGE (*Bundesverwaltungsgericht*, Federal Administrative Court) 127,302).¹³

Ethical education is always an education of the conscience. This is because an act of conscience is not an infallible oracle in terms of certainty about what the act entails. People can delude themselves in the verdicts they reach (the so-called “errant conscience”). This means that every individual must always subject themselves to critical introspection and lifelong moral learning. People are responsible for their own conscience. Ethical training in the armed forces is an education of the conscience in the sense that, as we have described, it encourages empathy among soldiers, enhances their ability to imagine alternative courses of action, and trains their moral judgement.

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The law protects soldiers' acts of conscience if, for instance, a watchful conscience "issues a warning" to refrain from a certain military action before undertaking it. The law guarantees freedom of conscience to enable soldiers to fulfil their existential responsibility towards their own conscience. Strengthening this responsibility is another aspect of ethical training, since in the end it aims to produce soldiers who are guided by their conscience and strengthened in their personality. If we are to appreciate a thoughtful understanding of obedience, then it will require the cultivation of the kind of internal culture in which judgements of conscience find widespread acceptance in practice as well as theory.

Summary

Ethical education should strengthen moral competence. This certainly includes moral judgement – deciding what is justified in an actual situation of conflict. Honing this involves refining the perception, enhancing the imagination, and training the capacity of judgement itself. Yet the right judgement does not automatically lead to the right action. The Socratic conviction that insight necessarily entails a motivating force is not tenable. Moral judgement and moral motivation remain independent variables. A constituent of the decision-making process is one's own commitment to values and convictions which, kept stable by virtue as dispositions of the will, are placed on what could be described as permanent duty. But these matters reach deeply into a soldier's personal way of life and address background convictions about life itself and about one's view of the world, and about the spiritual dimension of human existence. Imparting these things often requires different formats of teaching and places of learning, but above all, it needs a space that is free of hierarchies in which one can speak openly and in confidence. *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*, which is non-assessed, and professional ethical studies, which are assessed, can, if reciprocally related, and if made to concentrate each on its own focus, synthesize to assist in the holistic ethical education of soldiers.

1 Article 8 of the Statute of the International Military Tribunal dated 8 August 1945 does not consider action based on orders a reason to exonerate from punishment; merely, under certain circumstances, as a reason to mitigate it.

2 Refer to the instructive elucidations of Wright, Georg Henrik von (1994): *Normen, Werte und Handlungen*. Frankfurt am Main, p. 9 ff.

3 An exact description of this military conflict situation can be found in Eisele, Manfred (2000): *Die Vereinten Nationen und das internationale Krisen-Management. Ein Insiderbericht*. Frankfurt am Main, p. 35 ff.

4 This information is from an article printed in *Die Welt* on 1.11.2019. See https://www.welt.de/welt_print/article2372507/Drei-Zivilisten-sterben-an-Kontrollpunkt-der-Bundeswehr.html (accessed 4.11.2019).

5 This description of a situation of moral conflict is also from Eisele (2000), p. 48 ff.

6 Extremely instructive on the problems of applying standards and the problems of particular situations: Ebeling, Klaus (2000): "Der Krieg im ehemaligen Jugoslawien. Friedensethische Kriterien zur Beurteilung des Konflikts." In: *Militärseelsorge* 28 (2000), July edition, p. 78 ff.

7 The concept of prima facie duty was devised by the Scottish philosopher William D. Ross. Translated into German: *Ein Katalog von Prima-facie Pflichten*. In: Birnbacher, Dieter/Hoerster, Detlef (eds.) (1976): *Texte zur Ethik*. Munich, p. 253–268. As an introduction see also Wolf, Jean-Claude (1996): "Ein Pluralismus von prima-facie Pflichten als Alternative zu monistischen Theorien der Ethik." In: *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 50 (1996), H. 4, p. 601–610.

8 This information is from a working paper published by the *Zentrum Innere Führung* and entitled *Entscheiden und Verantworten. Konfliktsituationen in Auslandseinsätzen*. Koblenz-Strausberg, 2003, p. 13.

9 A more comprehensive description of this method can be found in resources such as Montag, Bärbel: *Debatten im Ethik- und Philosophieunterricht*. In: Nida-Rümelin, Julian et al. (2015): *Handbuch Philosophie und Ethik. Band 1: Didaktik und Methodik*. Paderborn, p. 196–205.

10 This method is described in detail in documents such as Engels, Helmut: *Gedankenexperimente*. loc. cit., p. 187–196.

11 This example is derived from a real incident at Beled Weyne camp in Somalia on 21 January 1994, which was part of the UN's UNOSOM II mission. A German guard, after firing several fruitless warning shots, and in compliance with the rules of engagement, shot a Somali who had broken into the camp near a fuel depot. See Deutscher Bundestag. 12th parliamentary term. Issue 12/6989: *Zwischenfälle beim Einsatz deutscher Soldaten im Rahmen der VN-Mission in Somalia (UNOSOM II)*, 8 March 1994.

The Norwegian forces had also secured their camp using guard dogs, for the reasons aforementioned, so no such incident occurred there.

12 For an exact interpretation of the wording of this paragraph of the *Soldatengesetz*, refer to the authoritative judgement of the *Bundesverwaltungsgericht* on 25 June 2005: BVerwGE 127,302 (322).

13 There is an exact analysis and interpretation of this verdict in: Gillner, Matthias (2008): *Gewissensfreiheit unter den Bedingungen von Befehl und Gehorsam. Das Urteil des Bundesverwaltungsgerichts vom 21. Juni 2005 zur Gewissensfreiheit des Soldaten und die katholische Lehre von der Kriegsdienst- und Gehorsamsverweigerung aus Gewissensgründen*. Bonn.

MILITARY PRACTICE BETWEEN ETHICS AND TRAGEDY

MORAL DILEMMAS IN THE CONTEXT OF PEACE EDUCATION FOR ARMED FORCES

Author: Fred van Iersel

Why and in what way do the actions of armed forces present moral dilemmas? What are these dilemmas? How does peace education in the armed forces deal with them? What educational concepts exist in this field? Are they effective? In the search for answers, this essay discusses insights from various branches of the social sciences, social philosophy and theology. In conclusion, we ask what contribution spiritual pastoral care can make during military training to raising awareness of moral dilemmas.

Abstract

In a democratic constitutional state, the ultima ratio is the starting point for military action. Armed forces are only deployed in the most extreme cases, when all other peaceful means of conflict resolution inherent in a democracy have been exhausted. So it is simply in the nature of things for democratic armed forces to perform a delicate balancing act between ethics and tragedy. Moral dilemmas are an intrinsic aspect of deployments. Soldiers as individuals face the enormous danger of morally damaging their own identity – besmirching it – through their actions in dilemma situations. This explains the desire for recognition that soldiers often express after a deployment. Civil society, which gave soldiers the mandate for military action, is no less affected by dilemmas of this kind. Fred van Iersel begins by outlining this very fundamental framework under which military deployments take place, before addressing the question of how to deal with the dilemmas that inevitably arise. He suggests a recourse to the Aristotelian ethics of virtue. Military action should be understood as practice, as action based on prudence (phronēsis), in which the choice of one's own goals and means has to be harmonized with the situational reality as it appears in one's own sharpened perception.

Using Christianity as an example, the author finally turns to religion and explains how a religious moral perfectionism can help to deal with moral dilemmas. Christian ethics takes the search for moral truth seriously that soldiers give expression to in their desire for recognition. This search can shape their role as moral actors. Their religious self-image offers military personnel a way to see themselves as more than just variables in a geopolitical equation. To the extent that faith promotes an intellectual confrontation with dilemmas, Christian spiritual and pastoral care can stimulate and encourage character development in the armed forces, and so make an essential contribution to the humanization of warfare.

Methodological starting points

In his *Methodologische Schriften*, the German sociologist and historian Max Weber argues that the definition of social and political action should be based on precisely those means that are crucial for this action. Thus, according to Weber, states should be defined by their monopoly on the use of force within their own territory.¹ Therefore, the armed forces – in the context of the mandate given to them by states that have a monopoly on use of force – should be defined based on their use of force.

This emphasis on the use of force is also a fruitful methodological starting point for peace and military ethics. First, however, the goals of this ethics must be defined: the attainment of a just peace, for example, or – not quite so comprehensively – the protection of sovereignty, territorial integrity, the central institutions of democracy, the rule of law and the international legal order. The explicit definition of these goals places peace ethics in the tradition of Clausewitz, for whom war is merely the continuation of politics by other means. In other words, it is politics that sets the goals, and the armed forces arrange their implementation. Without this insight, peace ethics remains, at core, incomprehensible.

Not without reason, the administration scientist van Braam wrote that politics in particular was a “battle for values.”² For the same reason, and rightly so, peace ethics and military ethics pay particular attention to the foundations of post-war peace – meaning the systems for conflict prevention and the quality require-

ments for peacekeeping measures. These goals should influence the *modus operandi* of the armed forces. Accordingly, peace ethics and military ethics are primarily focused on instruments of non-violent conflict resolution. These range from active non-violence, to informal and formal diplomacy, to sanctions imposed under international law. Here, in the context of conflict escalation and de-escalation, the armed forces are located as part of a wide-ranging repertoire of instruments.

The existence of democratic constitutional states is interpreted ethically in different ways (cf. John Rawls and Jürgen Habermas). Within different currents of social ethics, the morally paradoxical character of the armed forces, as an organization that uses force to prevent war, is discussed in various ways. It should be borne in mind here that democratic constitutional states can only function adequately if they have not themselves defined the values, moral principles and moral duties of their citizens and social institutions.³

The *ultima ratio* as a starting point for military ethics

In democratic constitutional states, armed forces are exclusively used as a means of last resort (*ultima ratio*)⁴, i.e. only when all other means of dealing with the conflict at international level have been exhausted.⁵ The *ultima ratio* motif can be found in completely different philosophical and religious systems. The same is true of the instrumental character of the armed forces. Military ethics always occupies a subordinate position with respect to an ethics that is oriented toward goals. But even if democratic constitutional states provide for a separation of powers and internally achieve a culture of peaceful coexistence, they do not escape the particular paradox presented by institutionalized military defense using little force. Any military ethics – including the applied ethics of dilemmas which is part of it – must therefore refer to the moral logic of the *ultima ratio* as a starting point. Any military ethics must be categorically rejected if it is based on business ethics or military professional ethics in the narrower sense and if it equates the armed forces

almost with private-sector companies, their employees supposedly carrying out an independent profession like any other. Such a view would not do justice to the role and essence of the armed forces, and would not take them sufficiently seriously.

For reasons of necessity, the armed forces are used as a last resort on the borderline of political self-control in an escalating political conflict, when international justice and international law become the subject of public de-

Any military ethics must be categorically rejected if it is based on business ethics or military professional ethics in the narrower sense and if it equates the armed forces almost with private-sector companies

bate. Then the political question is whether a military escalation is necessary and wanted in the political sense, with all of the associated risks. The legal question is whether what we want, and the means used to get it are legal at all. For military action, deployment in an *ultima ratio* context means that the armed forces must always operate on the border between ethics and tragedy.⁶ After all, on the one hand morality and ethics are meaningful as long as self-control is possible in the implementation,⁷ i.e. in *practice*. On the other hand, tragedy comes into play where control is impossible due to the actual circumstances in the form of *force majeure*, or where the double effects of any *practice* are inevitable, yet at the same time disproportionate or even counterproductive.

Thus, seen through the lens of ethics, armed forces are deployed when the morally good can no longer be achieved in international relations. At most, one can still talk about “morally right” action; but this is always in light of the imponderables of action on the borderline separating ethics from tragedy. Armed forces do not choose their own political objectives – individual soldiers even less so. In his classic work,⁸ Samuel Huntington emphasizes the “top-down” character of military ethics with good reason. He refers to a logical decision for an instrumental organization that is also hierarchically structured within itself. Precisely

because armed forces can be deployed in an *ultima ratio* context, moral dilemmas are intrinsically associated with their deployment.

Types of moral dilemma

Ethics has provided at least seven different definitions of a “moral dilemma”.⁹ In this article, we will assume a very general definition: a dilemma is a moral problem concerning the choice between two alternatives.¹⁰ The question is whether an action should be performed or not, or which of two available alternatives should be chosen. The latter may mean comparing conflicting obligations and objectives, but the same also applies to a choice between two alternatives that have significant double effects. In armed forces, not only dilemmas of the kind “good compared to good”, which take the form of clashing positive obligations, are the relevant ones. It tends instead to be dilemmas of the type “right compared to right”. Thus it is a question of deciding under sub-optimal conditions, in which each decision also has negative consequences that weaken its moral justification. The likelihood of morally failing and of feeling permanent unease about the moral quality of one’s own actions is therefore

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considerable, and occurs mainly at the frontier between ethics and tragedy. This, then, is where man’s ability to control the consequences of his actions reaches its limits.

The latter is all the more true as a moral dilemma has consequences for the identity of the actor and is felt in the form of a setback. If one’s own actions in a dilemma situation have bad consequences, this changes one’s own moral identity in a way similar to a boomerang effect. The perceived “defilement of the self” subsequently changes one’s own sense of identity, one’s own feeling of personal innocence and professional pride. For this reason, veterans

usually seek social and political recognition after completing their missions. In their role, they were not primarily representing themselves, but rather also the state and the civilian population, which gave the state a mandate for military action through its elected representatives. Therefore both their positive achievements and their “dirty hands” are common property.

Before a military deployment takes place, the following categories of moral dilemmas have to be discussed in the armed forces. First: What does it mean to define justice and just peace as the objective of a military operation, and what role do the legitimate interests of the enemy play in this context? The dilemma that results from this conflict of values can be clearly seen in the political decision-making process and in the choice of military strategy.¹¹ Second: Are there moral dilemmas which arise from the importance of security? For example, which takes priority: (inter)national security or human security? And what is the relationship between these and *force protection*, the security of one’s own troops during military operations outside of combat deployments? Third: Are there dilemmas of compassion? What moral weight should armed forces attach to the humanitarian tasks that arise during their deployment for justice and international security?

Of course, moral dilemmas also arise in the areas where these three values overlap. A classic example would be the dilemma between the (neo)realist orientation toward security on the one hand, and justice in international relations on the other. And what about justice at the end of an armed conflict? Is it appropriately weighed against the need for reconciliation and reconstruction? After all, punitive justice stands in stark contrast to the pursuit of reconciliation.¹²

Understanding these fundamental value dilemmas is essential, as is a certain sensitivity to them. Above all, this applies to moral leadership in the higher ranks of the armed forces, who firstly are confronted with strategically relevant decisions at all times, and secondly also have to build a moral bridge between the political realm and their subordinates. This is because, empirically speaking, the moral motivation of armed forces participating in mis-

sions is usually not determined by fundamental values: they fight for their own survival, for the lives of their fellow soldiers, and for their military commanders. Empirically speaking, political legitimization and moral participation on the home front are only of secondary importance here.

Moral dilemmas of military action

At the operational level, moral dilemmas mostly concern the legitimacy of the use of force in the tensions of the specific situation – such as in fulfilling mandates and following the rules of engagement (ROE). Political and legal legitimacy¹³ in the use of force are not identical and do not belong in the category of moral legitimacy. Political mandate and legal admissibility are not *a priori* identical to moral and ethical justification. After Canadian troops under the UN mandate had witnessed the genocide in Rwanda, for example, Major General Dallaire said there really ought to have been an option to extend the use of force in this case.

The development of second-generation peacekeeping operations after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 also raised new moral dilemmas. The repertoire of military tasks and roles was substantially expanded with diplomatic and negotiation skills. In addition, there were development policy tasks such as the 3D process (defense, diplomacy, development), which is closely linked to the problem of prioritization, role conflicts and moral dilemmas.

Both phenomenological limitations and a perceived incommensurability are evident in military action.¹⁴ The former arise as a result of imponderables in the use of military power and the associated unruliness of military *practice*. Other actors – one's own political authorities, the United Nations, the enemy, irregularly operating non-state combatant groups – create additional uncertainties through their power. The perceived incommensurability stems from the contrast between the description of the mandate by the employer and the analyses of the military situation on the one hand, and one's own perception and actual experience in this context on the other.

