

[The Art of Being Human: Forgiveness, Decency, Trust & Gratitude - An Inclusive Interdisciplinary Conference](#)

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Call for Papers

Date:

October 19, 2019

Location:

Czech Republic

Subject Fields:

Peace History / Studies, Sociology, Human Rights, Humanities

**Saturday 7th March 2020 - -Sunday 8th March 2020
Prague, Czech Republic**

What is it to be human? How can we best live our lives in today's complex world? What values show humanity at its finest, and how can these be cultivated?

As part of our series of events 'Interdisciplinary Perspectives On Social Values', we will explore these questions under the conference theme 'The Art of Being Human'. We begin this series by considering four positive aspects of the human condition: forgiveness, decency, trust, and gratitude. While this is an arbitrary list, chosen from a much longer inventory of humanity's better attributes, it is a useful starting point for discussion. All four features are beneficial to the people with whom we interact, and they are good for us also. When we forgive someone, it is not only the transgressor who gains: a burden is removed from our own shoulders too. Similarly, acting decently, trusting others, and showing gratitude all have deeply personal benefits as well as improving the lives of those around us. At the same time, these actions are fraught with challenges and limitations that warrant closer consideration and analysis.

Forgiveness

'To err is human, to forgive divine', according to Alexander Pope. Everyone makes mistakes, but to show forgiveness for these is a finer action. Many religions warn against bearing grudges and feuding, advising us to forgive each other instead - as God forgives us for our transgressions. The alternative is to ruminate about what has offended us - or even to plot revenge. On a personal level, this is bad for our wellbeing, and on the international political stage it can escalate into war. An apology could be enough to encourage personal forgiveness, while political forgiveness might need a 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission'. But what are the limits of forgiveness? Who is entitled to forgive? What reparations are needed? And how essential is it to forgive ourselves?

Decency

Decency is still important in our times, both in public life and in the private sphere. Yet as we push into the 21st Century, 'decency' is coming under increasing pressure across numerous fronts and on many diverse levels. There is a coarsening of both personal and political discourse in certain places.

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<https://networks.h-net.org/node/73374/announcements/4511722/art-being-human-forgiveness-decency-trust-gratitude-inclusive>

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In one sense, decent housing, decent food, decent healthcare, decent education and a decent job are all necessary for people to flourish. Yet the concept is sometimes abused when deployed by powerful groups - political, social or religious - to denounce others for indecency. Is decency a universal aspiration or is it determined locally, culturally, socially? And how does decency relate to power and the powerful, to gender, to the homeless, to the weak and to the strangers in our midst? Ought decency to be encouraged, or is it an outdated concept? If it is to be encouraged, what role do education, popular culture, laws, and professional codes have in promoting decency?

Trust

We live in a time when manipulated images, partisan reporting, and allegations of 'fake news' make it increasingly difficult to know who is worthy of our trust. Trust is a leap of faith that depends on a combination of experience, intuition, bravery and sheer hope. Interpersonal trust circumvents the uncertainties that put relationships at risk and transforms these into the most wondrous of alliances, as doubt turns to rapture. Less romantically, we trust professionals to conduct themselves in accordance with the rules and standards of their fields. We trust experts to tell us about events in the world and what we should or should not do. However, people and institutions we trusted have sometimes let us down. It has never been more important to evaluate how trust informs our personal and professional lives, as well as the way we operate in our communities. This raises a number of questions, including: Is there inherent value in trusting and being trusted? Is trust necessary for survival in a society? What are the foundations of trust? What makes a person or institution (un)worthy of trust? How do factors such as culture, historical context and identity shape the way we understand the concept of trust? What are the limits of trust? What are effective strategies for coping with lost trust and rebuilding a trusting relationship?

Gratitude

Saying "Thank you" is an everyday human action. But its mundane nature disguises an important phenomenon. Gratitude, it seems, is a key to feeling more satisfied with life. Studies have shown how gratitude can improve relationships, help in coping with adversity, and even fortify the immune system. Appreciating what we have is also an antidote to envy and competitiveness. But there are those whose sense of entitlement to social status and material wealth - denied to others less fortunate - leads to ingratitude and arrogance. This raises questions, including: To whom do we owe gratitude? And how might this be expressed? How should we receive gratitude? To what extent are social networks of obligation founded on gratitude?

We are thrilled to open up *The Art of Being Human* to exploration, assessment and examination, with a view to establishing real world impact in the conclusions reached. We welcome presentations and participation from artists, ngo workers, performers, scholars, thinkers, researchers and practitioners from a wide range of disciplines and areas of study, who have a contribution to make in understanding the art of being human. Subject to the discussions taking place at the conference, there is an intention to form an innovative interdisciplinary publication with the purpose of engendering further interdisciplinary collaboration and discussion.

