

ANSE[®]

periodical for professional exchange and networking

European Journal
for Supervision and Coaching

With words and beyond - values and identity in an incomprehensible world

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Volume 7 - 2023 - Issue 2



If you agree to the value, you can identify with it!

■ Barbara De Dominicis Ebetsberger & Gerry Aerts

Abstract

In this article we will explain the creation of this workshop, how we performed it and what our conclusion is. The goal of the workshop was to broaden ethical insights and creating new perspectives by adding values to this new time period. For this we used diverse methods, with and beyond words. You consequently will find a description of the tetralemma method and the dilemma method for moral reasoning. We explain how you can work with a

combination of these two methods and describe the impact. We introduce how a work of art helps to rethink one's own values. To slide deeper into the dialogue about values we used a game. We reflect on our findings of the combination of these methods used. We found out that a combination of the constellation method and the dilemma method really works well. Working in small groups helped deepen the dialogue about values and renewed ethical insights. Playing the values game created freedom to come up with new ideas which boosted the value level.

Creation of the workshop

We both experience in our work as supervisors that professionals sometimes struggle with new norms and values in this rapidly changing world. A lot of uncertainties are influencing our professional lives and sometimes it is hard to decide what is "good" or "normal". For this we use diverse methods, with and beyond words.

The goal of the workshop was to broaden ethical insights and creating new perspectives by adding values to this new time period. Since Barbara is working with constellations and Gerry is moderator of ethical dilemmas using the dilemma method, our idea was to experiment with mixing both methods in this workshop. That meant we wanted to give it time and applied for a long time workshop.

We started to think of a concept and the tetralemma-method popped up as an appropriate constellation work method. We sort of integrated this method into the dilemma method. We also wanted to include the ANSE Code of Ethics (2012) which we thought probably for most ANSE members a bit far out of their sight. We wanted to dig deeper into the values because of the theme of the SU "With Words and Beyond – Values and Identity in an Incomprehensible World". The constellation work of course is "beyond words" but the dilemma method has to use words. So, we decided to do this digging deeper in a more reflective way using a game to start the dialogue about values, related to the ANSE code.

Are you aware of your ethical dilemmas?

Participants were invited to bring a moral dilemma to the workshop they recently have experienced in their supervision practice. We started with the dilemma method for ethical reasoning. To get more background information and next steps towards handling the dilemma we worked with the constellation format of the tetralemma. We continued with the dilemma method to recognize next step towards answers. After the break art as an expression of (new) values was introduced. We used reflection, playing the value game in small groups, dialogue and reflection on the ANSE code of ethics, the professional part.

The workshop

We were happy to welcome 13 participants in our workshop in the morning and 12 in the afternoon. We wanted to

- Broaden ethical insights and attitude
- Create and practice new perspectives
- Experience constellation work with a moral dilemma
- Experience ethical reasoning using (parts of) the dilemma method
- Create awareness about the necessity of having a multi-perspective view on a moral dilemma
- Create new values

After welcoming and introducing the theme of the workshop we also brought up the issue of confidentiality. Maybe for experienced supervisors and coaches unnecessary, still in ethics secrecy is an essential starting point. We thought it was important to create a safe learning experience and therefore to address this issue. And it turned out very well, because participants could freely speak about their personal issues. (Dilemma method step 1) After a few examples presented by Gerry every participant was invited to close their eyes and go back to an experience in their own practice. They had to think of this dilemma like in a movie: the scene in facts, behaviour and feelings. What

moment in this movie did they feel the dilemma at the most? What was their boiling point like when they really felt the dilemma? (step 2) Then they had to decide: Shall I do A or B? (step 3) This moment of decision is important because either choice has different consequences. But you have to choose because the situation requires to take action. A dilemma implicates you must make a choice, because you cannot do both. Also whatever you choose you feel will do harm. By addressing harm it becomes more clear what is at stake. For the workshop we chose to formulate consequences in a more neutral way. Instead of using words we would use constellation work in step 4. This way the representatives would not be influenced.

Stolper, Widdershoven & Molewijk (2018) introduce the Dilemma method in ten steps.

1. Introduction
2. Presentation of the case (facts, actions and feelings, formulating the dilemma "boiling point")
3. Formulating the dilemma:
 - I. Should I do A or B?
 - II. What are the consequences of A and B?
4. Displacement through clarification questions
5. Values and norms of all involved (perspective, value, norm)
6. Alternatives, free brainstorm
7. Individually argued considerations
 - I. It is morally justified that I choose (A,B, or alternative)
 - II. because of this value
 - III. that will cost that value,
 - IV. I can limit the harm of the consequences by (action),
 - V. what more do I need to act
8. Dialogue about differences and similarities
9. Formulate necessary actions (not applicable in this workshop)
10. Evaluation

After introducing this method to the participants everyone shared their moral questions in the group: Should I do A or B?

A question was raised about this boiling point, could it also be the trigger point? When you are triggered and feel this inner judgement about right or wrong. You feel your emotions heat up and this could be in many moments in a situation. The difference was explained as follows: A trigger point comes up in a situation when your moral intuition is triggered: you feel a bit awkward, not knowing what to do because it doesn't feel right. You feel your emotions come up. This always asks for clarification in moral deliberation (Van Es, 2021): Which emotions are triggered by the case, and which are part of the emotional background of the participant?