It is precisely these phenomenological limitations and the perceived incommensurability that influence how moral dilemmas are experienced by military personnel. They lead to a feeling of powerlessness, for example when armed forces are not allowed to use their military power, even though this is a core area of the military job description and forms part of the professional self-image.¹⁵ As members of a community that shares a common fate, military personnel depend on each other for survival. Yet they find little guidance in the image conveyed to them in military briefings on the one hand, or in programs for coping with the consequences of deployments on the other. Here too, they experience this incommensurability. Since good and evil are distributed differently in a conflict area between the fighting parties and population groups than had been expected, based on training and the mission, such an experience has a moral dimension, too. Witnessing violence shakes the basic trust in the good in human beings in general – in so far as this trust existed before.

Military action as practice

If we consider at least military actions as *practice* in the tradition of Aristotle, then the focus on the moral dimension in the experiences of the armed forces, which can be traced back to Snow et al., is not at all so surprising.¹⁶ Aristotle made a useful distinction between *epistēmē* (theoretical science), *technē* (technical knowledge) and *praxis* (action based on *phronēsis* or prudence).¹⁷ Prudent action requires vision and anticipation, as in the case of strategic foresight, for example.¹⁸ As a moral virtue, it is based on wisdom and the ability to choose appropriate goals and means based on (critical) considerations and an assessment of the situational reality. The forms of morality and ethics derived from this do not regard ethical casuistry primarily as a form of legal application of laws and principles in the context of an action. Rather, they are based on a vision that regards social reality as dynamic, and action in this situation as expedient, but sees both power and insight into social realities and possibilities for action as being tied to imponderables. Accord-

ing to the philosopher C. Verhoeven, violence is always “anti-technical” because it gets out of control and as it goes on, it is no longer self-determined behavior.¹⁹

To regard the action of the armed forces in this sense as *practice* means – to put it in negative terms – that military action is seen not only as a question of technical and technological professionalism (or, if you prefer, of skilled and instrumental professionalism). But military action cannot be understood by being interpreted as a derived application of theory (*epistème*) to reality, either. On top of that, the question of the military ethics perspective does not arise only at the end of the deployment or with the judgment concerning the lawful application of laws, rules and principles. Formulated in positive terms, the key to understanding the moral experience of military personnel lies in prudence. A prudent soldier does not primarily apply theory to reality; instead he or she shows prudence *in* reality. Soldiers have to take their own observations and assessments as a starting point, in order to make a decision in light of the uncertainty of possible courses of action.

Accordingly, in the Aristotelian understanding of military *practice*, moral dilemmas are neither primarily due to a lack of *epistème* (theoretical knowledge about the military reality)

their own actions, and act accordingly with foresight – here the virtue of prudence is evident again. And it also follows from this that no soldier can escape the importance of dilemma ethics: moral dilemmas do not appear in isolated cases. Rather, they form the core of a professionalism based on prudence.

The recognition of prudence – not only as a cognitive but also as a moral virtue – was mainly developed by Thomas Aquinas in his reception of Aristotle. He subsequently succeeded in overcoming the excessive emphasis on confessor morality, which focused on repentance, dealing with guilt, and reconciliation. One of the ways in which he did this was by shifting the emphasis onto prudence, and hence onto anticipation. Moreover, an Aristotelian perspective locates moral dilemmas not only at the individual cognitive level, but also at the level of relationships and feelings and at the collective community level. Moral dilemmas are often shaped by relationships on the interpersonal level, and particularly in a *polis* they are up for discussion.

Dilemma ethics as a specialist field

Ethics teaching remains important as an academic discipline also in treating military action as *practice* and in emphasizing the virtue of prudence. Ethics, together with its philosophical and theological branches, should continue to be regarded as an independent *epistème*. Education in peace ethics is important for strengthening the normative reasoning abilities of soldiers as part of their training. These abilities are relevant to any military intervention based on international law, and also reduce the risk of avoidable incidents among the troops, such as sexual abuse or extremist tendencies. In this context, applied military ethics and dilemma ethics casuistry have the character of a mixed-method approach. They are developed both inductively (as case descriptions based on the moral experience and practices of the armed forces) and deductively, derived from ethical theories of justice, security, reconciliation and compassion.²⁰ The inductive element is essential because of the descriptive

For soldiers, moral dilemmas do not appear in isolated cases. Rather, they form the core of a professionalism based on prudence

nor to a lack of compliance with laws, regulations and policies, nor again to a lack of professional skills in the sense of *technè* in the field of technology or management. These dilemmas, however, are related to awareness: this denotes the ability to assess the moral significance of an existing situation during action, and, as a result of prudent assessment, to make an expedient decision to use appropriate means. This professional skill is present whenever military personnel are able to recognize the moral dimension of the social reality in which they are operating, as well as the moral significance of

elements of casuistry. The deductive element is essential because of the link with the objectives of military action, but above all because of the need for a hermeneutic interpretation of experience – ultimately, this as a whole is a task for the humanities.²¹

Training sessions on how to handle dilemmas based on applied military ethics deal with hierarchies of values and the principle of the indirect effect. It is also important to practice dealing with the existence of different types of moral dilemmas.

With regard to the handling of moral dilemmas by the armed forces, Wildering,²² with reference to Aristotle, attaches the greatest significance to character development. It follows that prudence as a virtue cannot be considered in isolation from other virtues fundamental to character development, such as justice, courage and frugality. The moral-ethical education of (young) adult soldiers should therefore take the form of self-training. The idea that a state – however democratic it may be – in its function as an employer should impose character development on its employees in its armed forces and shape the content of their characters, is already indicative of totalitarian tendencies. Self-training is practiced as dilemma sharing, as happens on interdisciplinary ethical committees that take the form of a moral advisory body with equal representation.

In the character development that is carried out as part of the training process, the conception or image of the soldier also plays a central role. This image is anchored in beliefs and convictions, and therefore has a philosophical nature. For this reason, it can only really be taught by spiritual communities such as the churches. Since moral dilemmas in the armed forces are always played out on the borderline between ethics and tragedy, collaboration with spiritual advisors in this role is essential. For tragedy, too, is a very philosophical subject. With their activities in the educational system (in schools, in vocational training and in training courses) on the one hand, and in pastoral care on the other, spiritual advisors play a dual role here.

Religion and moral dilemmas

Religion fulfills an indispensable task in the field of morality and ethics, also in the armed forces. Here we will take Christianity as an example. The relationship between Christian faith and moral dilemmas is much more complex than it first appears. It is by no means the case that the moral dilemma simply contains only the question, and the Christian faith, passed on through gospel and tradition, deductively provides guidance for action – as in an over-

Christian faith takes the armed forces members' search for moral truth seriously, and at the same time, it does not proceed from an assumption of ethical relativism

simplified “divine command” ethics. If a moral dilemma exists, we cannot too readily assume the existence of a fundamentally right or wrong option for action. On the contrary, Christian faith takes the armed forces members' search for moral truth seriously, and at the same time, it does not proceed from an assumption of ethical relativism. Moral dilemmas can sometimes be aporetic in nature, but in many cases the hierarchy of rights and duties, values and virtues is sufficient to deal with them. In the armed forces, this means a hierarchy based on justice, international and humanitarian security, and compassion.

Morally and ethically, Christian faith stands for moral perfectionism: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48)²³ This ideal continues in the pursuit of that which is morally good and right. It does not contradict this pursuit, but in return lends it strength. For it is essential to internalize morality, to bring values and behavior into harmony, not to limit the universal validity of morality to one's own value systems, to include also the enemy and people outside the mainstream of society, and to withstand external pressure to abandon values. Such an approach can help to counteract moral disengagement.²⁴ This is fundamental, since soldiers are and remain responsible actors, even under extreme circumstances. It

is therefore important to prevent them from seeing themselves as tragic victims of geopolitics. Precisely through its moral perfectionism, Christian faith can stimulate character development.

At first glance, moral perfectionism seems to produce an opposite effect, namely to constitute moral failure. High demands ultimately confront those on whom they are imposed with their own lack of ability, and entail an intrinsic risk of disloyalty toward and betrayal of the idealistic self-image – in a way that recalls Jesus's disciples when confronted with his suffering and death. Yet it is precisely

subjectively acceptable and communicatively manageable. This point represents an essential contribution to the humanization of warfare, which in itself remains morally ambivalent.²⁶ And it is precisely here that substantive justification can be found for the necessity for Christian and spiritual pastoral care in the armed forces, to train soldiers to deal with moral dilemmas. This applies in knowledge-oriented training courses, in relation to social and emotional skills, and – last but not least – in character development.

It is precisely the experience of moral inadequacy that can raise actors' moral sensitivity

this experience of moral inadequacy that can raise actors' moral sensitivity and make them aware of the need for forgiveness and reconciliation. The latter – in the light of Christian faith – is not only essential, but also possible, and actually given (John 20). And precisely this prospect of forgiveness has an enlivening, stimulating effect, as it shows the path of acceptance of guilt and shame. Thus the path to moral development and self-training is reopened in the form of character development.²⁵

The paradox of Christian faith in confrontation with moral dilemmas – precisely because and not despite its ability to demonstrate moral failure – thus enables faith to stimulate character development at the highest level. As a result, moral dilemmas become both

1 Weber, Max (1968): *Methodologische Schriften*. Frankfurt am Main, p. 357.

2 (Translated from Dutch). Braam, A. van (1986): *Inleiding bestuurskunde*. Muiderberg, p. 14.

3 Iersel, A. H. M. van/Baarda, Th. A. van (eds.) (2002): *Militaire ethiek. Morele dilemma's van militairen in theorie en praktijk*. Budel.

4 The term *ultima ratio* is meant qualitatively, not consecutively. This means that smart assessments can be used even if not all other means have actually been tried, for example because they are considered ineffective.

5 If armed forces are not used as *ultima ratio*, legitimacy issues are provoked.

6 Tragedy means a relationship between goal and intention on the one hand and the effect of action on the other, which is characterized by counterproductivity. A classic model is described by the author Sophocles in his tragedy *Antigone*, in which the King Kreon acts completely counterproductive and thus forfeits his moral identity and future. In the field of biblical wisdom literature, this theme is found as a *contrapassum*. In the field of military practice, tragedy is similar to the dilemmas with disproportional negative indirect effects, over which the soldier is constantly in danger of losing control.

7 Geyer, Anne L., und Baumeister, R. F. (2005): "Religion, Morality and Self-Control: Values, Virtues and Vices." In: Paloutzian, Raymond F./Park, Crystal L. (eds.): *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. New York/London, pp. 412–435.

8 Huntington, Samuel P. (1957): *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*. Harvard.

9 Schumm, George F.: "Dilemma." In: Audi, Robert (ed.), (1995): *The Cambridge Dictionary for Philosophy*. Cambridge, p. 203.

10 So dilemmas exist not only in the sense of negative indirect effects of various options but also, for example, in the case of conflicting realizations of human rights.

11 Stone, Deborah (2012): *Policy Paradox. The Art of Political Decision Making*. New York, pp. 264–268.

12 In the post-war period, radical execution of punitive justice counteracts the process of reconstruction and reconciliation, because otherwise politics, culture and society may lack the motivation to rebuild.

The Author



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13 In the sense of Max Weber, legitimacy is understood as a formal concept, namely as a social acceptance of authority.

14 Snow, David A. et al. (1986): "Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization, and Movement Participation." In: *American Sociological Review* 51, p. 473.

15 Rietveld, Natasja (2009): *De gewetensvolle veteraan*. Budel.

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19 Verhoeven, C. (1967): *Tegen het geweld*. Utrecht, p. 15.

20 Baarda, Th. A. van/Iersel, A. H. M. van/Verweij, D. E. M. (eds.) (2004): *Praktijkboek Militaire e Ethiek. Ethische vraagstukken, morele vorming, dilemmatraining*. Budel.

21 Cf. Elßner, Thomas R. (2016): "Didactics of Military Ethics: From Theory to Practice." In: Elßner, Thomas R./Janke, Reinhold (eds.): *Didactics of Military Ethics: From Theory to Practice*. Leiden, p. 9.

22 Wildering, Ger (2014): *Morele vorming in de krijgsmacht. Een katholiek perspectief*. Budel, pp. 239–341.

23 According to Timmons, Mark (2013): *Moral Theory*. Lamham etc., pp. 73–77, perfectionism – the orientation towards perfect life – is found in the natural law approach of the Catholic morality of Thomas Aquinas. In my opinion, all virtue ethics is basically about excellence. In the Catholic context, this orientation is not only moral and ethical in the field of character formation, but also linked to a spirituality of sanctification. Examples include the saintly soldiers and veterans, such as St. Martin of Tours and Ignatius Loyola.

24 Bandura, Albert (1999): "Moral Disengagement in the Perpetration of Inhumanities." In: *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, vol. 3.

25 McCulough, M. E./Bono, G./Root, L. M. (2003): "Religion and Forgiveness." In: Paloutzian, Raymond F./Park, Crystal L. (eds.), *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*. New York, p. 407.

26 Filibeck, G. (2003): "The Church and Humanitarian Law." In: Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace and Congregation for Bishops: *Humanitarian Law and Military Chaplains*. Vatican City, p. 45.

INNERE FÜHRUNG –

NORMATIVE BASIS OF PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE GERMAN ARMED FORCES

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Since it became known that the German Federal Ministry of Defense (*Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*, BMVg) is working on a new Joint Service Regulation on ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* (German armed forces),¹ the spotlight has focused on the various existing personality development offerings for military personnel. It is precisely the relationship of *Innere Führung* (officially translated as “leadership development and civic education”) and *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (LKU, “character guidance training”) to the sense and purpose of ethical education in the German armed forces that the planned new regulation has called into question. This relationship therefore deserves special attention. Under these circumstances, it seems appropriate to recall the binding nature of *Innere Führung* for every form of personality development in the *Bundeswehr*.

Abstract

The publication of a new Joint Service Regulation on ethical education in the Bundeswehr provides an opportunity to examine how personality development for soldiers in the Bundeswehr has been structured until now. The starting point is “Innere Führung”, a reformist concept in the federal German armed forces that ties the military to the values and norms of the Basic Law. So far these values and norms have been taught in the armed forces in the form of historical and political education and in “Lebenskundlicher Unterricht”. The ethos of the Basic Law thus becomes the ethos of the soldier. The basic right to freedom of conscience demands that a high priority be given to the development of conscience in the context of military service. Knowledge of the norms of international humanitarian law and military law is often not enough. Innere Führung has always revolved around the idea that obedience is owed to the “highest and final authority”. Ethical education which aims at conscientious obedience therefore also forms part of the core of Innere Führung. With the Lebenskundlicher Unterricht format, the Bundeswehr has a professional ethics skills development program that offers a “window into the civilian realm” because it is detached from the military hierarchy. It contributes “in a special way to character formation and personality development among military personnel”. Any freely developing personality – which is one element of the ideal “citizen in uniform” – requires a space away from judgmental superiors and career-relevant exams for its development. This is precisely what LKU guarantees. Therefore, the authors conclude, ethical education should not be considered without Lebenskundlicher Unterricht.

Innere Führung and the “mistakes of the past”

Since 1872, the Military Penal Code of the German Reich had held a soldier accountable for his actions even if he “considered his conduct to be necessary according to his conscience or the rules of his religion” (section 48 *Militärstrafgesetzbuch*, MilStrGB).² In swearing its soldiers to the National Socialist ideology with an obligation of unconditional obedience, the “Third Reich” bent military penal law *in extremis*, including the cited paragraph. Deliberately misrepresenting human conflict situations and intentionally negating human dignity, the Nazi military judiciary praised this paragraph for ruling out any possible “conflict of duties” between personal conscience and military obedience, since the law “unconditionally prioritizes military duty”.³ However, the many death sentences handed out by the *Wehrmacht* judiciary for disobedience, refusal to carry out orders and resistance on grounds of conscience show only too clearly that a person’s conscience cannot be deactivated by statute.

