

Supervision as Moral Activity: Moral Theories as Mediating Artifacts in the Practice of Supervision

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What is the relationship between supervision and morality? Or to be more precise: What role and function may morality have in supervision? This paper argues that framing this relationship as an issue of professional ethics is insufficient. Morality in supervision is not only a case of the supervisor's professional ethics. An alternative conception, it is further argued, is supervision as a moral practice or activity. Such an understanding gives moral theory a more prominent place in supervision. The formulation of relevant moral theory, however, cannot be outsourced to academics. It has to be a joint communicative enterprise between theory that is developed in practice and in an academic setting.

AN ETHICS FOR PROFESSIONALS

Ethics in supervision is often framed as professional ethics. Professional ethics of supervision is often argued as ethics of rules, virtues, or care. The rule tradition manifests itself, for instance, in codes of professional ethics.

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Moral autonomy is traditionally understood as one of the characteristics of the constitution of a profession.¹ It is therefore important for a profession to establish an explicit code of conduct that regulates the relationship to clients and constitutes a societal contract. It is also vital for the profession to establish internal procedures for enforcing these rules.

A typical example of this 'rule tradition' is found in the *American Association of Pastoral Counselors Code of Ethics*.² Some of the rules are quite specific:

(PRINCIPLE VII—ADVERTISING):

- G. Upon the transfer of a pastoral counseling practice or the sale of real, personal, tangible or intangible property or assets used in such practice, the privacy and well being of the client shall be of primary concern.
 - a. Client names and records shall be excluded from the transfer or sale.
 - b. Any fees paid shall be for services rendered, consultation, equipment, real estate, and the name and logo of the counseling agency.
 - c. We provide recent and current clients information regarding the closing or transferring of our practice and assure the confidentiality of their records.

Other rules start out quite general, with a continued operationalization and specification, such as:

(PRINCIPLE III—CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS):

- A. We do not abandon or neglect clients. We make reasonable efforts to ensure continuity of services in the event that services are interrupted by factors such as unavailability, relocation, illness, or disability. If we are unwilling for appropriate reasons, to provide professional help or continue a professional relationship, every reasonable effort is made to arrange for continuation of treatment with another professional. Prior to leaving an agency or practice we complete all files and paper work is documented and signed.

Most professional ethics codes are like this illustration from AAPC: they are in the form of moral rules which aim at maintaining boundaries for professional behavior. Some may also have a language of virtues that include descriptions of the good supervisor. And in some cases, certain values are given as aims for professional behavior. The problem with the language of virtue and values in professional ethics codes is that they are imprecise standards for behavior. Virtue focuses the attention to the person, not the action only. And values may be reflected in a number of actions as long as they maximize the value or aim. The societal function of codes of professional ethics is to make transparent standards for professional behavior to

clients and the society in general. This leads to standards written in the form of rules.

The alternative forms of professional ethics, virtue, and care, are primarily found in academic texts.³ These texts try to establish alternative moral perspectives for the professional and for the relationship between, here, supervisor and supervisee. I will return later to moral theories and supervision. Here the point is simply to claim that these traditional approaches to supervision ethics frame the role of the moral in supervision in terms of professional ethics. This means that the object of the moral is the professional or the supervisor. Rules address certain behavior on the supervisor's part. The purpose of rules is to establish boundaries for the supervisor's actions. Virtue ethics work more broadly on the development of the character of the supervisor. Care theory expands the field of the moral to the dyadic relation between the supervisor and the supervisee. These expansions are valuable and fruitful, but insufficient. Supervision is more than the actions of the supervisor, her character and the immediate relationship between supervisor and supervisee. The consequence of limiting the morality of supervision to professional ethics is that larger fields of supervision as social and historical practice are left out of moral perception.

The problem in this standard approach to supervision and ethics is that one begins at the wrong end of things by starting in moral theory and working towards an application in the practice of supervision. This application may be done explicitly or implicitly. Some texts discuss practice at great length, but rarely are the moral resources located in practice. Practice is more understood as a field of complex moral challenges in which ethical choices have to be made.