The boiling point is the point where the situation asks for action. You have to decide to actually do something, to act. These boiling points immediately indicates what is morally at stake. It tells us what our most important values are.

The Tetra-lemma constellation work we did in the plenary, because the group choose to do so.

Tetralemma

The tetralemma in systemic structure constellation is an adaptation of a logical scheme for Indian logic developed by Insa Sparrer and Matthias Varga von Kibéd (2016). It is used in the area of systemic coaching, counselling, therapy and systemic structure constellation. The scope for decision making is to get clear-sighted in decision-making. The tetralemma offers an expanded view of possibilities.

We are accustomed to dealing with the "dilemma" and it often dominates our way of thinking to a very high degree.

Tetralemma helps in clarifying internal and external conflicts, solving dilemmas and finding creative solutions. It makes overlooked and blind aspects visible.

The starting point is two decision-making options that initially seem to be mutually exclusive.

The first step out of this dilemma is to take

1. The One: Either or level: Separation, exclusion
2. The Other: Either or level: Separation, exclusion
3. Both: It shows what could not be seen on the either or level
4. Neither of them: It can show in which context the dilemma came up.

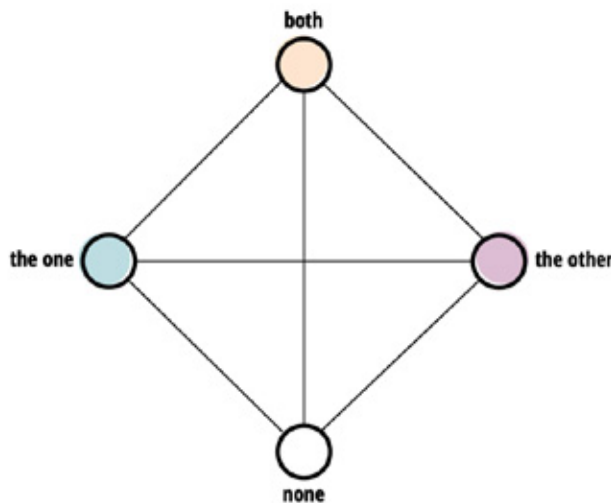


Figure 1. Four positions in the tetralemma method <https://triangility.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Tetralemma-v2.pdf>

5. Non of all this: The entire tetralemma is negated, the solution is sought on a higher level. This position can move free.

Figure 1 shows the constellation of the four positions.

A fifth position should also lead beyond the fourth position and correspond to a self-negating form, a „reflexive pattern interruption“. So it becomes possible to leave the four previous positions and the original dilemmatic question no longer requires an answer, but dissolves.

Practical Constellation

The participants were asked to look for a dilemma which is currently on their mind and which they want to clarify. They brought it to the plenum and we selected an example from a participant which had a strong emotional resonance to the dilemma. That was already noticeable in the presentation of her dilemma, as she switched to her mother tongue.

We started the constellation with three representatives: The One, The Other and the Focus.

The case bringer was asked to exactly describe the two possibilities and then to name them. So that it became clear that the position The One represented one action and The Other represented the other action. The Focus is the representative for the case bringer.

After having chosen the representatives the case bringer put the representatives into the picture. She was instructed to follow the rules of the tetralemma: The position of One and the Other is always a fixed position. They had to be placed facing each other.

As a next step the representative of the Focus was guided into the picture. Then we worked through the constellation process by repeatedly querying the individual positions.

Did you ever had an open dialogue about values and norms with your colleagues?

The Focus made its way, trying out in different places the position until she found the suitable position.

The Focus was guided to find the best place. The Focus experienced different places, feeling the resonance and connection to the position of The One and The Other. The Focus described her perceptions, feelings and sensations on the respective positions (step 5). Also The One and The Other were asked to bring in their perceptions depending on the change of the place of the focus. After the Focus had found the best place for itself, the case bringer was invited to go to this place and take it in. She took time to experience this position and made some more small movements. She found her best place almost exactly in the middle between The One and The Other. She described her sensations and perceptions, how she felt and received information from The One and The Other. At this point the case bringer was satisfied. She had positively sensed „both“. On demand and different offers to test further positions (step 6) she confirmed, that for the moment she had made enough experiences and gained sufficient insights. Reflecting on these insights she will be able to make a decision when she is ready (step7).

Afterwards we had an interesting discussion in the plenum about some theoretical questions (step 8) before we ended the session (step 10).

After the break we started with a reflection upon the art of value. Participants were asked to look at the picture of this



Figure 2. Marble structure of an enslaved man. Picture by Dineke van Gulik, 2023.



Figure 3. Close up with the golden Rolex. Picture by Dineke van Gulik (2023)

marble statue (Figure 2) and think of the values it represented according to them. After that the meaning of “The art of value” was clarified.