The crimes against humanity committed by the *Wehrmacht* show what happens when people reject responsible, conscience-led decision-making, suppress moral action by force, and reduce military service to compliant machine-like functioning.

Future German armed forces had to learn from the culpable involvement of the *Wehrmacht* in the crimes of the National Socialist regime, which are “unique in history in their extent, horror and degree of state organization”.⁴ To prevent the danger of any repetition of these crimes, the special historical and political situation in which the *Bundeswehr* was founded had to be given serious consideration, and the relationship between state and armed forces redefined. This could only be achieved through a reformist concept. Called “*Innere Führung*”, it tied the military to the values and norms of the Basic Law. Thus the central idea in a security policy bound by values, to which the Federal Republic of Germany has been committed since its foundation, is human dignity. This applies not only to the German people, but to all people in the world. The free democratic order is protected by the “citizen in uniform”, who emerged from the military reform program. Human dignity is the highest priority for him or her too – and this includes the basic right to freedom of conscience. Not only do soldiers protect this value, but the value also protects soldiers in the event of a conflict. This was established beyond doubt by the German Federal Administrative Court (*Bundesverwaltungsgericht*, BVerwG) in 2005, confirming the ethical principles of *Innere Führung*.⁵ Conscience places limits on the duty of obedience.

“The values and norms of the Basic Law are realized in the *Bundeswehr* through the active shaping and observance of the principles of *Innere Führung*.”⁶ After human dignity, which is mentioned first and foremost, freedom, peace, justice, equality, solidarity and democracy are also mentioned as values and norms of the Basic Law. *Innere Führung* is therefore guided by values, and the ethical dimension of military conduct is immanent in it. Ethical education, also in the form of historical and political education

and *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*, is a key factor in the transmission of these values. In other words, *Innere Führung* is about military personnel experiencing the armed forces as a place where democracy is put into practice. Freedom and peace for the German people can only be protected and defended externally by those who wear the uniform if the actors in uniform experience themselves as being citizens of a free country. No-one will risk life and limb to defend something that does not correspond with their own experience. This is what distinguishes the citizen-soldier from the mercenary. When supporting the foundation of the *Bundeswehr*, Wolf Graf von Baudissin contributed his idea of defending the value of the worth of life, and helped to find ways to prevent a relapse into the spirit of the *Wehrmacht*.⁷ Freedom and self-commitment, command and obedience stand in complex and tense relation-

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ships that have to be individually balanced. It is the goal of *Innere Führung* to make sure free citizens should not have to bend their morals or put on an act when they get into uniform.

Inspector General Eberhard Zorn recently highlighted the importance of this connection between the lessons of Germany’s past and the ethical values laid down in the Basic Law. *Innere Führung* gives military personnel “the intellectual armor for deployment and the inner readiness to fulfill the mission with insight and conviction”. But, he continues, such an endowment of meaning cannot be achieved without “fundamental historical knowledge”. Therefore, it is historical education in particular (in accordance with *Innere Führung*) that protects against “repeating the mistakes of the past and following bad examples”⁸. From history one can thus gain an ethical stance for the present.

***Innere Führung* is not a German “Sonderweg”**

To recognize that *Innere Führung* is “a German concept that is only understandable in light of German history”⁹ in no way means that it is a historical chance occurrence that is neither binding nor generalizable. The concept of *Innere Führung* has proven to be surprisingly resilient and virtually without alternative, even as society has undergone many changes. It is now by no means any longer an organizational philosophy that holds primarily officers accountable. Rather, its letter and spirit should have an effect on all soldiers across all hierarchical levels.¹⁰ After the end of the Cold War, new questions arose. Under the conditions of

Regulation currently in force, which enables a reference to the new experiences of overseas deployments, *Innere Führung* “remains applicable in every situation, from office duty to mortal combat”¹².

Back in the year 2000, the German bishops pointed out that the principles of *Innere Führung* remain valid even as contextual conditions change (in this case: multinationality and overseas deployments): “They bind military action to the values of the Basic Law and orient the internal order of the armed forces to principles of the rule of law and the protection of human dignity.”¹³ The limits placed on command authority and the duty of obedience guaranteed by *Innere Führung* are still of paramount importance. *Innere Führung*, the bishops wrote in 2005, was therefore not a “German Sonderweg”¹⁴ or “special path” that could be neglected in international collaboration, but a pioneering way to come to a morally responsible decision in military contexts – also in dialog with other countries’ armed forces.

Innere Führung means that the *Bundeswehr* is firmly rooted in the free democratic basic order, and shares the foundation of values on which German foreign and security policy are built. The Protestant Church expressed a view similar to that of the German bishops: “Respecting and protecting human dignity [...] are the starting point and goal of all military conduct. Through their service, military personnel take responsibility for human life and death. That is why they have to justify their actions ‘before God and man’.”¹⁵ This statement is in agreement with other various memoranda, statements and papers at the level of the church as a whole. The Protestant Church in Germany, in its committees, with its peace commissioner (*Friedensbeauftragter*) and the Protestant Military Bishop, is grounded in the peace principle of the Basic Law, which coincides religiously with the peace principle of Jesus. In ecumenical solidarity, both large churches in Germany are in agreement in recognizing that whoever wants peace should prepare the ground for it.

Human dignity, peace, freedom and conscience, responsibility – these terms, with the

The concept of “Innere Führung” has proven to be surprisingly resilient and virtually without alternative, even as society has undergone many changes

overseas deployments, for example, requirements emerged that were still unknown to the early *Bundeswehr*: military personnel should no longer be able to fight only in the case of necessary national defense, but should also want to fight in a distant country to which they are sent for humanitarian reasons, to enforce order and peace. The criticism that *Innere Führung* with its ethical concept was no longer in keeping with the times¹¹ was answered with more instead of less *Innere Führung*. This is demonstrated by the increased efforts concerning personality development for military personnel, as well as the speech by the German defense minister, Dr. Ursula von der Leyen, to mark the 60th anniversary of the *Bundeswehr* on November 11, 2015. Both the political leadership and the military leadership resisted the temptation to define the soldier, who now also has combat experience, in terms of killing and being killed. Instead, the idea that the citizen in uniform is responsible for peace and freedom should prove its worth under combat conditions, too. According to the normative statement in the Joint Service

associated content of ideas, are deeply rooted in the European tradition. This makes it clear that numerous overlaps exist between the various educational formats in the *Bundeswehr* and *Innere Führung* and, above all, that a clear goal exists for them: since the formation of the *Bundeswehr*, it has been the prime concern of *Innere Führung* to educate military personnel in politics, history and ethics. This is because it must be ensured that the armed forces do not develop into a state within a state, and that no other ethos prevails in the armed forces than that which prevails in the surrounding free, democratic, pluralistic and individualistic society. The ethos of the Basic Law becomes the ethos of the soldier through *Innere Führung*. Here the basic right to freedom of conscience is extraordinarily important. As the German bishops have stated, the norms of international humanitarian law and military law are not enough. In addition, soldiers of the *Bundeswehr* should “have a sufficient overview of the effects of their own actions, and be able to evaluate those effects based on the ethical standards of an educated conscience. The legal standard achieved to date on its own cannot sufficiently protect the victims of armed conflicts. Accordingly, legal scope is required that enables the recipient of the order also in practical respects to oppose orders that violate legal or ethical boundaries.”¹⁶

Ethical education is at the core of *Innere Führung*

At its core, *Innere Führung* is a complex organizational ethics, intended to establish a value-driven leadership culture.¹⁷ It is rightly called complex because the self-reflection and self-responsibility it demands are not always easy to implement. For this reason, great importance is attached to personality development measures for military personnel. Political, historical and ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* are derivatives and fields of influence of *Innere Führung*, and the reasons for them cannot be understood without it. Accordingly, the new Joint Service Regulation on ethical education in the German armed forces states that ethical education is an integral part

of *Innere Führung* and contributes to the realization of the model of the citizen in uniform, “who protects the free democratic order and who is committed to the law and to humanity.”¹⁸

As the “result of a critical examination of moral principles and behavior as well as their teaching and application”, ethical education is “part of personality development and enables members of the *Bundeswehr* to orient their actions toward values and norms, morally justify those actions and take responsibility for them.”¹⁹ The “great responsibility” they assume as bearers of arms must be impressed upon every individual uniform-wearer, since the “need to make decisions even under stress and in moral predicaments” characterizes their profession. Ethical education must therefore “highlight the ethical dimension of action or omission” and contribute to the “development of action competence”.²⁰ The goal of all educational efforts is the “person who is guided by conscience, committed to their task and takes responsibility for their own actions”, who is encouraged to “develop an inner atti-

Even under the conditions of command and obedience, decisions must be made in accordance with one’s own conscience. Ethical education aims to sharpen this conscience

tude that leads to moral action and enables responsible command and obedience.”²¹ In other words, even under the conditions of command and obedience, decisions must be made in accordance with one’s own conscience. Ethical education aims to sharpen this conscience. For this is what makes it possible to assume responsibility and conditionally obey military orders. Franz-Josef Overbeck, in his capacity as Catholic military bishop, recently reminded us that the conscience is the first place to deal with the conflicts that can arise for military personnel in the exercise of their profession. “Even if the conditions under which they have to form a moral judgement about their actions and omissions have become more difficult, this certainly does not

mean that they can dispense with this task. On the contrary! Military personnel must not avoid the question of what is right or wrong. Their actions must be guided by their conscience.”²² If they do not do this, they run the danger of losing their “moral self-determination”, or even destroying their “moral identity”. To preserve and protect this identity is an expression of respect for human dignity. Similarly, in 2014 the Protestant military chaplaincy referred to the need for military conduct to be guided by conscience. While society thinks itself deeply at peace, members of the armed forces have very different experiences, which they call war. In these challenging situations, German military personnel should distinguish

Uniform-wearers who are prepared for dilemma situations and familiar with strategies of self-discipline and de-escalation will probably be less anxiety-driven and more stress-resistant in their actions than their unprepared colleagues

themselves by showing that they have a conscience, that they are aware of their responsibility, and that they want to take responsibility for others.

The linking of military service to the values and norms of the Basic Law produces a consequence that is logical, but not always understood. It is therefore specifically emphasized in the new Joint Service Regulation: “Military professional ethics is not a special ethics for members of the *Bundeswehr* that seeks to justify military patterns of behavior by referring to structures that supposedly follow their own

laws, practical constraints or unique features of the profession.”²³ Thus, at most, it is a field of applied ethics with which the principles and foundations of general ethics are transmitted into the *Bundeswehr* and implemented. Ethical education aims above all at strengthening the personalities of military personnel. It fulfils the educational objective in a special way by imparting basic ethical knowledge, practicing the application of moral principles, and training personal moral judgment. Members of the *Bundeswehr* should be able to morally justify and ethically legitimize their actions and omissions. To this end, they should be encouraged and empowered to develop ethical consideration and decision-making competencies so that they can reflect independently on their tasks and do the right and appropriate thing in every situation. Now, it is true that nobody knows whether the ethically trained soldier actually acts morally in every situation. However, uniform-wearers who are prepared for dilemma situations and familiar with strategies of self-discipline and de-escalation will probably be less anxiety-driven and more stress-resistant in their actions than their unprepared colleagues. Ideally, they will be more confident in their judgment and in their military actions.

Military personnel are ordered to take part in the mentioned educational measures. This conflicts to a certain extent with the reason why military personnel are allowed to take part in such classes, namely to study ethical issues on their own initiative, i.e. to want to educate themselves. Therefore it needs to be made clear that self-education cannot be commanded, since it is about an inner and inward examination of one’s own thoughts and actions. Despite it being an order, the *Bundeswehr* wants to encourage soldiers to engage in self-education. That is why it has prepared a broad educational offering and also set hourly rates for it. That is why it deliberately talks about education (*Bildung*) instead of instruction (*Erziehung*).

Author



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No ethical education without *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*

Despite its special position, *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (LKU) enjoys a good reputation among soldiers who are convinced that it helps them come to grips with the ethical questions of their profession.²⁴ This special position results mainly from the appointment of the LKU teachers – military chaplains are Christians from the two denominations, and soon also rabbis and imams. Thus, within the military system, an element alien to the military is implemented in the education system of the *Bundeswehr*, since the military chaplains are not subject to the military leadership, and are not integrated into the military chain of command. Instead, they are subject to the Military Chaplaincy Agreement (*Militärseelsorgevertrag*) that was concluded with the churches. Because of their special position, they are able to open a “window into the civilian realm”²⁵ within the *Bundeswehr* (Military Bishop Dr. Sigurd Rink), and can approach the military superiors directly in all matters of *Innere Führung*.

LKU is compulsory for military personnel. Military chaplains provide the classes in consultation and cooperation with the military superiors, and are given the necessary infrastructure, but they are free to decide how to teach the curriculum. The focus is on questions of conscience and personality, the individual's conduct of life, and then also the soldierly identity. That LKU forms part of ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* can be seen from the fact that it is not religious instruction, but rather a professional ethics skills development program. As the new Joint Service Regulation on ethical education states, LKU contributes “in a special way to character formation and personality development among military personnel”²⁶. Constitutive elements for this are the establishment of a “hierarchy-free space of open and trusting discussion”, the integrated and action-oriented approach, and the fact that LKU is “not appraisal-relevant”, meaning there are no exams or grades.²⁷ This is where its importance as an educational measure becomes apparent: any freely developing per-

sonality who is to make an active contribution in these classes, is most likely to do so under these conditions. The problems related to the responsibility of conscience play a large part in the work of military chaplains, both within and beyond the LKU context. Only in this way, therefore, can these problems be adequately

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addressed and the goal of a sharpened ethical awareness achieved.

The Joint Service Regulation on *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* mentions a “military canon of values”. Strikingly, however, it does not list values such as camaraderie or bravery, which one associates prima facie with the military. Instead, it borrows this canon from the Joint Service Regulation on *Innere Führung*. This means that the “moral guiding principle of responsible conduct and action”²⁸ for military personnel has a civilian orientation; instead of the concept of war, which soldiers have focused on time and again in recent years when describing the reality of their lives and their mental orientation. Here, we find explicit mention of the concept of peace. In other words, military personnel can find their canon of values in the values of the German Basic Law! These values “should” be internalized by

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tions that arise from the contradiction between the order for German soldiers, to serve peace in the world, and the use of military means of violence. Prof. Dr. Dörfler-Dierken teaches at the University of Hamburg and published numerous publications.



uniform-wearers. However, internalization in the proper sense cannot be demanded – it is a consequence of self-education and self-commitment. The classes and educational events offered invite an inner examination of the professional ethics issues in military service. As responsible individuals, soldiers must draw their own conclusions for their personal lives and for the fulfillment of their duties.

When the *Bundeswehr* was formed, the intention was to thoroughly vanquish the spirit of the *Wehrmacht*. This is why a military chaplaincy was established outside of the

It should be noted that the way soldiers deal and come to terms with questions of meaning and with death and injury is inseparably bound up with beliefs

military hierarchy. The churches had – at least in parts – formed a counterweight against the unjust state.²⁹ For the state to desire the service of churches and religious communities, and to design this service around cooperation with the military leadership, is unique in the world. It promotes the “self-commitment in freedom” of military personnel and encourages their orientation toward peace – also and especially when they have to use lethal force. In this context, military chaplains are regarded as having a good understanding of military life and its special challenges, because they share in it and belong to it as outstanding insiders. In addition, it should be noted that the way soldiers deal and come to terms with questions of meaning and with death and injury is inseparably bound up with beliefs. One may expect military personnel to be more strongly affected by questions of death and dying than many other people, owing to their professional experiences. *Bundeswehr* psychologists report that experiences in overseas deployments can not only trigger post-traumatic stress disorders, but also give rise to powerful feelings of shame and guilt (keyword: moral injuries). The most effective help here is provided not so much by medications and therapy, as by military chaplains.