I suggest working from a different angle. The practice turn of contemporary theory⁴ made apparent the resources of social and historical practices. This leads to an investigation of the moral resources in supervision itself as practice and activity. Still, I would argue that an inductive, 'bottom-up' perspective is problematic. What is needed, as I shall argue in this essay, is a dialectical or dynamic interaction between supervision as practice and moral theory. I will do this in two steps. First I will present a theory of practice and activity and analyze supervision as a moral activity. Secondly, I will try to establish a dialogue between the moral resources of supervision and moral theory.

A DIALECTICAL METHODOLOGY

Methodologically, the paper is different from two other approaches. In the first approach, theories of duty, rules, virtue, or care are established and then applied to the practice of supervision. The direction is from theory to practice. The design of this relationship between theory and practice (and data) is top-down or deductive. The second methodological approach may be called bottom-up or inductive. The aim is to analyze the morality in supervision, using ethnographic or phenomenological methods. The third methodology, which is used in this paper, may be called dialectic and hermeneutical. The assumption is that any understanding of practice is theory-laden, and that any theoretical account works on assumptions of reality and social practices. Neither academic theory nor social practices are given primacy.⁵

A few words on terminology are, however, necessary. I use the concepts 'morality' and 'ethics' synonymously. The reason for this lies in the understanding the relationship of 'theory' and 'practice.' Theory is used to identify more or less systematic narratives on phenomena and experiences. This means that theory may develop in different social practices, such as research, academics, faith communities, everyday life, and so on. It follows that one can distinguish between moral practice and moral theory. Moral theory can take place in different practices—philosophy and theology on one hand and supervision and education on the other. Implicit in this conception is the idea that the development of theory is distributed in and between different social practices, and not a property of research and academics alone.⁶ This said, research and academics are vital producers of theory and epistemic knowledge.⁷ However, theory is not solely generated in research and then distributed to and consumed by fields of practice.⁸

PRACTICE AND ACTIVITY: SUPERVISION IS LIKE A PLAY

What does it mean that supervision is a practice or an activity? Initially it is fruitful to distinguish between practice as simply 'doing' and practice as "arrays of human activity."⁹ This corresponds to the distinction between 'action' and 'activity.' An action is an isolated, intentional event by an agent. A question a supervisor poses to a supervisee is an action. An activity is historical, collective, and has an objective.¹⁰

The historical aspect means that supervision is established as a practice before a person starts to supervise. A supervisor enters supervision as a

historically and socially defined practice. As a supervisor one does not construct supervision from scratch. One enters a practice that has developed in time and space, and is still emerging and becoming. So understood, supervision as an activity is a play with a script and the supervisor is an actor.

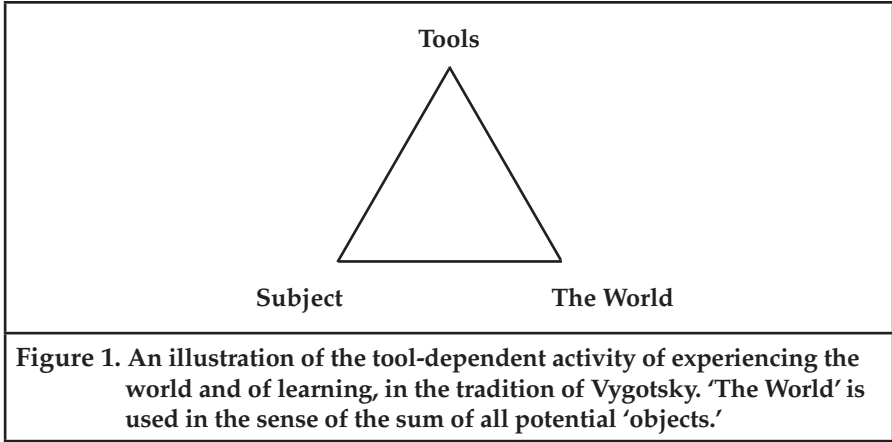
Like a play, an activity is a collective enterprise. One normally acts with other actors, and certainly with a script, an audience, a director, a scene, material objects on the scene, and so on. This means that in order to understand the play, one cannot analyze only the actor. Everything the actor does is relational: it is a response to someone or something else.¹¹ Supervision as an activity can therefore not be understood or reduced to the actions of the supervisor. It is a collective activity, a play. The most interesting things happen in the relations, in the space between, in inter-action.

