

The power of ethics

- A study of power and ethics in organizations

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Jeppé Lykke Aarup

Supervisor: Bent Meier Sørensen, Department of management, politics and philosophy

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1. Introduction

This paper will cover my internship at the consulting firm Etikos, and analyse *The Ethical Method* which is the underpinning of Etikos' consulting services. The Ethical Method itself is an introduction to and the practical use of certain ethics and principles of ethics, through which individuals are able to reflect upon dilemmas and the moral implications of their possible actions.

The focus of my paper is to investigate and understand the influence of ethics, in the form of *The Ethical Method*, on various forms of power in organizations. Throughout my internship, I have observed how the implementation and use of applied ethics have an impact on existing power structures and relations between individuals in organizations. Furthermore, as I have observed multiple forms of power I will therefore apply various theories of power as a fundament for the theoretical perspective in this paper, since a multiple power perspective allows us to better understand how *The Ethical Method* influences different kinds of power, and how it itself can be perceived as a type of power. The three main theoretical perspectives on power will be discursive power, social power and structural power.

The analysis of this paper will be twofold: First, I will argue that *The Ethical Method* operates within the perspective of discursive power, since it is the intention of *The Ethical Method* to incorporate a language of ethics into an organization, and thereby making it possible for individuals to engage in reflective dialogue when encountering ethical dilemmas in their sphere of work, thus producing a *self-reflecting subject*. Through its discursive power, it will be shown that *The Ethical Method* influences and reduces the bases of personal power amongst employees.

Second, I will demonstrate empirical observations indicate that while *The Ethical Method* succeeds in producing a *self-reflecting subject* when it operates in different departments with groups of employees, this *self-reflecting subject* is not apparent when managers interact on a managerial level. Therefore, in the second part of my analysis I will investigate which types of power that oppose and challenge *The Ethical method* on the managerial level, and suggest how these can be overcome in order to enable managers to engage in reflective dialogue about ethics.

1.1 Research questions

- How does *The Ethical Method* produce a *self-reflecting subject*, if seen in the perspective of discursive power, and how does this subject affect the power in organizations amongst employees?
- Since this the *self-reflecting subject* is not observed to be prevalent on the managerial level, which existing types of power challenge The Ethical Method on the managerial level, and how are these challenges to be overcome?

2. Methodology

In the following I will present the methodical approach of my internship report. I will focus on the theoretical reflections behind the perspectives of power utilized in my analysis, as well as elaborate on my empirical material and how it has been generated and gathered in order to ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis in this paper. Finally I will give an overview of the structure and disposition of the internship report.

2.1 Theoretical reflections

The concept of power is a major and key concept in the analysis of this paper, and in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the power which I have observed in my empirical material this paper will focus on a single theoretical perspective on power. Instead, the theoretical approach of this paper will include a variety of theories of power, as this will be more beneficial to present an understanding of power as a multifaceted concept, rather than entrenching the theoretical part of this paper and argue in favour for a single embracing concept of power.

The theoretical perspectives on power utilized in this paper are inspired by the analytical tool called the *triangle of power* which is proposed by Fogsgaard and Elmholdt (2015). Fogsgaard and Elmholdt argues that power is a multiple concept and therefore when one tries to understand power between individuals in organizations, especially between leaders and their employees, it is highly beneficial to recognise that power is a complex system of relations which can be contradictory, yet must be balanced and navigated between. The three perspectives in this *triangle of power* is 1) discursive power which shapes individuals through language and relations, 2) social power which stems from individual abilities and attributes, and 3) structural power which focusses on more conventional notions of power.

However, instead of just applying this *triangle of power* directly in the analysis it is used as starting point for the theoretical framework of this paper. Each perspective will be rendered in turn through their theoretical sources, and not solely through Fogsgaard and Elmholdt, whom will only be used complementary in the theoretical sections of this paper. This is done in order to increase the reliability of the theory utilized in the analysis, and so the theoretical framework will include readings of Foucault (Foucault, 1976, 1982, 1995; Thyssen, 2012; Villadsen, 2007, 2013) to conceptualize discursive power and readings French and Raven (1959) and of Dahl (1957) to conceptualize respectively social power and structural power.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that the theoretical framework will not include any ethical theories, yet ethics is an integral part of this paper as a whole. This is due to the nature of the services of the consulting Etikos which are based on applied ethics, and since the core service of Etikos, *The Ethical*

Method is one of the primary objects of analysis in this paper the ethical perspectives of its foundation will be covered and presented in order for the reader to have a better understanding of the object of analysis, and how the theoretical framework regarding the perspectives on power is utilized to analyse said object.

2.2 Empirical material

The empirical material of this internship report consist of two bodies of data; the first is the many observations I myself have made as an intern throughout my internship at Etikos and the second is composed of five interviews conducted in collaboration with one of Etikos' clients in the Danish public sector.