A brief summary

The goal of all educational measures is to develop the ideal soldier, who is educated in every respect and acts out of inner conviction based on the values of the Basic Law and in accordance with his conscience. Even when their service places them in difficult situations, the “soldierly personality” should act for peace in the spirit of the Basic Law, and respect the human dignity of fellow soldiers, civilians and even the enemy. This requires ethical education. But ethical education faces great challenges. The scenarios in which soldiers are deployed have reached a high degree of complexity, which is likely to increase still further. In a pluralistic society that respects diversity, generally binding fundamental ethical values are constantly exposed to questioning and have to be renegotiated. In addition, religious ties are weakening. The first edition of the *Innere Führung* manual saw soldiers as necessarily having transcendental ties. Its very first chapter began with the “highest and final authority”, which solely and alone deserved “total obedience”, before which the soldier’s actions ultimately had to be answered for.³⁰ In contrast, the Basic Law emphasizes the freedom to commit oneself to a denomination or religious community. Increasingly, however, this freedom also means the autonomously declared renunciation of any such bond. Thus the social consensus on fundamental value orientations is not necessarily being lost, but it has by no means become easier to establish and maintain.

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MEDICAL ETHICS IN THE MILITARY CONTEXT

A CHALLENGE FOR RESEARCH AND TEACHING

Author: Dirk Fischer

Medicine and the military have always gone hand in hand. This is not really surprising, given that war represents a danger to life and limb for the parties involved.

Among the prominent authors in modern times who have discussed the relevance of medical care in war is Henry Dunant (1828–1910), in his book *Un souvenir de Solferino* (English: *A Memory of Solferino*).¹ Still considered one of the most fundamental documents of the modern age, this report triggered the development of international humanitarian law. In the book, Dunant not only calls for the consistent provision of medical aid in war, but also demands protection for the medical service, which must be observed by the warring parties. Efforts to save lives require special safeguards in an environment where lives are being taken. A short time later, his demands found expression in the Geneva Red Cross Convention of 1864. This first Geneva Convention is extremely important. From the point of view of medical ethics, the Convention and the documents that followed are one of humanity's greatest achievements.

After the Second World War, the world community finally managed to formulate the current Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols. This subsequently appears as an event that stands out in the history of mankind. The importance of the principles set out in these documents becomes especially clear in light of the asymmetrical conflicts of the 21st century. It seems doubtful whether it would be possible to agree on a similar body of rules again today. Safeguarding the activities of the medical services is an ongoing special challenge, with the aim of helping humanity to prevail even in times of war. This was impressively demonstrated during the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission.² Military training should take this aim into account.³

Abstract

Medics in the military have always faced special ethical challenges.

This “overlapping zone of ethical reflection” is now commonly referred to as military medical ethics. In 2016, a Teaching and Research Unit for Military Medical Ethics (LFWME) for this field of Wehrmedizinethik was set up at the Bundeswehr Medical Academy in Munich. Dirk Fischer starts by describing the various tasks of the LFWME, which range from basic research to critical participation in international discourse on military medical ethics.

He also cites a number of current key issues, including moral injury as a specific dimension of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Fischer explains how successfully coping with the challenges of a soldier's role requires a triad of physical, mental and moral fitness. To ensure a necessary and well founded ethical education, he argues for an “ethics of teaching and learning”. This implies a scientific grounding, competent staff and high-quality educational offering, together with an increased awareness of ethical issues and problems and the teaching of role-specific fields of applied ethics. The LFWME's proposed three-pronged training concept for the medical service can act as a paradigm for the other branches of the armed forces. Ultimately ethical education should be viewed as a lifelong learning process, with continuous ongoing and advanced training offerings. The military chaplaincy's offerings play a central role in this context.

Military medical ethics as a new field

In the military, moral problems arise that medical ethics does not have to face in the civilian context. To deal with them requires knowledge of military ethics as well as medical ethics, resulting in an overlapping zone of ethical reflection. To describe this field, the use of the term “military medical ethics” (in German: *Wehrmedizinethik* or *Militärmedizinethik*) has now become established. The term used in the *Bundeswehr – Wehrmedizinethik* – is derived from the term *Wehrmedizin* (military medicine), a special medical field that deals with the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of diseases and injuries in the military. The use of the term *Wehrmedizinethik* reflects an effort to be terminologically stringent.⁴

A systematized and institutionalized examination of questions of military medical ethics has been ongoing since 2016 at the Teaching and Research Unit for Military Medical Ethics (*Lehr- und Forschungsstelle für Wehrmedizinische Ethik, LFWME*). The unit was set up as a cooperative project between the *Bundeswehr* medical service and the Catholic military chaplaincy as an externally funded project, funded by the latter, at the *Bundeswehr Medical Academy (Sanitätsakademie der Bundeswehr)* in Munich. In particular, the project aims to carry out basic research on military medical ethics, which the medical service’s various educational programs will then build on.

A further aim is to contribute fruitfully to national and international discourse on military medical ethics. In this context, the various philosophical approaches in ethics have to be considered. The question of whether medical ethics is motivated by an ethics of duty, of utilitarianism, or of virtue, plays a considerable role. While an ethics of duty starts by declaring recognized binding precepts to be the basis of moral action, a utility-oriented view derives the moral value of an action from its consequences. The virtue-ethics approaches which are increasingly gaining attention today develop appropriate plans of action from the virtuous attitude of the actor. If these distinc-

tions are ignored, then it is not uncommon for discourse to be seriously distorted, making it difficult to reach an agreement on the formulation of internationally binding ethical standards. For example, consider the discussion about military and medical necessity associated with the dual role as doctor and soldier. Opinions differ internationally on whether medical service activities should primarily

The question of whether medical ethics is motivated by an ethics of duty, of utilitarianism, or of virtue, plays a considerable role

serve military or medical purposes. This also explains the difficulty of taking up the predominantly utility-oriented publications on military medical ethics from the English-speaking world without a dedicated reflection in the German context. A critical reading of such texts requires knowledge of the respective author’s underlying philosophical point of view. These texts should be discussed in light of alternative approaches such as the principles of biomedical ethics formulated by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress.⁵

Questions of our time in military medical ethics

One of the central problems of our time in military medical ethics is certainly the question of dual loyalty. This results, for example, from the simultaneous role of doctor and soldier. In particular, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission from 2001 until 2014 raised a series of military medical ethics issues that have been the subject of sometimes controversial national and international debate. They include, for example, the use of weapons by medical personnel. There was heated debate in the context of the Afghanistan mission, and not only in the *Bundeswehr*, on whether the agreements in the Geneva Convention are actually sufficient to protect activities by medical personnel. The question of medical care for the population in the coun-

try of deployment should also be mentioned. The associated allocation problems create serious medical ethical challenges for the decision-makers concerned. Internationally, the handling of torture has occupied military

Generally speaking, the teaching of ethical skills is centrally important when it comes to successfully coping with the requirements of a soldier's role at home or overseas

medical ethicists no less than the question of whether care of the sick and wounded should be geared more to military or to medical necessities.⁶

The closeness of military medical ethics to the ethics of technology becomes obvious in the field of human enhancement. The question of how to deal in the military context with the capability to technologically enhance human beings will become increasingly relevant in the future.

Moral psychology takes special account of the fact that ethical questions play an important role with regard to our self-realization as moral beings. Moral conflicts do not leave the soul and body unaffected, and the phenomenon of moral injury is increasingly attracting the attention of psychologists, ethicists and pastoral caregivers.

Physical Mental Moral Fitness (PMM) model

Generally speaking, the teaching of ethical skills is centrally important when it comes to successfully coping with the requirements of a soldier's role at home or overseas. Following the U.S. Comprehensive Soldier Fitness (CSF) model, which contains many elements (including family fitness, social fitness, spiritual fitness), a reduction to three central core competence areas seems advisable from an application-oriented point of view.

The PMM model proposed by the Teaching and Research Unit for Military Medical Ethics consists of physical, mental and moral fitness (see fig. 1). The term "fitness" has proven par-

ticularly useful in emphasizing individual responsibility and the capacity for personal development. In analogy to the idea of fitness in sport, the need for soldiers to train to acquire skills can be extended to physical as well as mental and moral abilities. The importance of soldiers' physical fitness is obvious. Mental fitness proves to be particularly relevant with regard to potential post-traumatic disorders. Furthermore, moral fitness is important with regard to the moral challenges associated with overseas deployments, which require ethical reflection.

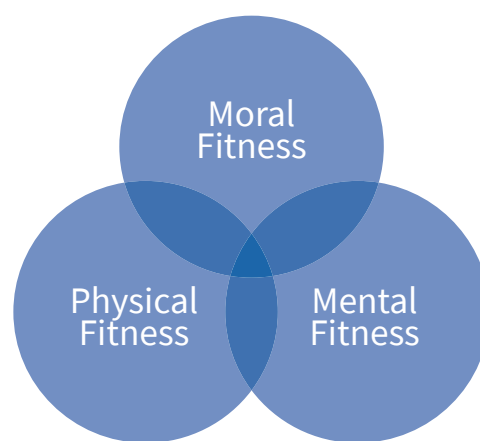


Fig. 1 Physical Mental Moral Fitness model

Teaching and learning medical ethics

Knowledge of medical ethics is one prerequisite for successful activities in the medical service, but a corresponding basic level of knowledge is also essential in the other branches of the armed forces. The requirements arising from different roles both in the medical service and in the other parts of the armed forces have to be taken into account. The Joint Service Regulation (*Zentrale Dienstvorschrift*) on ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* that was drafted in 2019 underlines this point emphatically in the field of general ethics, and makes some references to medical ethics.

As well as imparting fundamental ethical knowledge, ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* also has to take into account various fields of applied ethics. Along with military

ethics and peace ethics, the various branches of the armed forces should pay attention to questions of leadership ethics, cyber ethics, political ethics, the ethics of technology and medical ethics, for example, with a view to today's real situations. Here the character of ethics as a cross-sectional subject is clearly evident, as it requires detailed knowledge in various academic disciplines as well as moral philosophical knowledge. This fact must be taken into account in the selection of suitable teaching staff. It is important to realize that it is almost impossible nowadays for the complexity and breadth of topics in the fields of applied ethics to be covered by just one teacher. For example, let us just consider the question of when human life begins. Without relevant knowledge in human genetics, embryology, anthropology, reproductive medicine, gynecology and perinatal medicine, this question cannot be mastered. Interdisciplinarity is therefore not only an advantage, but a prerequisite. Similar examples can be found for all of the areas of applied ethics mentioned above. It should be pointed out that this is not in any way about preventing individuals from engaging with ethics by overloading them with requirements. What is important, however, is that teachers have an appropriate level of competence so that they can be accountable for the teaching they provide with respect to their employer, to their learners, and to themselves.

With regard to the imparting and acquisition of ethical knowledge, a distinction can be drawn between an ethics of teaching and an ethics of learning, with medical ethics serving as an underlying paradigm. An ethics of teaching focuses for example on the academic expertise of the teaching staff, which they are to be accountable for, and on the design of a course offering for learners that is capable of imparting both general ethical skills and skills in fields of applied ethics. An ethics of learning is based on the insight that engaging with ethical questions is an expression of morally accountable action in itself. To sensitize military personnel to this distinction and motivate them accordingly is a requirement that should not be underestimated.

In this context, it is important to avoid a serious fallacy: ethical competence must not be confused with morality. Morality means a person's ability to perform a good act that stands in contradistinction to evil. Ethics is an academic discipline that considers precisely this human ability. Ethics is to morality as psychology is to the psyche, for example. Psychology as a science focuses on the psyche: ethics as a science focuses on morality.

Ethics has to satisfy scientific standards in research and teaching. To assume that anyone can be employed as an ethics teacher, even without an appropriate academic background, seems irresponsible with regard to both the teacher and the learner.

Stages of ethical education

Ethical education can only proceed in stages. Starting from a heterogeneous basic knowledge acquired outside the military, in the family, at school and in society, the aim is to impart a comparable fundamental knowledge that is appropriate for all. Indeed, military

To assume that anyone can be employed as an ethics teacher, even without an appropriate academic background, seems irresponsible with regard to both the teacher and the learner

personnel today brings very different ideas of values and norms into the *Bundeswehr*. So far, instruction on critical engagement with values and norms has taken place mainly in the context of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (or "character guidance training"), which is taught mostly by military chaplains. Their theological and philosophical training makes them especially qualified for this task. This should be distinguished from a third level consisting of content in fields of applied ethics (functional knowledge), which has to satisfy the requirements of each individual military role. For example, members of the medical service require more extensive knowledge of medical ethics than members of other military fields of activity.

Ethical Competence in Military Medicine (*Ethische Kompetenz in der Wehrmedizin, EthKompWM*)

In recent years, military medical ethics in medical service training programs has gained in importance both nationally and internationally. In the *Bundeswehr*, corresponding teaching content has been integrated into a large number of teaching formats. The Bundeswehr Medical Academy in Munich has played a pioneering role in this regard. In addition, education and training formats have been developed at *Bundeswehr* hospitals. Complementing the educational offering in medical ethics, an international study day on medical ethics is held every two years in part-

study and professional activities. Insight into and encouraging engagement with topics relevant to medical ethics could support a three-pronged model that starts early in the training process.

As a first step, a study day on ethics could give a first insight into moral problems and questions. This should ideally take place before the start of university studies, as part of the general basic training. This would be an opportunity to point out the importance of ethics for dealing positively with the questions and problems raised. Then, for example, the classes offered in the history, theory and ethics of medicine at the civil medical faculties within the framework of human medicine courses can be regarded as an important opportunity for in-depth study. Ethics proves to be closely connected with the history and theory of medicine. Since military physicians in training do not complete their studies at a central training facility, but are distributed across the medical faculties in the Federal Republic of Germany, the second step is to establish a uniform standard by providing guidance documents to accompany study courses. These would also offer an opportunity to ensure a common basic level of knowledge for subsequent ethics courses. Here the Teaching and Research Unit recommends one guidance document of manageable scope for each study year. A third level of ethics training could build on the ethics module already established at the Bundeswehr Medical Academy as part of post-university medical training. Since a basic medical-ethical education has already been provided in the history, theory and ethics of medicine subject in conjunction with the guidance documents accompanying the courses, it would now be possible to begin working on case studies in military medical ethics in a timely manner. These would provide an opportunity ahead of time to deal with the moral difficulties associated with the first foreign deployments.

An "Ethics in Military Medicine" certificate awarded after successfully completing the proposed program could serve as an incentive to engage with questions of military medical ethics. It would certify that the medical doctor

In recent years, military medical ethics in medical service training programs has gained in importance both nationally and internationally

nership between the Catholic military chaplaincy, the Center for Ethical Education in the Armed Forces (*Zentrum für ethische Bildung in den Streitkräften, zebis*) and the Bundeswehr Medical Academy.

The question of how to implement a general education in applied ethics that is suitable for all rank groups, and a role-based education for medical service personnel, is a high priority for military medicine. The Teaching and Research Unit for Military Medical Ethics (LF-WME) attempts to participate in this discourse in a special way. However, it is not purely an internal task for the *Bundeswehr* to determine which didactic and content-related requirements education in military medical ethics has to fulfill. As part of a conceptual proposal for medical professionals' training, the following general suggestions could be formulated paradigmatically. A selective, one-part course offering does not appear to be appropriate for the purposes of lifelong learning. Training and continuing education in military medical ethics should accompany members of the medical service in all phases of their training,

has a relevant qualification in medical ethics beyond their role in the *Bundeswehr*.

In addition to academically based training and continuing education in military medical ethics, the Teaching and Research Unit for Military Medical Ethics recommends that relevant content should also be included in practical military training, for example in procedures for tactical casualty management. Moral conflict situations can be specifically set up to give soldiers the opportunity to test their theoretical knowledge in practice. This could be a particularly effective way of increasing the acceptance of training in military medical ethics. Considerations that were previously perceived to be a theoretical thought game can thus be recognized by military personnel as being relevant to successfully coping with deployments. Allocation problems relating to military medical ethics are particularly suitable in this context, such as how to care for the civilian population in the country of deployment, or deal with large numbers of casualties.