An activity is constituted by objects.¹² The object of an activity is more than the sum of individual goals and aims. The object lies in the history of the activity and it is always emerging. The object is the existing production of the activity, but also the potential of production.

This distinction between supervision as action and practice-acts on one hand and as activity and social and historical practice on the other is of significant analytical value. It is decisive for how, and at what level, we analyze supervision—and it is vital for where we locate morality. The question is: should morality primarily be analyzed on the level of action, on the level of individual actors, the level of dyadic relations, or on the level of activity or practice?

SUPERVISION AND CHAT

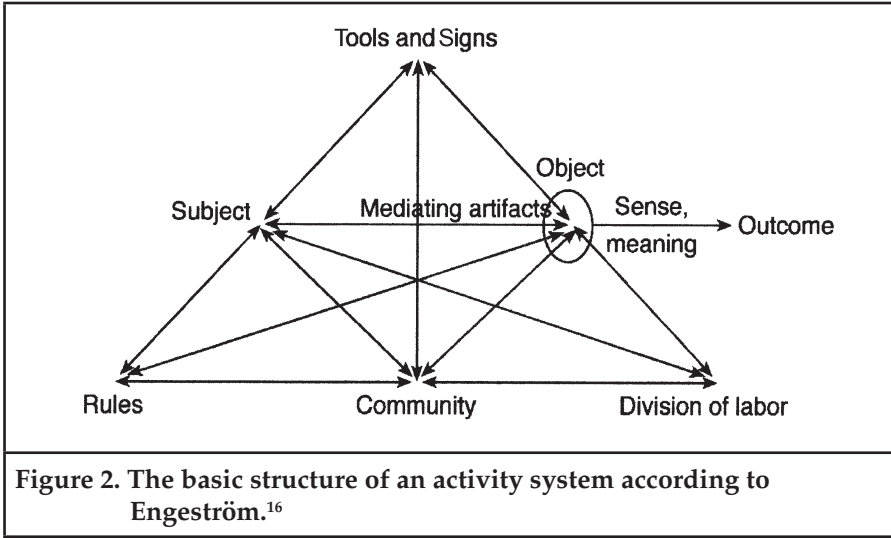
Experience takes place with the help of cultural and material tools. These tools are not neutral carriers. They constitute, condition, translate, and transform the experience. I will elaborate on activity and practice, using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), particularly in the version of Yrjö Engeström¹³ in the tradition of Lev Vygotsky.¹⁴ Vygotsky's insight was that human beings experience the world indirectly. This understanding of mediation is different from another use of the concept. Mediate may also mean the process of handing over something from a-to-b, without changing the mediated content. In CHAT mediation is understood in a strong sense, there is a triangular relationship between the experiencing subject, tools and the world (figure 1).



The two main categories of tools are cultural signs and symbols (including language) and material tools. Another concept for tools is artifact. Artifacts have a hybrid character, webs of material, and symbolic aspects. That is, material artifacts have historical meaning. A couch in a therapist's office is such a material artifact, loaded with historical meaning. It puts the therapist and the client in certain positions and roles, it directs the play between them. Language is also an artifact. This means that language is not understood as representational, but as mediational and performative. Language opens up and closes the world: it creates different realities. This is not understood in a strong social constructivist sense. There is always a relationship between the world, language, and the actors. But the relationship is never direct or final—it is indirect and finite.¹⁵ In supervision language is a tool, a mediating artifact. It carries meaning and meaning potential into supervision. At the same time it gets meaning through use in practices, as supervision.

Artifacts are not individual, internalized properties. They are external, out there, in the space between actors and between actors and the world. A number of material artifacts may be used in supervision, a diary, a letter, a drawing, an image, a video recording. Artifacts may also be mainly symbolic. They may, however, get a more or less materialized form. Accounts of persons, activities, and situations may enter supervision, and they may in time get an external existence. A child, a critical incident—everything can become an artifact in an ongoing supervision, a tool that is used to think, feel, and act with. These symbolic artifacts can be introduced by any participant in supervision, but they are created and shaped in the interaction.