The sister project *The Art Of Being Inhuman* will meet later in 2020.

Key Topics

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Some of the themes that we would like to see connected with forgiveness, decency, trust, and gratitude include (but are not limited to):

- ~ personal relationships (including online interactions)
- ~ professional and therapeutic relationships (including codes, governance and practices)
- ~ self-help approaches
- ~ civil society, institutions, movements, rights, and the rule of law
- ~ international relations
- ~ indigenous cultures
- ~ consumerism and business
- ~ wealth, power and class
- ~ philosophy, religion, and faith-based traditions
- ~ marginalised/vulnerable people
- ~ crime and punishment
- ~ role modelling; the 'one good adult'
- ~ entertainment and leisure activities
- ~ research, education, news media and other sources of 'fact'
- ~ scientific perspectives
- ~ technologies
- ~ literature, poetry, drama, music, art, film, television, gaming

What to Send

The aim of this inclusive interdisciplinary conference and collaborative networking event is to bring people together and encourage creative conversations in the context of a variety of formats: papers, seminars, workshops, storytelling, performances, poster presentations, panels, q&a's, round-tables etc. Please feel free to put forward proposals that you think will get the message across, in whatever form.

300 word proposals, presentations, abstracts and other forms of contribution and participation should be submitted by Friday 4th October 2019. Other forms of participation should be discussed in advance with the Organising Chairs.

All submissions will be at least double reviewed, under anonymous (blind) conditions, by a global panel drawn from members of the Project Team and the Advisory Board. In practice our procedures usually entail that by the time a proposal is accepted, it will have been triple and quadruple reviewed.

You will be notified of the panel's decision by Friday 18th October 2019.

If your submission is accepted for the conference, a full draft of your contribution should be submitted by Friday 17th January 2020.

Abstracts and proposals may be in Word, RTF or Notepad formats with the following information and in this order:

- a) author(s), b) affiliation as you would like it to appear in the programme, c) email address, d) title of proposal, e) type of proposal e.g. paper presentation, workshop, panel, film, performance, etc, f) body

of proposal, g) up to 10 keywords.

E-mails should be entitled: Being Human Submission

Where to Send

Abstracts should be submitted simultaneously to the Organising Chair and the Project Administrator:

Seán Moran: sean@progressiveconnexions.net

Len Capuli (Project Administrator): praguehuman@progressiveconnexions.net

What's so Special About A Progressive Connexions Conference?

A fresh, friendly, dynamic format - at Progressive Connexions we are dedicated to breaking away from the stuffy, old-fashion conference formats, where endless presentations are read aloud off PowerPoints. We work to bring you an interactive format, where exchange of experience and information is alternated with captivating workshops, engaging debates and round tables, time set aside for getting to know each other and for discussing common future projects and initiatives, all in a warm, relaxed, egalitarian atmosphere.

A chance to network with international professionals - the beauty of our interdisciplinary events is that they bring together professionals from all over the world and from various fields of activity, all joined together by a shared passion. Not only will the exchange of experience, knowledge and stories be extremely valuable in itself, but we seek to create lasting, ever-growing communities around our projects, which will become a valuable resource for those belonging to them.

A chance to be part of constructing change - There is only one thing we love as much as promoting knowledge: promoting real, lasting social change by encouraging our participants to take collective action, under whichever form is most suited to their needs and expertise (policy proposals, measuring instruments, research projects, educational materials, etc.) We will support all such actions in the aftermath of the event as well, providing a platform for further discussions, advice from the experts on our Project Advisory Team and various other tools and intellectual resources, as needed.

An opportunity to discuss things that matter to you - Our events are not only about discussing how things work in the respective field, but also about how people work in that field - what are the struggles, problems and solutions professionals have found in their line of work, what are the areas where better communication among specialists is needed and how the interdisciplinary approach can help bridge those gaps and help provide answers to questions from specific areas of activity.

An unforgettable experience - When participating in a Progressive Connexions event, there is a good chance you will make some long-time friends. Our group sizes are intimate, our venues are comfortable and relaxing and our event locations are suited to the history and culture of the event.

Ethos

Progressive Connexions believes it is a mark of personal courtesy and professional respect to your colleagues that all delegates should attend for the full duration of the meeting. If you are unable to make this commitment, please do not submit an abstract or proposal for presentation.

Please note: Progressive Connexions is a not-for-profit network and we are not in a position to be able to assist with conference travel or subsistence, nor can we offer discounts off published rates and fees.

Please send all questions and enquiries to: praguehuman@progressiveconnexions.net

For further details and information please visit the conference web site: <http://www.progressiveconnexions.net/series/interdisciplinary-perspectives/social-values/the-art-of-being-human/conferences/>

Sponsored by: Progressive Connexions

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