Moral injury

The recognized importance of moral injury in the context of various post-traumatic stress disorders following an overseas deployment should be given special attention within military medical ethics research and teaching. A “moral injury” is a psychological construct connected to a traumatizing event and focused on questions of morality.⁷ In a moral injury, experienced reality can no longer be reconciled with one’s own values and norms. The role that ethical education plays in connection with prevention, therapy and rehabilitation for moral injury-associated post-traumatic stress disorders is an important subject of current and future research. Here it will be necessary to pursue an interdisciplinary approach that combines elements of psychiatry, psychology and ethics. A serious problem that has not yet been investigated is the question of whether ethical education and the associated sharpening of an awareness of values and norms increases susceptibility to moral injury.⁸ Further studies are needed in this regard to enable evidence-based statements.

Answering this question should be a high priority for military medical and military medical ethics research.

Practical relevance of ethical education in everyday life

The motivation to engage with topics in military medical ethics generally grows with increasing clinical and military experience. When an ethical question becomes relevant in a person’s life, it is usually a long time distant from the challenges and problems addressed in training. In the sense of lifelong learning, continuous education and training needs to accompany people throughout their professional lives, so that the experiences and insights gained can lead to a deeper understanding of the practical relevance of ethical considerations in everyday life.

In this context, the military chaplaincy’s diverse offerings are of key importance. This is all the more true since it is here that a protected space for ethical debate is offered, in which questions and problems can be openly discussed.

In analogy to the concept of fitness in sport, the PMM model suggests that continuous training is required to retain, build up and keep developing acquired knowledge and skills.

Summary

Since the 19th century, the close connection between the military and medicine has shaped increasing efforts to afford special protection to medical service activities. Establishing this entitlement to protection in international humanitarian law is one of humanity’s greatest and most important achievements; the fact that it is increasingly coming under threat in the context of asymmetrical conflicts poses a worrying challenge.

Central questions and problems relating to medicine in the military context are discussed in the field of military medical ethics, which is undergoing increasing institutionalization and systematization, also in Germany, where it is known as *Wehrmedizinethik*. The Physical

Mental Moral Fitness (PMM) model emphasizes the triad of fitnesses that mutually complement and depend on each other. The role moral fitness plays in successfully coping with deployments requires further, more intensive research, not least with regard to potential moral injury.

Military medical ethics proves to be a cross-sectional discipline that requires a willingness to carry out interdisciplinary research. This in turn places high demands on teaching. Teaching the relevant content requires profound expertise. Ethics teachers have to be accountable to their employer, to their learners, and to themselves for the content they teach.

This applies to all levels of ethical education and the critical-reflective engagement with basic, deeper and functional ethical knowledge that takes place within it. The concept of Ethical Competence in Military Medicine

1 Cf. Dunant, Henry (2013): *Eine Erinnerung an Solferino*. Paderborn.

2 Cf. Uslar, Rolf von/Schewick, Florian van (2009): "Rotes Kreuz im Fadenkreuz? Gedanken zu Schutzzeichen und Rolle von Sanitätern in asymmetrischen Konflikten aus militärisch-taktischer, juristischer und ethischer Perspektive." In: *Wehrmedizin und Wehrpharmazie* 3, pp. 44–52.

3 Fischer, Rupert Dirk (2018): Der "Menschlichkeit verpflichtet." In: *Wehrmedizin und Wehrpharmazie* 1, pp. 30–32.

4 Cf. Fischer, Rupert Dirk (2013): "Die Frage nach dem Arzt im bewaffneten Einsatz im Zentrum der Wehrmedizinethik." In: *Wehrmedizin und Wehrpharmazie* 3, pp. 34 f.

5 Cf. Beauchamp, Tom L./Childress, James F. (2013): *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*. Oxford.

6 Cf. Gross, Michael/Carrick, Don (2016): *Military Medical Ethics for the 21st Century*. London.

7 Cf. Zimmermann, Peter/Siegel, Stefan (2010): "Moralische Verletzungen von Soldaten im Auslandseinsatz." In: *Wehrmedizinische Monatsschrift* 6–7, pp. 185–188.

8 Cf. Zimmermann, Peter et al. (2016): "Werteveränderung und moralische Verletzungen bei im Einsatz psychisch erkrankter Soldaten der Bundeswehr." In: *Wehrmedizinische Monatsschrift* 1, pp. 7–14.

The role moral fitness plays in successfully coping with deployments requires further, more intensive research, not least with regard to potential moral injury

developed and proposed paradigmatically for the licensed professions by the Teaching and Research Unit for Military Medical Ethics (LFWME) shows how the transfer of knowledge can take place in military medical ethics. This draft concept is informed by the insight that engagement with ethics has a practical relevance in everyday life. With regard to the good life, it points far beyond the military medical context.

The Author



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Authors: Franz J. Eisend/Thomas R. Elßner

At the end of the Enlightenment: peace education and the “citizen in uniform”

Only human dignity, law and justice can pave the thorny path to peace, and it is peace education¹ which, as generations pass, contributes effectively, step by step, to draining forever the swamp of violence in humankind. This fundamental insight took root at the beginning of the 20th century, before blossoming for the first time in a dense undergrowth of mistrust, propaganda and violence after the First World War. At the end of the Weimar period, it was not without reason that National Socialism hastily appropriated the young (reforming) educational movement, only to trample on the delicately flowering seedlings of “peace education” through its subsequent fatal abuse of that movement.

After these shattering experiences of the Second World War, the thoroughly vital pedagogical rootstock sprouted again in the course of the democratization process. As a strengthened peace pedagogy, it exerted a lasting influence on the continued socialization of Germany. Despite great internal resistance, peace pedagogical thinking even found its way into the everyday practice of soldiers serving in the then newly formed *Bundeswehr*. Over the years, it ultimately led to a completely new soldierly self-image, which persists to this day.

Turning our attention to the thorny transformation of German society, let us first look at Kant's promise, written in the spirit of the Enlightenment: “Thus when nature has unwrapped, from under this hard shell, the seed for which she cares most tenderly, namely the propensity and calling to think freely, the latter gradually works back upon the mentality of the people (which thereby gradually becomes capable of freedom in acting) and eventually even upon the principles of government, which finds it profitable to itself to treat the human being, who is now more than a machine, in keeping with his dignity.”²

In accordance with the requirements of *Innere Führung* (“leadership development and civic education”) in the *Bundeswehr*, the citizen in uniform was no longer to be regarded merely as a “cog in

AN ELEMENTARY BUILDING BLOCK OF EDUCATION ON THE THORNY PATH TO PEACE

WHAT IS “LEBENSKUNDLICHER UNTERRICHT”, ACTUALLY?

Abstract

Franz Eisend and Thomas Elßner not only offer a comprehensive definition and description of the tasks of Lebenskundlicher Unterricht (LKU) in the Bundeswehr in its current form, they also explain in detail its relevance to peace education. After the Second World War, a new soldierly self-image emerged, based on the dignity and responsibility of the individual and emphasizing service to peace, freedom and justice. This, they argue, is essentially due to LKU. As a “democratic freedom for self-discipline of the intellect and character” that was partially removed from military control, it represented an innovation and at the same time defined the moral standard for leadership. This reflects a basic insight of peace pedagogy: a community can only achieve lasting external strength through the inner cohesion of its parts, based on freedom, law and self-restraint.

In a historical overview, the authors retrace how the decidedly peace pedagogical orientation found its way step by step into LKU. LKU developed from Christian-influenced moral instruction into a compulsory professional ethics skills development program without denominational ties. It now makes a decisive contribution to independent personality development for military personnel and to the cross-sectional task of ethical education.

At the “heart” of ethical education, LKU raises fundamental questions about human existence and personal world-views. Military chaplains are well qualified to deal with these issues appropriately, not simply because of their academic or scientific expertise but because they occupy a clearly identifiable position regarding “Weltanschauung” – and therefore bring sensitivity and a sense of responsibility to personal encounters. There is no such thing as “neutrality” in this field.

a [war] machine” of his government – as had still been the case in the Wehrmacht. Instead, from now on, man as soldier is to be treated “in keeping with his dignity”!³ From the beginning, this intention was a foundation of *Innere Führung*, which was also conceived for the purpose of “helping the individual to escape the fatal feeling of ‘being only an object’”⁴. Initially there was still great internal resistance to Baudissin’s ideas in the new West German defense army, and even today *Innere Führung* is “venerated, laughed at, praised to the skies, rejected” (Lieutenant General Jürgen Weigt; translated from German). Even so, a kind of peace education practice has found its way into the *Bundeswehr* to this day, and over time it has also had an impact. This is reflected for example in the new “guidelines for understanding and cultivating

Bundeswehr soldiers now see themselves primarily as protectors, saviors and fighters – even in the Hindu Kush or in Mali. Though it may not easily be proved, it can be assumed – and the new “tradition guidelines” (see above) confirm this impression to some extent – that the decades of practicing ethical education in the German armed forces, especially as a cross-sectional task, have successfully helped to cultivate and develop the *Bundeswehr* soldier’s deeper self-image from that time to present day. In practice, the “fields of influence of *Innere Führung*” shaped the concept of the “citizen in uniform” in this way. In other words, over the course of decades, mainly leadership, political education as well as law and military order,⁶ but also historical or intercultural education and, in a very special way, *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (LKU) – or “character guidance training” – likely made a not-to-be-underestimated peace pedagogical contribution to overall developments. From the perspective of a peace pedagogy for society as a whole, the new soldierly self-image becomes plausible for our century, especially in light of a Christian *Weltanschauung*. This is reflected very aptly and hopefully in the words of the Second Vatican Council, which are addressed to all people of good will worldwide – especially also those who are currently serving their countries as soldiers: “Those too who devote themselves to the military service of their country should regard themselves as the agents of security and freedom of peoples. As long as they fulfill this role properly, they are making a genuine contribution to the establishment of peace.”⁷

A kind of peace education practice has found its way into the Bundeswehr to this day, and over time it has had an impact

tradition” issued in 2018: “The basis and standard for the *Bundeswehr*’s understanding of tradition and for its cultivation of tradition are [...] above all the values and norms of the *Grundgesetz* (Basic Law). These include, in particular, respect for human dignity, the rule of law and international law, the exclusion of all forms of tyranny and arbitrary rule, and the commitment to freedom and peace. Members of the German armed forces also have an obligation of humanity, even under stress and in combat.”⁵

Of course the *soixante-huitard* movement and peace demonstrations of the 1980s also had a lasting impact on the concept of the “citizen in uniform”. In the main, however, it has been German reunification, the transformation of the armed forces into a volunteer and professional army, and the suspension of compulsory military service that are likely to have had a significant impact on the self-image of today’s soldiers. The change from a “peace service” to a robust mandate for overseas deployments, painful experiences with wounded and fallen fellow soldiers, and on top of that the new technological challenges of digitization have done the rest in terms of contributing to the current self-image. Aware of the guiding principle “We. Serve. Germany.” (*Wir. Dienen. Deutschland.*),

Lebenskundlicher Unterricht as a peace education program of elementary importance

The *Bundeswehr* attaches great importance to upbringing, education and training. Even though in practice there are signs of changes in educational expectations at the present time – education threatens to break down into skills-based training – ethical education is currently still regarded as fundamentally important, alongside military training. This is always a question of leadership, and ultimately it is about the soldier’s overall education. Putting the overall educational expectation to one side for a moment, if we now examine

the terms used for the fields of influence – “*Politische Bildung*” (political education), “*Historische Bildung*” (historical education), “*Interkulturelle Bildung*” (intercultural education) and in the future probably also “*Ethische Bildung*” (ethical education) – then there is something odd about the choice of words in “*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*”. Why didn’t the spiritual fathers of the *Bundeswehr* continue the naming logic of “*Politische Bildung*” and simply call it “*Lebenskundliche Bildung*” or just simply “*Ethische Bildung*”? Did they mean this to express a conscious distancing from the extremely questionable “*Lebenskunde*” (life skills) taught under National Socialism?

The term “*Ethische Bildung*” (ethical education) did not fit because it would have only partially covered the actual educational intention. Moreover, in terms of its content, ethical education was understood to be primarily a cross-sectional task, i.e. it was always seen in the context of the soldier’s overall education. Given this comprehensive expectation of education, “*Politische Bildung*” (political education) was ultimately seen as a vehicle or medium for ethical education under special circumstances. This idea of implicit ethical education as a cross-sectional task in the context of a soldier’s overall education also seems to have played a role in the naming of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*. Apparently a personality-forming measure was envisaged whose ultimate focus was on “morality”, and where the real challenge for teachers consisted in the direct interplay of “ethics” and “morals”. The term “*Moralunterricht*” (moral instruction), as it had once emerged from the ideas of the Enlightenment, would probably have most suited the actual project.⁸ Did they suspect acceptance problems among the troops, or did they simply not want to teach “non-religious morality” at that time because of the foregoing experiences under National Socialism?⁹

A look at the first Joint Service Regulation (*Zentrale Dienstvorschrift*) 66/2 from 1959 sheds some light on the question of the original intention of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (LKU): “It [LKU] is based on the foundations of the Christian faith and is given by military chaplains.” The primary goal of this educational program was to “give soldiers means of assistance for their daily lives” and thus “to help promote moral, intellectual and spiritual capacities”. The individual soldier had to

be “made aware of his responsibility for the conduct of his life”, it was important “to teach him to recognize the need for self-discipline and moderation”, “to strengthen his sense of duty [...] to show to the individual the sources that give meaning to life, and lead to systems of order through which the community becomes worth living in and hence worth defending”. The political and military leadership of that time expected a lot from *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*, and considered it to be equally important as the purely subject-specific areas of education, inasmuch as the “moral, intellectual and spiritual capacities [...] determine the soldier’s value even more than technical ability”. Up until that time, training or instruction of this kind had not existed in Germany, neither in the history of military education nor in military pastoral care. “For the first time, the military relinquished sole responsibility for the contents of one part of military education. In this area, it granted the military chaplaincy scope for involvement that remained beyond complete military control and sole determination.”¹⁰ ... And now, after almost 70 years, it seems that it is exactly this “scope for involvement” – thoroughly considered at that time

It seems that it is exactly the “scope for involvement” which the German Ministry of Defense suddenly perceives to be a supposed “regulatory gap”

and a deeply democratic conception – which the German Ministry of Defense suddenly perceives to be a supposed “regulatory gap”. Hence they are attempting – perhaps somewhat rashly – to close this gap by means of a Joint Service Regulation on “Ethical Education”. But the planned Joint Service Regulation on “*Persönlichkeitsbildung*” (personality development) has shown – if it wasn’t already apparent – just how flawed the thinking in the current educational concept really is: How is such an expectation of comprehensive control over the *Bundeswehr* compatible with Article 2 of our Basic Law?¹¹ Is this not rather the first step towards the “state within the state”?

With the aim of further tracing the development of the term “*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*”, and in view of the above goal definition regarding the

teaching of “morality”, it is important first of all to properly classify the word “*Unterricht*” (instruction or training) in the name. In the armed forces, as everyone knows, discipline is essential. Therefore, in this context discipline does not stand in contradiction to true education in the *Bundeswehr*. Education itself is strictly speaking a process of increasingly disciplining the intellect and character. In Latin, *disciplina* first means “teaching” and “instruction”, and not only discipline in the sense of self-control. In terms of democratic education, i.e. equal participation on equal terms, this is really about having a mental teaching space in which it must be guaranteed from the outset that soldiers may express an opinion that differs from the teacher’s opinion, without having to fear negative consequences in their everyday lives as soldiers.

The possibility of open, trusting conversation among fellow soldiers is quite simply the fundamental condition for “Lebenskundlicher Unterricht”

The possibility of open, trusting conversation among fellow soldiers is quite simply the fundamental condition for *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*. On the other hand, however, in an enlightened democracy it must also be assumed of the participants that despite different interests and views, they at least share a basic and voluntary orientation toward education, insight and truth. Seen in these terms, *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* – formally speaking – is the democratic freedom for self-discipline of the intellect and character.