In this perspective supervision is always an indirect and relational activity. Engeström calls such activities activity systems, illustrated in figure 2.



Supervision is an activity system and the subjects of the activity are normally the supervisors and the supervisees. These persons and the other persons in the supervising practice constitute a *community of supervision*. A division of labor is continuously negotiated between the different participants, in particular between supervisor and supervisee. This depends on the role of the supervisor, but the role is always relational to and a response to the supervisee’s positioning—and vice versa. Explicit and tacit rules regulate the relationship between subjects and the supervising community. Rules ‘follow’ the practice as a historical activity, but are also negotiated in action. This means that rules and division of labor also can be understood as mediating phenomena in supervision. Mediational artifacts are therefore not limited to tools and signs (see figure 2).

HOW THE ACTIVITY OF SUPERVISION DEVELOPS

Last, but not least, supervision has an outcome. Supervision has an actual and potential object and purpose. In most cases supervision aims for better practice in another activity, for instance pastoral work, personal relations, or doing research. This other practice may also be understood as an activity system. The pastor’s activity system is the congregation or the hospital and the PhD student’s activity system is the research community she is partici-

pating in and contributing to. These activities have their own rules, division of labor, objects, subjects, language, and other artifacts. The purpose with supervision is to enable the supervisee to understand and act better in this second activity.

Such a perspective has a number of consequences. First, the supervisee is not simply an isolated individual professional but is a participant in a relational, historical, and collective activity. Second, the supervisee participates in this second activity using mediating artifacts. This means that supervision should not only be directed to some internal, cognitive, or emotional change within the supervisee. Change occurs in the relation between subject and cultural tool. This means, third, that supervision is a quest for better artifacts—tools and signs, objects, and language. This is a matter of expansion. In bringing the second activity into supervision, the search is for expansion of existing practices and artifacts. An activity is always emerging. It is developing and can be developed through expansion of artifacts and objects. This is what supervision often is about, an attempt to dialogically re-describe practice in such a way that it opens up possibilities for actions, understanding and emotions.

Such an understanding of supervision has consequences for the normative¹⁷ role of the supervisor. On one hand, the supervisor cannot prescribe better practice for the supervisee. This is because one cannot prescribe participation in an activity system. There is a script and a scene, but there are numerous ways to perform and create. Furthermore, normativity is not only on the supervisee's side. Normative resources are in between and are created dialogically between supervisor and supervisee. Understood this way, normativity is created as a possibility—as an emerging space. It cannot be created in the second activity; therefore it has the form of language, a story, a theoretical distinction—or a drawing, a video recording, a written contract, tears, or a very special stone. Normativity, in this sense, enables and restricts. Normativity is not only a question of ideas, it has a material side. It comes in a real form: there are moral bodies and tools, words, stories, and images. It is a complex relationship between the material and the symbolic which creates possibility of normative meaning. And this potential normative meaning is created and negotiated in activity. Normativity is relational, in between, external, objective, and negotiated in action.

Supervision on this account has a triological structure. The object of supervision is not the internal emotions or cognition of the supervisee. It is neither a pure, dyadic relationship between supervisor and supervisee. It is

an indirect relation and, better, a mediating activity, constituted by symbolic and material artifacts.¹⁸ The supervisor is free to contribute to normative resources and normative artifacts that have the potential of developing and improving the activity of the supervisee in a qualitative sense. By externalizing normative resources and artifacts, the normativity of the supervisor is not an act of imposing on the supervisee. Normative artifacts are 'placed in the middle,' in between the supervisor and the supervisee and this is done in a dialogical manner. The normative artifacts must be understood as fruitful by the supervisee, as tools constituting good practice. This does not exclude critical and provocative artifacts. The point is that the supervisee must be able to see the constructive critical potential in these. Potentiality is created in dialogue, or to be more exact, triologue between supervisor, supervisee, and artifact.