“We see a marble structure of an enslaved man who, like the mythological Atlas, carries on his shoulders a heavy burden, in the form of sacks of Surinamese rice. He is a replica of one of the four supporting pillars of a huge grave monument erected in 1669 to Giovanni Pesaro, the Doge of Venice at Santa Maria Gloriosa dei Frari. The black marble figure is a slave both of capitalism and the church’s architecture, typifying the perverse alliance between mythology and colonialism.

This Atlas doesn’t hold up the earth, or the tomb of a dead Doge, but a huge pile of real sacks containing the most basic food of the common people – rice. He carries on his shoulders the economy of colonial relations, in which forms of slavery persist to this day. He also bears the burden of a vulgar contemporary replica, with an original gold Rolex on his wrist (Figure 2). The man thus features in an uncomfortable narrative, which highlights sensitive issues rather than shrouding them, as commonly happens. Different “values” thus collide uneasily.

The values of food for the common people and the decadence of marble, rice and gold, fake and genuine, original and replica, extreme poverty and extreme wealth, slavery and freedom, political correctness and colonial history. The Art of Value is an “historical addition”: insinuations which in hindsight intervene in history, infecting it, forcing us to take a moral standpoint that allows us to reconcile the many ethical issues underlying this tale.

Hans van Houwelingen (1957) makes art that says something about society. His interventions which often include existing images and materials, pointedly draw attention to

certain issues. His work is largely conceptual, and always combines art with ideology and politics.”¹

After this explanation the ANSE Code of Ethics (2012) Vienna was presented. This is shown in figure 4. We decided to focus on the part of the professional for this workshop because we have to always act according to moral requirements arising from the nature of supervision.

1. Supervisors are to be fully aware of the basic values of their profession, as set forth in the statutes and code of ethics of the national organisation they are a member of, and in the ANSE Code of Ethics.
2. Supervisors are bound by the code of ethics of the national organisation they are a member of.
3. Supervisors will always serve the interests and protect the integrity of their clients and constituents to the best of their ability.
4. Supervisors are to exercise their profession autonomously, impartially, and confidentially.
5. Supervisors will develop and maintain their competencies to the best of their ability.
6. Supervisors will hold themselves accountable to clients, constituents and colleagues for the means and methods they apply and for the quality of praxis and professionalism thereof.

Figure 4. Basic Ethics on the individual level of everyday practice. ANSE (2012)

¹Description about “Art of Value” (2023) Museum de Fundatie in Kasteel Het Nijenhuis near Heino, Netherlands

Participants were asked to form small groups and play the values game². We choose to use this game to engage participants in the topic. Playing together motivates and helps to stay focused. It stimulates critical thinking and creativity. They had to consider the values on the cards of the game and choose six values that were important to them, related to the ANSE code of ethics.

Then a dialogue followed about the values. Were there any values related? Or were there values that could clash? They had to reach consensus as a group, about values they considered to be important and write them down on a flip chart. After that they were asked to write down their personal ethical code in maybe one statement or keyword. And again, relate it to the ANSE code of ethics. Values noted in these colours on the flipchart by the tree different small groups of participants

**Solidarity Quality Competence Tolerance Compassion
Commitment Reliability**

**Love Respect Acknowledgement & Appreciation
Authenticity**

Openness Confidence Sustainability

Conclusion

In the field of supervision and coaching ethical dilemmas arise from the nature of the work. It helps to clarify different perspectives with colleagues to understand the dilemma better. Also, to develop one's own ethical reasoning and clarifying the case. Most important is the dialogue and open mind to investigate other values without judgement. We found out that a combination of the constellation method and the dilemma method really worked well.

The constellation work is an additional tool to solve a dilemma. It can be a complementary or continuing work that brings new perspectives to the supervisees or coachees. The format of the tetralemma supports them to get more

clear-sighted in decision-making and to let emerge new steps that they have never thought of before.

As one of the participants said: I really felt the solution.

The value game and the work in small groups helped to slide into a dialogue about values that helped to renew ethical insights. Playing this game created freedom to come up with new ideas which boosted the value level. Thanks to all participants to step into our experiment. ■

Resources

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Dr. Barbara De Dominicis Ebetsberger (left) Dr. Barbara De Dominicis Ebetsberger has worked for years as supervisor, coach, psychologist and psychotherapist in Italy and abroad. After completing educations and trainings in systemic-structure-constellation, autopoietic-constellation and other different constellation formats she expanded her field of activity. Today she supports coaches, leaders, teams and organizations as an experienced systemic-structure facilitator, coach and supervisor, to bring up their full potential. In her work she combines theoretical knowledge and inner wisdom to empower aspects of self-awareness in the persons and creating new ways for enterprises to follow self-organizing principles. <https://www.ebetsberger.it/>

Gerry Aerts MSc. (right) Gerry is an experienced (meta) supervisor and lecturer. She has been working in a Supervision Training program in the Netherlands for almost 20 years. Nowadays she works as an educational and training system designer, (meta)supervisor and leadership coach on intercultural competences. She is co-developer and trainer of the ANSE module “Dealing with Diversity & Multiculturality as a Supervisor “. She is a member of the ANSE Quality Expert Group and national editor of the ANSE journal in the Netherlands. <https://www.geosupervisie.nl>

²The Values game. Available www.kwaliteitenspel.nl/en