The content expectations of such broad “*Unterrichtung*” (instruction) are actually contained within the term “*Lebenskunde*” (life skills). The arc spanning self-determination and life-determination, self-management and conduct of life, indicates the existential content with which the *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* teaching space is to be filled for the participants and with them themselves for the purpose of soldiers’ overall education. Ultimately, this is all about leadership – i.e. leading oneself and others on one’s own responsibility in the face of professional and private challenges. Since the very beginning of the *Bundeswehr*, expectations of ethical education – un-

derstood as a cross-sectional task in terms of its content – have welded the primary field of influence of “leadership” with that of “*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*” to form an inseparable moral unit. This is no accident, since leadership and everyday life as a soldier must not in principle contradict the ethical standards for which *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* stands. From this perspective, superiors in particular should also in their basic moral attitude feel a moral obligation toward the values and content taught in *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*. Seen in this light, the moral unit of “leadership” and “*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*” is peace pedagogical practice pure and simple in the everyday professional life of *Bundeswehr* soldiers – and hence it should also be regarded without qualification as the “heart” of ethical education in the *Bundeswehr*.

Excursus: The Nestors of peace education in the Bundeswehr

In the wider context of peace education for society at large, *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* thus appears as an elementary building block of education on the path to peace. It is a building block whose scope and significance for society have not been taken into account until now, or hardly at all. On closer examination of the development of ethical education in the *Bundeswehr*, it is precisely in this interplay between leadership and LKU extending across generations of soldiers that highly effective outlines of a peace pedagogy as briefly sketched above begin to emerge. Two educationalists should be mentioned in this context. The first is Franz Pöggeler (1926–2009), who as a “military educationalist” for two decades was instrumental in developing Baudissin’s concept of *Innere Führung* very much in the spirit of a peace pedagogy. Of particular note here is his prudent and extraordinarily durable moulding of the central field of influence of “leadership” in the *Bundeswehr* in peace education terms. The second – the true Nestor – is Pöggeler’s teacher, the ethicist and peace educationalist Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster (1869–1966). Foerster, a “Michelangelo of pedagogy” (Hans Swann), not only coined the term “*Lebenskunde*”¹² but was also the first educationalist to use the term “peace pedagogy”.¹³ In his time, he established and propagated the

necessary (federal) basic principle of “fair play” in society, politics and between peoples.¹⁴ Two quotations from Foerster are provided here to outline briefly the basic idea of peace education and the perspective that derives from it. Thinking in peace education terms – very much in keeping with *Innere Führung* and the principles of the modern constitutional state – ultimately always leads to the deep insight that one learns to fight for what is right and not just for one’s own right:

“The real *essence and foundation of the state*, the binding agent of its cohesion, is almost the *opposite* of power, namely law, order, a moral community amid opposing interests. And all lasting external strength of a state rests on the depth and solidity of these *internal* ties. Power can at most be recognized as a *means* to serve the *legal purposes* of the state, but never as the state’s ultimate purpose. For this reason, the first precept in the life of the state is not, say, to maintain and increase its power, but to strengthen the *inner unity* of its members and to promote the supremacy of conscience and a sense of right and wrong over ruthless selfishness.”¹⁵

Starting from this understanding of the state, in a chapter entitled “Peace Education”, Foerster expressly points out that military training must be in the right proportion to the other goals of education. This is entirely in line with the peace education spirit of “*si vis pacem, para pacem*”¹⁶, and evinces remarkable clarity at a time still imbued with violence and war. He says that for this to happen consistently, it is necessary “to bring the idea of military national defense itself into a healthy relationship with all the other methods of making the country secure: a country, after all, is defended not only by weapons, but also by ideas, which have an attractive effect on the world around one, and stop hostile moods from growing into a power that overwhelms all other interests and feelings, whereas a too one-sided concentration on military methods of protection could have the effect of summoning up the evil that one wants to prevent.”¹⁷

From character to values

“It all depends on character” (*“Auf den Charakter kommt es an”*): This was the theme of a booklet that was handed out to soldiers by Catholic military chaplains in the early years toward the end of each *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* class. While LKU was also denominationally separated, the cross-denominational model of the U.S. Army’s “Character Guidance Program” probably still had a significant influence on its content. Years of preparation and negotiations had preceded the first classes. Georg Werthmann (1898–1980), who became the first Catholic Military General Vicar, once summarized the opinion of the German bishops in this early phase of the *Bundeswehr*’s development as follows: “It is a delicate matter, but we cannot say no” (translated from German). During the first talks between church and state in the context of the question of how the civic-democratic and ethical education of soldiers should be guaranteed as a unit by church and state in partnership, the Americans were still interested in introducing a general course of instruction called the Character Guidance Program. Parts of

Thinking in peace education terms – very much in keeping with Innere Führung and the principles of the modern constitutional state – ultimately always leads to the deep insight that one learns to fight for what is right and not just for one’s own right

this program would be taught by the chaplain as an expert in morality and education, and as an employee of the commander. The churches, on the other hand, wanted to set up a pastoral care system through this partnership, which was to be organized by the churches in their own way; they were prepared to guarantee such a system, but in accordance with the principles of the ecclesiastical understanding that had developed in Germany – i.e. under the responsibility of the church and rejecting a totalitarian state. With regard to *Innere Führung*, at that time in church circles one did not think in peace education categories; moral instruction tended instead to be more pastoral and was mainly intended to promote Christian character formation. How “delicate” the matter of the

planned *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* may have been for both military chaplaincies in the beginning is also reflected in the fact that this training is not mentioned in the contracts concluded between the churches and the young Federal Republic of Germany.

In 1956, LKU was trialed in close partnership between the newly formed *Bundeswehr* and the two military chaplaincies. From 1959, a Joint Service Regulation (ZDv) 66/2 regulated how the training was to be provided, thus making LKU a “trademark” of the military chaplaincy both inside and outside the German armed forces. Classes were to be held during service hours and on a denominational basis. From then on, LKU would be offered on behalf of the state, and carried out by military chaplains. It was possi-

expanded the peace education approach to produce an ever broader understanding of ethical education as a cross-sectional task.

In this respect there was a turning point in 2009, when LKU became compulsory for all soldiers, and without denominational ties. After a three-year trial phase, the new ZDv 10/4, subtitled “Taking responsibility for your own life – being able to take responsibility for others” (translated from German) finally came into force in 2011. It was this regulation that brought LKU onto the home stretch of an actually comprehensive peace education in the *Bundeswehr*. This direction was then unerringly maintained, as in the course of restructuring ZDv 10/4 first became Central Regulation (*Zentralrichtlinie*) A2-2530/0-0-1, before finally being replaced on February 2, 2018 by ZDv A-2620/3. Since LKU is mandatory, explicit reference is also made to what LKU is (or is not) and who can give lessons. Thus LKU is not religious education or a form of religious practice. Rather, it is a professional ethics skills development program and constitutes an essential and indispensable complement to achieving the principles and goals of *Innere Führung*.

Thus the expectation that LKU should provide peace education has been evident at least since ZDv 10/4, and runs through all offered subject areas of the curriculum. LKU is “conceptually a place of freedom in the barracks” (Angelika Dörfler-Dierken; translated from German) and its ethical and moral content guides self-management and the conduct of life both in military service and in the private sphere. Based on the inviolability of human dignity, carried out and led by a qualified teacher, in open conversation with fellow soldiers, ethical value awareness is formed, personal conscience is sharpened, and the ability to make moral judgments is strengthened. In this way, military personnel form a sense of responsibility, reflect on their inner moral attitude, and thus, in accordance with ZDv A-2600/1 entitled “*Innere Führung*”, make a decisive contribution to their own independent personality development.

Incidentally, another event is highly significant in this overall development of LKU as peace education. In 2009, when “the matter” became “delicate” again for the military chaplaincy due to mandatory participation, the Catholic Military Bishop established zebis, the present-day Center

LKU constitutes an indispensable complement to achieving the principles and goals of “Innere Führung”

ble to deregister from classes, but in that case, soldiers were asked to work on the LKU topics independently. The goal of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* according to the later 1976 version of ZDv 66/2 was “to deal with moral issues which are central to how we conduct our lives, to our relationship with the world around us, and to an ordered coexistence in any community” (translated from German). Against the background of developments in society as a whole, the close dialectic between “leadership” and “*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*” then led to a gradual transition in focus from moral character to ethical values. In the context of *Innere Führung*, this

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for Ethical Education in the Armed Forces, in Hamburg. The main objective of the new institution was to set up an online teaching portal to provide professional support to all military chaplains in the face of increasing challenges. Against this background, zebis can also be regarded as the very first “Peace Education Institute” for an army anywhere in the world, and thus as a further elementary building block on the thorny path to peace!

Looking back in summary at how *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* has developed dynamically over the last six decades, its importance as an elementary building block for peace education in society as a whole becomes ever clearer. It is essential for soldiers’ personality development, and it makes a significant contribution to the cross-sectional task of ethical education in the *Bundeswehr*. For this reason, LKU to this day is “the service desired by the state and provided by the church” and the German bishops continue to stand by it – then as now – precisely for the sake of the peace that is hoped for: “We will continue to provide human and spiritual support to members of the armed forces in the future and promote an ethically reflected soldierly self-image, including through *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*. The culture of *Innere Führung* is one of the essential prerequisites for our involvement in the armed forces.”¹⁸

From mandatory personality development to the definition of LKU in the context of pluralistic *Weltanschauungen*¹⁹

Political leaders and *Bundeswehr* officials currently emphasize both the specific qualifications and the commitment of military personnel. This includes their willingness to “risk life and limb”. A wider educational mandate with comprehensive peace education in mind therefore suggests itself, and conforms to the educational expectations of members of the *Bundeswehr* as well as the self-image of the German people formulated in the preamble to the Basic Law. In view of the service regulation on ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* that is now planned, it is important to explain plausibly to everyone involved, but also to interested outsiders, that LKU forms as it were the “heart” of ethical education in the *Bun-*

deswehr, and continues to be an indispensable personality-building measure.

As mentioned earlier, general ethical education stands in contradistinction to political or historical education with their respective implied ethical

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issues. As a cross-sectional task, particularly in the interplay of “leadership” and “*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*” as a moral unit, it also applies to the general conduct of life, and, in a very special way, to questions of one’s personal *Weltanschauung*. It is not only in order to distinguish “good and evil” that LKU aims to promote the ability to form moral judgements. Questions can arise here that go well beyond the scope of science (or the humanities), and into the realm of true “contemplation” (“*Anschauung*”) of human experience, of life and the world – such as has generally been the domain of the millennia-old world religions. The human being as a whole, in his dignity, his unique existence, indeed in his whole meaningfulness can be the subject of LKU.

Thus the three subject areas of the curriculum – “The individual and society”, “Personal lifestyle and military service”, and “Moral and psychological challenges of military service” – can raise fundamental questions about space, time, death, life, existence, humanity, meaning, love ... and about “reconnection” (in the sense of religion)

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Photo: KS/Doreen Bierdel

and also about “God”. But to live up to this expectation requires teaching personnel who are selected without any doubt, who have appropriate training and qualifications, and whose own background in terms of *Weltanschauung* must in all cases be transparent, and if necessary can also be documented and clearly identified. This ethical and moral necessity exists since ultimately it has to be clear to LKU students in which *Weltanschauung* their teachers are rooted.²⁰ Therefore it is competence in science and in *Weltanschauung* in the same manner that qualifies someone to teach LKU. It is particularly in the case of very far-reaching ethical issues (e.g. at the beginning or end of life) that the extremely complex educational context deserves most attention, as behind ethical positions – even scientifically founded ones

the personal *Weltanschauung* of every soldier should be heard and above all taken seriously, so that a teacher can guide students responsibly through the “ethical and moral dimension” of the topic at hand. In this way, through self-reflection and conversation among fellow soldiers, ethical awareness can be fostered, the “conscience” trained, and the ability to form moral judgments strengthened in a sensitive way with regard to *Weltanschauung*. In terms of peace education, this is about developing not only “ethical competence”, but also a “responsible character”.

For soldiers to develop their own personality requires freedoms which are open-minded with regard to *Weltanschauung*. For this reason, LKU includes fundamental aspects of the conscientious personality and of individual life conduct, as well as questions of identity. It also addresses the whole of human existence, beyond professional ethics contexts. This is why since its inception the *Bundeswehr* had sought partners who were outside the military system and at the same time had the necessary qualifications and, above all, an educational background which is sensitive with regard to *Weltanschauung*, to reflect on the concrete challenges of military service and life as a soldier.

In view of the development outlined above, LKU should not only be a “study of ethical values”, but also a form of sensitive training with regard to *Weltanschauung* more in the spirit of a general peace education. Through character development and by fostering personal life conduct skills, using the given ethical and moral content and ultimately for the independent development of personality, LKU should help military personnel to proceed with “grit”²² on the thorny path to peace.²³

With the expectation of these peace education outcomes as part of the overall leadership and education of military personnel, “*Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*” can be defined as follows:

LKU is a compulsory personality-building measure. Within the framework of Innere Führung in the Bundeswehr, it is a form of sensitive training with regard to Weltanschauung with ethical and moral content. With good justification, it is provided primarily by military chaplains, in the expectation that it will form part of a wider peace education process.

It has to be clear to LKU students in which “Weltanschauung” their teachers are rooted

– there are always positions of *Weltanschauung*. There is no ethics free of background assumptions (of whatever kind). Anyone who does not recognize the corresponding need for clarification will not do justice to the formulated self-expectation of freedom of education and the formation of personality in accordance with our Basic Law.

This is also the reason why so far it has mainly been military chaplains who teach LKU classes. Their *Weltanschauung* can be clearly identified – usually it is the Christian one – and thus through their person they represent the competence of their respective church with regard to *Weltanschauung*. This is also easily recognizable for the “ideologically neutral state” at all times. In the same way, in the future it will also be possible to assign Jewish military chaplains and, after a phase of clarification, probably also representatives of Islam to a competence with regard to *Weltanschauung*. Only with this preliminary clarification can it be guaranteed that LKU as sensitive training in terms of *Weltanschauung* continues to make “an indispensable complement and an essential contribution”²¹ to the development of professional ethical competence. In the protected space of LKU as a personality-building measure,

1 Peace education or “peace pedagogy” is here understood to mean mainly adult education (“andragogy”). This is based on the ideas of Klaus Prange, *Die vielen Erziehungswissenschaften und die eine Pädagogik – zum Verhältnis von Erwachsenenbildung und Allgemeiner Pädagogik* (<https://www.die-bonn.de/doks/prange0501.pdf>; accessed November 22, 2019). Furthermore, pedagogy (“Pädagogik”) is seen here as an auxiliary science that is particularly significant for all areas of life in society that are related to upbringing, leadership, education and training.

2 (English translation taken from <https://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/ethics/kant/enlightenment.htm>, accessed October 8, 2019). Kant, Immanuel (1907 [1784]), *WA*, AA08, 41.32–42.2. Final sentence in the essay “Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?” (“Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?”).

3 Ibid.

4 (Translated from German). Baudissin, Wolf Graf von (2014): “Diskussionsbeitrag bei der ‘Soldatentagung’ an der Evangelischen Akademie Herrmannsburg.” In: by the same author: *Grundwert: Frieden in Politik – Strategie – Führung von Streitkräften*. Berlin, pp. 43–47, here p. 45.

5 Bundesministerium der Verteidigung (2018): *Die Tradition der Bundeswehr. Richtlinien zum Traditionsverständnis und zur Traditionspflege*. Berlin, pp. 4 f.

6 Cf. on the fields of influence Joint Service Regulation (*Zentrale Dienstvorschrift, ZDv*) A-2600/1: *Innere Führung*, no. 504.