This means that the disharmonic, multi-voiced, and tensional character of supervision as activity and practice cannot be understood as an issue between two subjects. Artifacts are the third subject. It might be that artifacts create tensions. They may challenge and create a situation of disjunction, even chaos—between tool and supervisee, between tool and supervisor and in their collective use of the tool. Such a state has a related aspect of power. How are the power relations **influential** in introducing, working with, and molding artifacts? How do the artifacts resist molding **or** how do they strike back? How do artifacts position the participants in supervision? Artifacts can be used to reconfigure power relations.¹⁹ Power is then not understood as a personal possession or a dyadic relation. Power is an aspect of supervision as a triological and dynamic relation. Tension and disjunction are not negative states as such, they are moments of potential change and learning.

PRACTICAL, OBJECTIVE, AND MEDIATIONAL

Based on the previous analysis, I claim that morality in supervision is a) practical, b) objective, and c) mediational. That morality in supervision is *practical* means that it is not primarily grand theory, but located in everyday life, in the finite practice of supervision. The practical aspect of morality is not an application of theory but rather it is enacted life in historical and culturally constituted activities. Practice is not the same as an action: it is complex and relational activity. Entering supervision means entering a field with many, complex, and changing conditions.

Supervision as a practice consists of natural and material objects, of bodies, chairs, images, watches, paper, and texts. It is *objective*.²⁰ Even the

oral dialogue between the participants has an objective aspect. And all these objects are in motion, the handshake, the smile, the look at the watch, the drawing of the patient, and words spoken. Morality is in all this objectivity and symbolic interaction. At the same time, the material carries meaning and worth. Objects open up and restrict meaning and value. At the same time, what is material may be transformed by powerful symbolic meaning. For example, consideration of a situation from work gives worth, value, and meaning to the supervisee. At the same time, symbolic reshaping of the material, can open up new possibilities of value and meaning.

To put it bluntly, morality comes in things and objects—in this broad sense, which includes bodies and the frequency of speech. And since the objects are in motion, morality is in the movement, intersection, and direction of objects. This is contrary to a more conventional or idealist sense of morality as consisting of rules, values, and virtues. Rules are, however, spoken or written, values are words and narratives, and virtues have biographies. In this sense, there is a materiality to morality. When morality is understood as human ideas and moral actions are the application of these ideas, the objective aspect of morality is domesticated to ideas, idealized and then instrumentalized.

The key question here is this: how is morality objectively constituted in supervision? What kind of moral objectivity exists and is put into play? This is an empirical question, but also a theoretical and normative one: What kind of possibilities and potential does this moral objectivity have?

This leads to a second sense of object, the direction and purpose of supervisory practice. Supervision produces an object and this, obviously, concerns the question of good which is a moral question. What does supervision work towards? Is the end result of supervision of value to other practices? The direction is not always clear or in a straight line and certainly not instrumental. Still, supervision is walking along a path and changing paths. The question of good concerns the walking as well as the direction, because walking and direction is interlinked—and as the participants walk, they interact with the environment in ways that imply changing. These are moral interactions and changes.

Morality in supervision is *mediational*. Mediation is here used in a strong sense. This means that the moral objects of supervision can be understood as artifacts, as tools that participants can use in different practices and activities. These moral artifacts are sorts of extensions of our bodies. We use them as cultural-material tools in order to act, think, and feel; that is, to

participate in activities. At the same time the moral artifacts constitute the supervisor and supervisee as moral actors. The moral artifacts are appropriated. This is not the same as internalization and domestication of moral objects. Moral artifacts are different from human actors, but with increased skills they become as if they were a part of the body.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF RULES TO MORAL ACTIVITY IN SUPERVISION

If my analysis of supervision as moral activity is accurate, and if morality in supervision is practical, objective, and mediational, then how and where does more traditional moral theory enter this account? What might be the contribution of moral theory to supervision as moral activity? The emphasis remains on the contribution to the practical, objective and mediational character of morality in supervision.

The classic moral theory of Immanuel Kant emphasizes the morality of rules, law and duty. The aim of this moral tradition is to create principles and maxims that have objective, in the sense of universal, validity.²¹ This gives an external status of moral rules and laws, an object in the space between human actors. The mediational potential of rules consists in their challenging the participants in supervision to expand their vision from the immediate to external relations and responsibility. Supervision is a practice of several tensions—between proximity and distance, between attachment and detachment, between support and criticism, and so on. These tensions belong to the historical and cultural activity of supervision. They cannot be resolved without dissolving supervision, but they demand to be negotiated. Moral rules are valuable tools in these negotiations. Moral rules function as mediational artifacts that can be used to act, feel, and reflect with.