7 Cf. pastoral constitution “Gaudium et Spes”, no. 79.

8 Cf. on this point Enders, Susanne (2002): *Moralunterricht und Lebenskunde*. Bad Heilbrunn/Obb., pp. 29 f.

9 On the fundamental political self-image at that time, which certainly especially in the early days of the *Bundeswehr* still had a decisive influence on its expectations of education and development, here is a word by Carlo Schmid: “[We are convinced] that there is no *Christian* politics as such, but only politics in and of itself done by Christian or non-Christian people.” And with social democracy in mind, he explains just prior to this that: “We have learned that man carries in his breast an insatiable urge for religious experience, and that for us in Europe, for the majority of people, this need is satisfied in the Christian churches. [...] The Social Democratic Party is not an anti-Christian party; on the contrary, we bow in awe before all those who take Christianity seriously, and we are perfectly willing to give the concerns of Christianity the importance they rightly deserve in public life; because we know how much everything in the world of which we approve, is only the way that it is, and we would have it no other way, because our culture is determined by Christianity. [...] An anti-Christian, or anti-church attitude as a political principle has no place among our members.” (Translated from German). Schmid, Carlo (1973): “Weg und Ziel der Sozialdemokratie.” In: by the same author: *Politik als geistige Aufgabe*. [Gesammelte Werke I.] Bern, pp. 24 f. (emphasis in original).

10 Cf. Kruse, Herbert (1983): *Kirche und militärische Erziehung. Der lebenskundliche Unterricht in der Bundeswehr im Zusammenhang mit der Gesamterziehung des Soldaten*. Hannover, p. 16.

11 “Every person shall have the right to free development of his personality [...]” (“Jeder hat das Recht auf die freie Entfaltung seiner Persönlichkeit [...]”) (https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/englisch_gg/englisch_gg.html#p0023, accessed October 8, 2019).

12 Cf. Enders, p. 180.

13 Cf. Nipkow, Karl Ernst (2007): *Der schwere Weg zum Frieden. Geschichte und Theorie der Friedenspädagogik von Erasmus bis zur Gegenwart*. Gütersloh, p. 240.

14 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 244 ff.

15 (Translated from German). Foerster, Friedrich Wilhelm (1918): *Politische Ethik und politische Pädagogik*. Dritte stark erweiterte Auflage der “Staatsbürgerlichen Erziehung”. Munich, p. 194 (emphasis in original).

16 (“If you want peace, prepare for peace”). Foerster, Friedrich Wilhelm (1916): “Die psychologische Vorbedingung des Weltfriedens.” In: *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, vol. 137, no. 682 (April 30, 1916), p. 1; reprinted in: Hipler, Bruno (ed.) (1988): *Foerster, Friedrich Wilhelm. Manifest für den Frieden – eine Auswahl aus seinen Schriften (1893–1933)*. Paderborn, here p. 112.

17 (Translated from German). Foerster (1918), chapter 9 “Friedenspädagogik”, pp. 460 ff. (emphasis added).

18 (Translated from German). Die deutschen Bischöfe (2005): *Soldaten als Diener des Friedens. Erklärung zur Stellung und Aufgabe der Bundeswehr*. No. 82, Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz (ed.). Bonn, p. 18.

19 *Weltanschauung* is often translated as “world-view” or “ideology”. In our view, both are not apt to reflect the meaning of the term. “Ideology” in particular is linked to exclusion and totalitarianism and would exclude sensitivity and open-mindedness which are, as we explain below, essential for “Lebenskundlicher Unterricht”. We have therefore decided to keep the German word.

On the social mega-theme of the relationship between *Weltanschauung* and “ethics”, cf. Hauser, Linus (2004–2016): *Kritik der neomythischen Vernunft*. Vol. 3. Paderborn.

20 This is illustrated by the question frequently asked by soldiers in LKU: “And what is your personal view on that, Father?”

21 Cf. ZDv A-2620/3, nos. 106 and 503.

22 In other words, strength of character, courage, stamina, guts, punch, or “enthusiastic resolve”.

23 Thus together with the virtuous character we find e.g. competences of legal understanding and legal education; competences of intercultural understanding; competences of independent critical discernment in religions and secular world-views; competences to dismantle masculine ideologies and behaviors in the face of everyday violence; concepts that overcome thinking in terms of a dualistic concept of the enemy and open up a mediating and reconciling third perspective; communicative competences that treat other people respectfully and enable human closeness with its risks and opportunities; a willingness to develop and maintain a culture of remembrance for common victims – but first and foremost: to promote “confidence-building measures”, i.e. to practice the peace-pedagogical wisdom hidden behind the so-called “Golden Rule” throughout one’s life, and to shape life together on this basis!

THE MILITARY CHAPLAINCY AS A DISCUSSION AND COOPERATION PARTNER IN PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT TRAINING FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Author: Dirk Ackermann

The German armed forces need discussion partners out- side of the military system

The guiding minds of the *Bundeswehr* wanted to integrate the new German armed forces into democratic society with the concept of *Innere Führung* (officially translated as “leadership development and civic education”) and the model of the citizen in uniform. For this reason, from the beginning, they sought discussion partners in the various social institutions and groups that were outside of the military system. This was true not only but particularly with regard to the values orientation within the newly formed *Bundeswehr*.

The concept of *Innere Führung* was also determined by the fundamental insight that the free, secular state thrives on conditions that it cannot itself guarantee. Other institutions have to intervene here if the state wishes to avoid falling back into making that claim to unlimited authority from which it had been led away after denominational civil wars and a totalitarian dictatorship. Values orientation therefore cannot be decreed by the state. Rather, the state must ensure in its institutions that there is scope and freedom for values orientation. To shape this scope, the state requires other institutions that stand outside the system of state. This was and is particularly true for the *Bundeswehr*, if it does not want to succumb to the danger of becoming a “state within a state” again.

The Protestant Church as dis- cussion and cooperation partner

Even before the *Bundeswehr* was established, the Protestant Church was involved as a discussion and cooperation partner in developing *Innere Führung* and the values orientation in the German armed forces. The main driving force behind the concept of *Innere Führung* was the future Lieutenant General Wolf Graf von Baudissin, whose outlook was strongly influenced by West German Lutheranism.¹ The guiding ideas behind the key concepts of “the conscientious individual”, “responsible obedience” and “the

Abstract

Dirk Ackermann begins his article with a resume of the development of Innere Führung as a concept that embeds the Bundeswehr in democratic society. “In critical solidarity”, the Protestant Church influenced the rebuilding of the armed forces and their guiding values, while the military chaplaincy – as an independent institution – was responsible for teaching Lebenskundlicher Unterricht (LKU). From the outset, LKU was designed to be a more comprehensive “imparting [of] social orientational knowledge”. According to the author, in the wake of discussions at the start of the 21st century about a further development of ethical education and how LKU should fit into this context, the focus shifted back onto “a comprehensive ethical reflection on the professional and life situation” of military personnel, the significance of a hierarchy-free space, and the importance of the independent military chaplaincy.

The special features of LKU make it an indispensable complement to Innere Führung, an essential contribution to personality development and the development of conscience, and therefore an educational format that goes beyond aspects of professional ethics. Now, in the context of devising an independent Joint Service Regulation for ethical education, these features are being re-examined in the German Ministry of Defense. Ackerman points out that although the described special nature and relevance of LKU are still recognized, they should also be given due attention. LKU should not compete with other ethical education formats; instead, these should draw on an already proven concept and the valuable practical experience of the military chaplaincy as a cooperation partner in the area of Innere Führung.

ability to resolve conflicts and make peace in a spirit of humanity” can only be understood in terms of Lutheran thinking. Graf von Baudissin received the most important suggestions for the concept in particular in the discussions with the future first Military Bishop, Dr. Hermann Kunst, and through the discussions in the Evangelical Academies.

It was for a good reason that the Protestant Church got so strongly involved in these matters. Following the history of failure during the National Socialist period, the Church wanted to participate actively in building a democratic community. It wanted to assume “public responsibility”. After the fierce debates over the re-establishment of armed forces, the Protestant Church was greatly concerned not to be inactive in the development of *Innere Führung* as a contribution to the rebuilding of armed forces in a democracy.

The Protestant military chaplaincy as a discussion partner in critical solidarity

It is not surprising, therefore, that after the military chaplaincy was established in 1956/57, military chaplains became and still remain partners to the *Bundeswehr* for dialogue and cooperation in questions of *Innere Führung*. The Protestant military chaplaincy has been seeing itself as an institution within the armed forces that is in critical solidarity with the *Bundeswehr*, while being independent of the military hierarchy and organized on a civilian basis. It seeks to make a conceptually important contribution as a complement to the *Bundeswehr*’s own specific elements of *Innere Führung*. This was especially true of its contribution to values orientation through *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (“character guidance training”, LKU). The experiences and discussions of the early years were set down in a Joint Service Regulation (*Zentrale Dienstvorschrift*) ZDv 66/2 (*Merkschrift*) of 1959.

The term “values orientation” really does not go far enough, as it could incorrectly suggest that military personnel should be guided solely by the values and norms of the Basic Law. *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*, in contrast, im-

plies a more comprehensive concept, which in more recent literature is referred to as “imparting social orientational knowledge” (K. Tanner).² *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* “[...] deals with moral issues which are central to how we conduct our lives, to our relationship with the world around us, and to an ordered coexistence in any community [...]. It should show to the individual the sources that give meaning to life, and lead to systems of order through which the community becomes worth living in and hence worth defending” – ZDv 66/2 from 1959.³

Further development of ethical education and *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*

The military chaplaincy had taken on this responsibility in the teaching of social orientational knowledge since the early days of the *Bundeswehr*. In the 21st century, however, the armed forces faced new challenges, along with changes in society (e.g. a changed denominational composition, different cultural backgrounds of military personnel, and encounters with other cultures in theaters of operations). Therefore, at the beginning of the 21st century, the whole concept of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* and ethical education in the armed forces underwent a rethink.

The ideas that had been discussed since September 2004 in both branches of the military chaplaincy and in the German Federal Ministry of Defense (*Bundesministerium der Verteidigung*, BMVg) produced the following results at that time:

First: Ethical education is a task that cuts across the armed forces.

Second: Human dignity, freedom, peace, justice and democracy are the common foundations of our free democratic basic order, and form the ethical basis for *Innere Führung*.⁴

Third: Within the framework of *Innere Führung*, military personnel must be given space to reflect on and internalize these principles in self-education and self-development processes. They take responsibility for their own lives and actions, and can take responsibility for others.⁵

Fourth: Ethical education is therefore described as an act of personality development, in which skills for living responsibly are developed, a confirmation of our community's intellectual and moral foundations is facilitated, and the conscience is sharpened. This takes up the comprehensive understanding of education that was already found in the old notion of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*: ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* is understood in a comprehensive sense. It is neither about spelling out the basic principles of peace ethics or security policy, nor about working through different battle scenarios from an ethical perspective. What is aimed for, instead, is a comprehensive ethical reflection on the professional and personal situation of people who have made

dispensable complement to it.⁶ Therefore, in the relevant sections in ZDv *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*, reference is made firstly to the newly adopted ZDv *Innere Führung*, in order to explain in what way LKU is an important complement.

Second: Likewise, LKU is not to be equated with religious education, let alone a form of religious practice within the meaning of section 36 of the Act Concerning the Legal Status of Soldiers (*Soldatengesetz*). Rather, it is a form of instruction in professional ethics, as it is also given in other organizations (e.g. the German Federal Police, or nursing training) and in other nations' armed forces (e.g. Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Norway) by chaplains who are particularly well qualified as teachers in this role. It is therefore applicable to all military personnel from now on.

Third: This new version returned to the original idea of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*. The idea of cross-denominational ethical education emerged from discussions between Bishop Hermann Kunst and Generalmajor Graf von Baudissin.

Fourth: LKU has the following goals: a) It serves to foster a sense of meaning and purpose in life (*meaning*). b) It should enable soldiers to recognize, reflect on and assess the ethical dimension of their actions (*professional ethics*). c) In view of cultural and religious plurality in the *Bundeswehr* and in the realities of deployment, it should help to confirm the common values of a free democratic society. In this way, military personnel are able to engage critically with other world-views and cultures, enter into dialog and develop intercultural understanding (*confirmation of one's own cultural identity*). d) LKU strengthens conscience, and trains moral judgment and responsible action on the part of military personnel (*sharpening of conscience*). e) In a special way, skills for responsible *conduct of life* are developed (e.g. work-family balance).

Fifth: Military chaplains are particularly suited to the described tasks of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*. a) Orientational knowledge can only be acquired in a place of free and trusting expression. The state attaches great importance to this free space in the midst of the military realm. The special position of the

Ethical education in the Bundeswehr is neither about spelling out the basic principles of peace ethics or security policy, nor about working through different battle scenarios from an ethical perspective

it their (life's) task to maintain or restore security and peace. This is guided by a fundamental idea: ethical education in the *Bundeswehr* can only succeed when focusing on the whole person – with their cultural and religious backgrounds, their various areas of life and fields of action, and considering the associated ethical challenges.

Fifth: If this form of personality development is described as a comprehensive task for *Innere Führung*, then the military chaplaincy remains its discussion and cooperation partner. This cooperative relationship takes concrete form in *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*.

One consequence of this further development of ethical education in the armed forces was to place *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* in this new context. The new version of the Joint Service Regulation on *Innere Führung* was now followed by the new version of ZDv 66/2 on *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (now A-2620/3). The following key points should be noted:

First: *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* is not part of *Innere Führung*, but it is an essential and in-

military chaplain underlines this point. The independence of our military chaplains in the classroom is preserved. b) The military chaplaincy is happy to assume this responsibility as a cooperation partner of the armed forces. It sees *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* as part of its overall mission. In a spirit of “positional pluralism”, military chaplains convey knowledge about the sources of our culture (religion, ethics, tradition). By this means, they encourage and demand of every soldier a confirmation in their own identity, and they teach soldiers to engage in dialog, critically examine other positions, and acquire intercultural competencies. c) This is why the military chaplaincy provides *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* for all military personnel. In particular, LKU should support military personnel during phases when they are in situations that increasingly raise the fundamental questions in life (basic training, pre-deployment training, course training).

With this further development of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht*, the military chaplaincy has the opportunity to make a contribution to the democratic culture in the armed forces, and to the respect for and protection of human dignity.

Lebenskundlicher Unterricht in the new setting of the joint service regulation on ethical education in the armed forces

For a number of years, efforts have been underway at the German Federal Ministry of Defense (BMVg) to develop an independent joint service regulation for ethical education to stand alongside the described joint service regulations. Representatives of the churches and other social institutions were involved in developing the new joint service regulation as discussion and cooperation partners.

During the discussions, both branches of the military chaplaincy highlighted the special features of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* as an educational format among the ethical education measures:

First: As an educational format, LKU is specifically aimed at personality development. LKU deals with current topics in the *Bundeswehr* within the framework of the curriculum (diver-

sity, tradition, work-life balance, operational stress, etc.) This range of topics is complemented by ethical perspectives. LKU therefore contributes to the professional competence of military personnel. Beyond professional matters, it considers the person as a whole with their inner processes and social interactions,

In keeping with Innere Führung, a view of the whole person and an extension of the range of topics beyond explicitly military aspects are both necessary and helpful for the education of military personnel, and particularly also for the development of conscience

and thus contributes to the development of personal skills.

Second: LKU enables open discourse and provides the free space that is necessary for ethical education. The classes are not relevant to appraisals; the teachers enjoy a special trust with regard to confidentiality; they are outside of the military hierarchy.

Third: LKU fosters personality development through special learning settings: through special learning venues (seminar format, external conference centers, etc.), through the teachers' special qualifications in the fields of ethics and self-reflection as well as qualified support for individuals and groups, and finally through a continuous institutional commitment by the churches to professionalization in both method and content. Especially on the last point, both branches of the military chaplaincy have undertaken a large bundle of professionalization measures in recent years, even setting up a dedicated center for ethical education in the armed forces (zebis).

Fourth: LKU takes place in a context of institutional cooperation to promote education: it is structurally integrated into the *Bundeswehr's* educational work. It represents a continuous civilian element in education. As a systemic view from the outside, it promotes reflexivity. The teachers represent civil society in a spirit of critical solidarity.

Fifth: LKU also includes ethical education as an independent topic within the curriculum and in keeping with the basic idea of ethical

education as a cross-sectional task for the key areas of *Innere Führung*.⁷

Thus LKU is also ethical education in the armed forces. But it goes beyond that. In keeping with *Innere Führung*, a view of the whole person and an extension of the range of topics beyond explicitly military aspects are both nec-

Without cooperation and coordination, ethical education programs might be run in parallel and so will be more likely to confuse military personnel than provide guidance

essary and helpful for the education of military personnel, and particularly also for the development of conscience. This is delivered by LKU for these purposes.