In the example at the beginning of this essay, the rules of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors are textual objects and artifacts. These rules enter the space in between the participants of supervision. Because rules are agents with a life of their own, with their own agendas and meaning, they are not only instruments that agents use but they may strike back. They have power, value and meaning to challenge. They are objects that have meaning and they also get meaning in the practice of supervision. They open up and restrict and they challenge.

Still, the rules cannot be applied; they can only be used. This gives a clue to the limitation of the morality of rules and law. Rules and principles are not universal but they do have an objectivity in time and space.

This means that some rules are used more frequently than others. Some are actually not used at all, perhaps because they have no mediational potential. Old rules disappear, new emerge. Some rules get a political function, for instance in the process of professionalization. Other rules are more or less tacit. Rules are in process, in making. They change as a result of both the politics and practice of supervision. Rules find their practical validity in use. Understanding the morality of law and principles as mediating artifacts means that rules are put into motion and negotiated. Still, rules are of limited benefit in supervision as a moral activity.

TRUST AND CARE: THE MORAL DEMAND OF THE OTHER

Making morality into rules is an irresponsible reduction of the moral character of human life, it may be claimed. Morality is no additive to everyday life because it comes with being. Morality is here, it only needs to be perceived. This is the contribution of Knud Løgstrup to a care tradition of moral theory. Human relationships require trust. Human beings do not act on systematic and fundamental distrust. In all human encounters, something of 'the other' is placed into my hands. This 'something' demands responsibility; and trust is the basic characteristic of the relationship. Trust and responsibility is an ethical demand although it can be violated.

In other words, the demand implicit in every encounter between persons is not vocal but is and remains silent. The individual to whom this demand is directed must him or herself in each concrete relationship decide what the content of the demand is. This is not to say that a person can arbitrarily and capriciously determine the content of the demand. In that event there would be no demand. But the fact is that there is a demand. And since the demand is implied by the very fact that a person belongs to the world in which the other person has his or her life, and therefore holds something of that person's life in his or her hands, it is therefore a demand to take care of that person's life. But nothing is thereby said about how this caring is to be done.

The other person him or herself cannot say anything about this, even though he or she is the one directly concerned, since, as we said before, it might very well involve something diametrically opposed to his or her own expectations and wishes. It is of the essence of the demand that with such insight, imagination, and understanding as he or she possesses a person must figure out for him or herself what the demand requires.²²

This text seems to have great potential for supervision as moral practice. In supervision, parts of the life of the supervisee are put in the hands of the su-

pervisor. This is not an act done by the supervisee; it simply is an aspect of human encounters. At the same time, it is a moral fact and a moral demand, because the supervisor has a radical responsibility for this part of the supervisee's life in his hands. The moral demand is there as a part of existence: it simply has to be seen or perceived—it may be overlooked and responsibility may not be taken.

This demand is silent. It is not expressed by the supervisee or some external rules. Furthermore, the demand is not reciprocal. I have responsibility for the things put in my hand, independent of your acts of responsibility and irresponsibility. The ethical demand is given, silent, and radically personal. The supervisor can respond to this ethical demand in many ways. There is no prescription in the demand itself for how it is to be directed. The demand is neither to do what the supervisee wishes. The demand is radically to care and be responsible.

Such a moral theory opens up the scope of the moral. Morality is not restricted to rules and action. Morality is connected to perception, responsibility, and adequate response. What this moral theory mediates is the fundamental ethical character of the supervisor-supervisee relationship. There is a radical demand for responsibility on both sides, for the supervisee as well as the supervisor—and this demand is independent of the other's actions. Placing moral demand on the supervisee side does not reduce moral responsibility for the supervisor. In both cases the moral demand is radical.

The moral quality of supervision is, however, only available through perception. This stands in contrast to a cognitive tradition in moral theory, where emphasis is put on rational justification and the understanding of moral values and rules. If the supervisor does not see, hear, and sense the supervisee, she will not be able to recognize the moral demand or respond accordingly. Moral sensitizing is therefore a condition to act ethically in supervision.