These thoughts on sharpening the profile of LKU compared to other educational measures in the field of ethical education have been incorporated into the new joint service regulation on ethical education in the armed forces. LKU as a necessary, essential and indispensable complement to the fields of influence of *Innere Führung* will be maintained as a separate element and remain regulated in a separate joint service regulation.

Future challenges

The goals of *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* provided by military chaplains can only be achieved if the teaching takes place in collaboration with superiors and the military personnel being taught. For this reason, in spite of being organized by the military chaplaincy, LKU must not be misunderstood. *Lebenskundlicher*

Unterricht is explicitly not religious instruction (see above). Instead, it is an essential and indispensable complement to what happens within the framework of *Innere Führung* in terms of imparting social orientational knowledge. For the future implementation of the concept, it will therefore be important to coordinate the initiatives for ethical education in the armed forces with the LKU program. Without cooperation and coordination, ethical education programs might be run in parallel and so will be more likely to confuse military personnel than provide guidance.

With regard to the further development of the ethical education format in the armed forces, methodological and didactic standards should be set that effectively promote personality development. In particular, this includes the implementation of the paradigm shift toward competence development, as stipulated by the current personnel strategy of the *Bundeswehr* and the European and German Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, KMK). The military chaplaincy's decades of practice in *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* and the knowledge and experience gained from it should make a beneficial contribution here.

In this context, one should warn against having disciplinary superiors as instructors. Otherwise, instead of offering ethical education as a self-reflexive process with open discourse (free space), the superior's opinion will be taught in the manner of the correct conduct to conform with regulations. This would be a departure from the origins of *Innere Führung*, which in these matters has deliberately and consciously chosen discussion and cooperation partners outside the system (see above).

Military chaplaincy remains available as a partner. It wants to make its contribution to the necessary cooperation and coordination as well as to the further conceptual development. It therefore remains committed to the origins in respect of its mission and contribution to ethical education in the armed forces. Military chaplaincy remains a discussion and cooperation partner to the armed forces in the further development of *Innere Führung*.

The Author



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1 Cf. Dörfler-Dierken, Angelika (2005): *Ethische Fundamente der Inneren Führung*. Strausberg.

2 (Translated from German).

3 (Translated from German).

4 Cf. ZDv A-2600/1, no. 304.

5 Cf. ZDv A-2600/1, no. 508.

6 Cf. ZDv A-2600/1, no. 503.

7 Joint Service Regulation (*Zentrale Dienstvorschrift*) ZDv A-2620/3, no. 103: "Ethical education is a cross-sectional task that is found in all areas of influence of Innere Führung and in many areas of everyday military life. This is where the ethical and moral challenges of military conduct are discussed. The aim is to improve the ability of military personnel to make moral judgments, and increase their confidence in their actions. In addition, the capacity for reflection, intercultural and conceptual skills, decision-making ability and integrated thinking are to be promoted. This also includes the ability to discuss problems and ethical conflicts with other people, and solve them together."

SPECIAL: “LEBENS- KUNDLICHER UNTERRICHT” – CHARACTER GUIDANCE TRAINING IN PRACTICE

An edition about ethical education in the German armed forces would be incomplete without incorporating the views of those responsible for teaching “Lebenskundlicher Unterricht (LKU)”. We asked three representatives of the Protestant and Catholic military chaplaincies key questions about their understanding of ethical education and their experiences in and with LKU. They were free to choose how to respond to the questions and present their views on their role, their methods and the challenges of the educational format.



Martin Jürgens, a member of the Protestant military chaplaincy since 2010, Hannover site

What does ethical education for military personnel in “Lebenskundlicher Unterricht” mean to you?

Following Eilert Herms, I see it as a fundamental task of the church to be the “mediator of religious communication” – of communication between systems of meaning. This is exactly what happens in *Lebenskundlicher Unterricht* (LKU), without the pressure to be a successful denominational preacher. Nevertheless, the church does have the opportunity to put its own points of view across. So I see LKU as a liberating and very important area of activity for church welfare and social work.

What attitude do soldiers have to LKU, in your experience, and how open are they to the themes of LKU? Have you noticed any changes in this respect?

Attitudes and openness completely depend on the person attending class. Since this is the second time that I have worked in the military chaplaincy, I can see that this has not changed. Soldiers generally bring along a mixture of cautious interest and a certain skepticism. To respond to both, you have to be authentic, professionally competent, and use suitable methods. I often receive positive feedback both from those with a higher intellectual level and from those who are supposedly uneducated, and find they already have an interest that can be developed.

How do you work and what methods do you use? How do you tackle the curriculum? Do you respond to requests?

Since I work at a school where I usually see learning groups once only and for a fairly short period of time, I have adopted the “infotainment” or “edutainment” format, a bit like Eckart von Hirschhausen (a physician and talk show host) has done in the field of medicine. For teaching materials, I use images and short video sequences such as those provided via the zebis online teaching portal. I never show long movies or use conventional PowerPoint slides, as the soldiers have more than enough of those as it is. For the lesson topics, I listen to their spontaneous suggestions (since the participants only have a short time to prepare before class, it is rare to receive explicit topic requests) or use topics in current ethical and political debates. Once I have found a theme, I check to see if it fits into the curriculum. I have discarded ideas before because they do not fit.

Discussing and reflecting on ethical issues can emotionally affect those involved. What experience left the greatest impression on you – or was most difficult for you – in your (teaching) role as a military chaplain, and why?

In a class about the difference between being a good person and being a do-gooder, I started by asking who thought they were a good person. A young soldier said that she did, and that triggered a storm of indignation. The room split into two groups, who started threatening each other with legal action, and the female soldier was one of the most vocal ringleaders. Together with my trainee, who had a Masters in psychology, I interrupted the lesson at that point, and after a brief consultation the two of us continued it as a crisis management session. At any rate we managed to calm everybody down, finish the course together, and avoid any legal action being taken. But also impressive, in a pleasant way, was a class discussion with a female Muslim Hauptfeldwebel who was co-director of

ZASaG (*Zentrale Ansprechstelle für Soldatinnen und Soldaten anderer Glaubensrichtungen*), the central point of contact for soldiers of other faiths in the Bundeswehr. This meeting led to two wonderful interreligious retreats.

“The soldiers’ attitudes and openness completely depend on the person attending class”

What are your wishes for the future?

For the military chaplaincy, I simply hope that this good work can continue in the proven way, and be extended to other faiths. Soldiers greatly appreciate our work. But both church and political discussions about the military chaplaincy – the criticism of which I consider to be totally unfounded – are a burden on this service, which is most importantly a social welfare service. For the soldiers, my wish is always for political leadership that is aware of the value of the *Bundeswehr*, but also of its limits in terms of its capacity and the tasks it can be expected to perform.

Photo: Bundeswehr



Monsignore Bernward Mezger, Military Dean, member of the military chaplaincy since 2011, Catholic military chaplain's office Hamburg II, Federal Armed Forces Command and Staff College (Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr)

Lebenskundlicher Unterricht (LKU) in the German armed forces is more than ethical education. It helps military personnel to deal with life in general, which includes many other topics in addition to, for example, questions about partnership and family, concepts of humanity and identity, and coping with operational stress and other difficult situations. But ethical education – which means thinking about one's own judgment and actions from a moral perspective, examining moral principles and norms, and practicing their application in different situations – is what LKU is all about at core. The Bundeswehr's guiding principle of the “citizen in uniform” means that soldiers are expected to cultivate a certain character. They should practice conscientious obedience, be responsible and decisive, have good leadership skills, and above all set an example both in and outside the military. To do this, they need to develop a set of virtues, be proficient in dealing with complex, morally demanding situations, and be able to deal critically and vigilantly with questionable ways

The most important medium of “Lebenskundlicher Unterricht” is the teacher

of thinking and behaviors within and outside the *Bundeswehr*. LKU probably provides the best learning environment for this purpose – a protected and above all judgment-free space for free thought and speech, for critical engagement and mentally trying out solutions. It is where they can learn about and experiment with the ethical toolbox.

In courses at the Federal Armed Forces Command and Staff College (*Führungsakademie der Bundeswehr*), course participants as well as teachers show a greater interest in ethical questions concerning the fundamentals of the soldier-

ly self-image, the legitimacy of military action and ethical aspects of leadership. Outside of the course, as is the case in the *Bundeswehr* as a whole, attitudes towards the classroom topics are more nuanced. For some, LKU is a welcome change from a sometimes monotonous daily routine, while others see it as more of a disturbance that keeps them from supposedly more important activities. There is also the seemingly ineradicable practice, not covered by the regulations, of identifying soldiers who have time for “a few hours with the military chaplain” by means of a “voluntary sign-up”. This is contrary to what is supposed to happen, which is that all soldiers should be given the opportunity to take part in lessons to which they are entitled. Defensive reflexes against church representatives are encountered occasionally; in this respect, too, the *Bundeswehr* reflects social reality. Such attitudes may stem from prejudice or from personal bad experiences; teaching theologians should take them seriously and accept them as a positive corrective to their role. It is not their role to preach the church's message here but rather to facilitate an authentic encounter for the development of each soldier's own identity and to improve their moral judgment. One asset that the military chaplaincy cannot overemphasize, as a creator of LKU, is its operational experience: a useful ethics for soldiers is an ethics suitable for deployment.

In general, however useful and necessary the professional use of media in the classroom may be, the most important medium of LKU is the teacher. Despite the concept still being somewhat blurry, competence-oriented learning is becoming increasingly important in the *Bundeswehr*. Here the teacher sees his or her task as being primarily a learning facilitator. This seems to be especially important in ethical education, where it is not only possible to score points on the basis of superior knowledge and experience, but also essential to provide guidance on

how to exercise conscientious judgment and take responsibility for actions. Although the career courses specify many subjects to be taught, the participants' requests for topics always have priority and increase their willingness to participate actively. The existing curriculum provides a sufficiently broad framework, and the zebis online teaching portal with its now extensive range of teaching materials and media offers good support for familiarization with new topics, as well as various suggestions for the methodological implementation.

A prudent choice of topics, targeted methodology and a credible approach lead in the best case to a culture of discussion in which soldiers also talk about personal experiences. This often provokes strong feelings when difficult operational experiences are brought up, such as witnessing torture as a disciplinary measure during a training mission, or child abuse by senior officers of a partner nation (where normally the orders are "don't intervene, it's the local custom"). The long-term effects of severe moral dilemmas can be felt here too. Reports about courageous and intelligent solutions to conflicts of duties are also moving, and it can be astonishing what ethical education is able to achieve. No less impressive, however, is the sensitive culture of discussion fostered by excellent tutors in many classrooms or learning groups that allows precisely these affective approaches.

It would be desirable for the *Bundeswehr* to have more time for such talks. The Soldiers' Working Time Ordinance and the tight constraints of duty set limits to this; the benefits would presumably consist in higher motivation and, above all, even better decision-making process quality. The new joint service regulation in its final drafting stage proposes that in the future, ethical education in the armed forces will no longer be taught only in LKU and otherwise by way of example and guidance. If this is to

be the case, and it is instead to be taught explicitly by disciplinary superiors, then it is to be hoped that the instructors will be more extensively qualified for it in all areas. Military chaplains do not acquire the ability to teach LKU by the laying on

A prudent choice of topics, targeted methodology and a credible approach lead in the best case to a culture of discussion in which soldiers also talk about personal experiences

of hands. They have to carefully work out topics and methods. Similarly, superiors will also need extensive education and training in this area before they can deliver good lessons. The necessary resources, in terms of personnel and time, would certainly be well invested.



Jens Prüve, Protestant military chaplain since 2016 at the Federal Armed Forces Logistics School in Osterholz-Scharmbeck

Lebenskundlicher Unterricht (LKU). A heated discussion about “fake news”. Suddenly a soldier speaks up: “I don’t know if I’m sticking my neck out by saying this ...” Then he hesitates for a moment, before continuing. And his theories are fabulous, provoke contradiction. The discussion continues, as lively as it began.

For me, that was a great moment in LKU. Because a space opened up in the classroom where even a questionable opinion could be expressed. An opinion that provoked contradiction. This is exactly my idea of teaching: aside from all the necessary knowledge transfer, to create a space for lively debates where conflicting positions can be expressed – and questioned. That is why I think it is a very good decision to place LKU in the hands of military chaplains. Our training makes us qualified to teach ethical education. We are part of the Bundeswehr and we know the procedures and

I teach at the Federal Armed Forces Logistics School (*Logistikschole der Bundeswehr*, LogSBw), so my LKU course participants are mostly attending the school for a few weeks or months of training. For this reason, I largely avoid using PowerPoint presentations, because the soldiers experience more than enough of this medium in their other classes.

I find that short films or film sequences work best. Zebis offers an inexhaustible treasure trove of this material. The eyes are the guiding sense of our time, moving images are what the course participants are used to. Short films are also often a good introduction to a topic. However, especially in longer classes, it is important to switch between different media and methods. I like to use media as an introduction or starting point, as a way of initiating a lively, sometimes controversial discussion. And if the class discussions sometimes continue into the break, then I know that the topic has hit a nerve with the soldiers.

Of course not everything always goes smoothly. I find the short lessons of two periods to be more difficult. Here you hardly have time to get started on a topic. After the introduction and warm-up, we already have to begin our descent. This is particularly unfortunate because the lessons at the logistics schools are often one-time contacts and it is not possible to refer back to previous units or resume them.

With the longer lessons, things are different. If we have a whole day for LKU, then we can go on a trip. For example to the Bunker Valentin (site of a WW II submarine boat factory) or other German historical sites. This makes some topics much more directly accessible.

A special highlight for me is the one-and-a-half day LKU seminars for junior officers. These seminars provide an opportunity to work on a topic in the depth it deserves and not just scratch the surface. There is also much more time for talks and discussions. And the joint lecture hall evenings are great, too. They offer a good opportuni-

Spaces for discussions can emerge that are not always possible in day-to-day military life

issues, but we are not part of the military hierarchy. As a result, spaces for discussions can emerge that are not always possible in day-to-day military life.

I think that the specified curriculum is extremely helpful. It covers a wide range of topics. Every teacher and every teaching group can find something suitable in it. I usually bring two or three topics along with me and let the class choose. Sometimes the participants request a topic in advance, and I am happy to include that if possible.

ty to get into conversation with each other outside of the classroom.

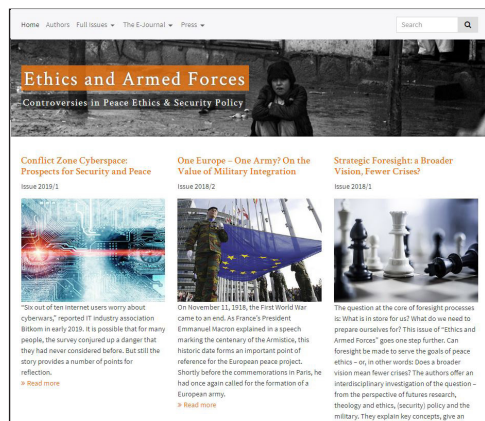
In lessons and seminars, I find that soldiers will talk very openly and really engage with the lesson if they are interested in a topic and if they feel that the teacher is also enthusiastic about it. Lessons can be difficult if they had a social evening the night before, or if there is an exam soon after the LKU class. That happens sometimes, too. And occasionally I notice that some soldiers are very set in their beliefs and find it difficult to think differently. This is particularly obvious when it comes to “fake news” and the realization that some people are shut away inside their filter bubble. So LKU and ethical education in the armed forces are all the more important for the future.

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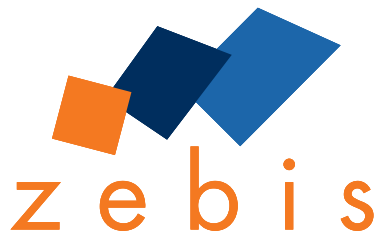
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