What must be seen is the 'something' that is put in the other's hands in supervision. This is a metaphor, Løgstrup says, and in his theory the 'thing' in the hands soon dissolves or is transformed into an existential moral demand. There might be reasons to let the things, or objects, stay in the hands of the supervisor and supervisee. It might even be put on the table between them. Such a modification does not change the responsibility for the object and the relationship between object and participants. The supervisor has responsibility for the objects the supervisee 'puts on the table.' Through this responsible handling, a climate of trust is developed. This is empirical, not

ontological, trust. The moral demand on both sides of the supervising table, is to introduce, work on, supplement, reduce, maximize, challenge, and criticize objects on the table. In order to do this the supervisor must see the supervisee, and imagine how the object may be of help for the supervisee.

However, there is more to morality in supervision than this. Rules and dyadic care places the moral in action and in the immediate I-you relationship. As argued above, morality in supervision also lies in supervision as historical and cultural practice and activity. The supervisor and supervisee enter an activity that carries certain ways of doing, valuing and understanding. The supervisor enters a moral space. This means that supervision is not an empty field where participants can act morally. Moral standards, standards of excellence, ways of seeing, and valuing, are all inherent in supervision as historical practice.

VIRTUES AND PRACTICES

In order to expand the moral scope of supervision, other kinds of theories is necessary. One valuable contribution is Alasdair MacIntyre's theory of virtues.²³ MacIntyre's concern is that contemporary moral theory is too thin and that moral practice in late modern societies is esthetic and 'emotive' more than informed, reflective, and argumentative. Morality has to be integrated into persons' lives. It has to be a way of living if the courage needed can be mobilized in situations where moral integrity is seriously tested. MacIntyre draws on the tradition of virtue ethics. Morality concerns identity and the quality and character of the person—not isolated actions. As moral resources, the rules in the *American Association of Pastoral Counselors Code of Ethics* are far from strong enough. They presuppose a moral character, a moral way of living, and performing a profession—and the quality of moral character will override rules. The consequence for supervision is therefore an emphasis more on virtues, character, and identity than rules.

Still, MacIntyre's scope is not at all as individualistic as it seems from the account above. In traditional virtue theory following Aristotle, the resources of the development of virtues is found in nature and the teleological character of nature, including human nature. Modern natural science stripped nature of teleology, which brought virtue theory into problems and idealist positions. Since virtues are not real, they can only be argued as ideal. The problem is that moral philosophy turned solely normative. With radical normal plurality, morality became a matter of belief and taste. MacIntyre's

project is to bridge the separation between the real and ideal, facts and values, is and ought: "Abstract changes in moral concepts are always embodied in real, particular events."²⁴ This means that moral resources are integrated in social, human practices. Social practices have internal goods and emerging standards of excellence. And since there is no fundamental distinction between practices and theories, theories of social practices are potentially moral resources.

Saying "he is a 'supervisor'" about a colleague may mean that he is a supervisor, but not a good supervisor. The concept of supervisor is not only descriptive; it contains an image of the good. The person that is referred to may formally be a supervisor, but for some reason people question his practice, whether he is supervisor in a qualified sense. It is the historical practice of supervision that has constituted this conception of practical excellence.

MacIntyre's theory may be used as mediational tool in supervision. It opens up the, often silent and tacit, moral resources in supervision as activity. It makes the participants aware that entering supervision is a question of socialization and learning a practice. It may also help the understanding of objectivity as purpose. The purpose is in the doing and participating in the activity, not external to it. As a supervisor I commit myself to the community of supervision.

Two points can be made at the conclusion of this second section of the paper. First, Kantian theory, Løgstrup and MacIntyre all contribute to understanding the moral aspects of supervision. They address somewhat different aspects, in somewhat different ways. None of these theories cover the totality and the complexity of the practice. A variety of moral theories are necessary in order to understand supervision. There is no 'grand theory' of the moral aspects of supervision. Different theories give affordances to the practice and understanding of supervision. The theories are not true or good in themselves. Their validity is related to their potentiality in use.

Secondly, traditional moral theories cannot be used in any direct sense in supervision. The usefulness of moral theories depends on how they contribute to the dialogue with the internal moral aspects of supervision. The validity of moral theory is dependent on their contribution to the understanding of the objective, practical, and meditational character of morality in supervision.

CONCLUSION

The question asked in this paper is how one may understand the moral aspects of supervision. I have argued that supervision is a moral activity. I will summarize the argument in five steps.

1. Supervision is a morally loaded practice. Opposite views would locate morality in the periphery of supervision. Moral resources would be located in traditional moral philosophy, that is, external to the practice of supervision. My argument is for an expansion of the moral in supervision. This means that supervision may be understood as for instance a psychological, educational, sociological, theological, *and* moral practice. There is no particular moral domain in supervision. Everything in supervision has a potential moral *aspect*. First, and foremost, the moral concerns supervision as a quest for the good.
2. The moral in supervision should not be limited to issues of professional ethics. Morality should neither be restricted to the actions or character of the supervisor, nor the purely, dyadic relationship between supervisor and supervisee. The historical and social activity of supervision carries with it practices and conceptions of the good.
3. Since supervision as practice carries with it conceptions of the good; moral resources are found in supervision itself. These resources are both real and ideal. Morality is not only a matter of ideas; it comes in the form of matter. The matter of supervision is everything that is put in between the participants. The challenge is to analyze the moral dimension of everything that is put in the space in-between in supervision, that is, symbolic and material tools and artifacts. The moral resources of supervision are not a property of the supervisor or supervisee. The good comes in the form of artifacts that are used and negotiated in practice.
4. Moral artifacts like language, video, drawings, and couches are used in supervision. However, the moral artifacts cannot be used for everything. They strike back. They carry historical and practical meaning. Moral objects are mediating artifacts in supervision as meditational activity. Supervision as moral activity is objective, practical, and meditational.
5. Traditional, philosophical and theological, moral theory may contribute to supervision as moral practice. Moral theory cannot be implemented to practice. It may, however, expand the objective, practical, and meditational character of supervision. This means that moral theory both is devalued and revalued. It is devalued from the position as the sole provider of moral resources. There are reasons, however, to revalue moral theory. Moral theories may work at their best when they are used as mediating artifacts in supervision. At its best, moral theory is a quest not for the bad but for the good.

NOTES

1. Andrew Abbot, "Professional Ethics," *The American Journal of Sociology* 88 (1983): 855–885; and Mark S. Frankel, "Professional Codes: Why, How, and with What Impact?" *Journal of Business Ethics* 8 (1989): 109–115.
2. American Association of Pastoral Counselors, *AAPCC Code of Ethics* (Fairfax, VA: AAPCC, 2010). Available online at <http://aapc.org/content/code-ethics-1> (Last accessed March 24, 2012).
3. There are numerous academic books and articles on professional ethics and they have quite different characters. Differences concern the emphasis on ethical theory versus practical cases—and which moral theories that are used. See for instance Kenneth S. Pope and Melba J. T. Vasquez, *Ethics in Psychotherapy and Counseling: A Practical Guide* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007).
4. Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr-Cetina, and Eike von Savigny, *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2001).
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10. Aleksei N. Leontiev, *Activity, Consciousness, and Personality* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1978).
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15. Martin Kusch, *Knowledge by Agreement: The Programme of Communitarian Epistemology* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 2002).
16. Engeström, *Developmental Work Research*, 61.

17. By 'normative' and 'normativity' I do not mean 'best practice.' Questions of best practice I would term 'issues of prescription' and 'prescribing practice.' Normativity deals with a more abstract level of understanding' and questions of 'ought' at this level. This means that finding normativity in practice does not mean identifying good practice—it means identifying resources of the good in practice.
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19. Ibid.
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21. Immanuel Kant, *The Moral Law: Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (London: Routledge, 2005).
22. Knud Eiler Løgstrup, *Den Ethiske Fordring (The Ethical Demand)* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1956), 17. Available online in English translation at <http://carlhumphries.com/Logstrup.pdf> (Last accessed March 24, 2012).
23. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, 2nd ed. (London: Ducksworth, 1985).
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