As an intern I participated in many of the consulting services which Etikos provided to their clients, and therefore I have numerous observations which are being used in this paper to present and introduce what is called *The Ethical Method*, which is as mentioned above the foundation of Etikos' consulting services. All of these observations can be termed as an ethnographic study of Etikos itself, however, this approach to the empirical field was by no means intentional. Yet, it is possible to argue for its validity and reliability since I have taken field notes during almost every process I have participated in with Etikos' consultants, and furthermore I have written a weekly log as part of my internship so that the consultants at Etikos could follow my progression and reflective development as an intern. It is on the basis of all this written material that I present Etikos, the services of the company and the interaction with their clients.

However, there are certain pitfalls in ethnographic studies that may lead to biases in the empirical material. The one bias which I deem most influential in the generation of my empirical material is the gatekeepers through whom I gained access to the empirical field of study. Gatekeepers are defined as "*... those persons in an organization who has the authority to grant or deny a person access to the organization with the purpose of carrying out research.*"¹ (Kristiansen & Krogstrup, 1994: 139). The primary gatekeepers in relation to this internship report was actually the consultants of Etikos, since it was through one of these consultants that I gained access to the managers and employees of the public organization which will be the main object of analysis in this paper. However, gatekeepers may attempt to affect the researcher as they will; "*... try to place the field researcher within the context of their own experience horizon, and this of course has consequences for the way which the researcher is received and perceived.*"² (Kristiansen & Krogstrup, 1994: 139). In order to minimize these biases I have tried to distance myself as a researcher from my role as an intern in Etikos, and hopefully this way reducing the influence and thus the possible bias introduced into the empirical material by Etikos consultants.

¹ Author's translation

² Author's translation

In addition to my own observations the empirical material also consist of an interview study at one of Etikos' clients. The interviews were conducted during my internship at Etikos in the month of October 2015. In advance of the interviews an interview guide were prepared in collaboration with a consultant from Etikos (see appendix A), and the focus of the interview study were to explore how *The Ethical Method* affected existing types of power amongst individuals who applied the method in their workplace. The interviewees were four middle managers from the same management team and their general manager. Due to the consideration to the delicate nature of the focus of the interview study, the interviews were conducted with anonymity on behalf of the interviewees, and are therefore not included as appendixes in the paper however they can be provided upon request and valid reason.

2.3 Structure and disposition of the internship report

The structure and disposition of this internship report will deviate from what can be called the orthodox structure of a paper of its kind. Rather than having separate sections that first present the theory and then the analysis, I have chosen an alternate structure for this paper. The theoretical perspectives and the majority of the empirical material of this paper will be combined and presented alongside each other in the analysis. This means that, as the different theoretical perspectives on power are covered they will be utilized subsequently in the analysis. The intention of this disposition of my paper is to give fluent and coherent analysis, where focus is on the empirical material and how we can increase our understanding of the effect of applied ethics on power in organizations, using various theoretical perspectives on the matter.

First of I will give an introduction to Etikos as a consulting firm and to both the theoretical background and practical application of *The Ethical Method*. Afterwards the analysis itself will consist of four parts; the first part of the analysis will examine *The Ethical Method* in the perspective of discursive power, and conclude how this type of power produces a *self-reflecting subject*. The second part the analysis will focus on understanding how the power amongst the employees of the interviewed managers can be seen in the perspective of social power, and following this is the third part of the analysis where the effect of the *self-reflecting subject* on said social power is analysed. In the fourth and final part of the analysis the power of the managers themselves will be examined, and it will be determined why *The Ethical Method* and discursive power is being challenged by the prevalent structural power at the managerial level and how this power might be overcome so that the *self-reflecting subject* may be formed when the managers interact.

3. Etikos and The Ethical Method

In this part of my paper, I will introduce Etikos and the consulting services of the firm in short and broad terms. I will focus both on the theoretical underpinning of these services, and I will give an example of how Etikos' services are used in practice based on cases I have encountered during my internship. As mentioned earlier, Etikos is a consulting firm with *The Ethical Method* at its core. This method is developed by Etikos' consultants themselves, and the various services which the firm provides has this method as their theoretical foundation. Regarding the services of Etikos, the ones I most commonly as an intern participated in, varied from management supervision, to employee workshops regarding introduction to applied ethics, to processes that mapped the organizational ethical culture and ethical values. However, this small handful of examples is a just fraction of the full range of services provided by Etikos, which serve to illustrate the scope and flexibility of the use of *The Ethical Method*.

3.1 The Ethical Method in short

The Ethical Method is composed of three ethical theories and four ethical principles, each of which enables an individual to look at a dilemma at his or hers workplace from various ethical perspectives. In the following section I will give a short introduction first to the ethics and then principles behind *The Ethical Method* and their intended use, and finally I will illustrate how Etikos' clients applies *The Ethical Method*.

The three ethical theories utilized in the method is respectively based on Løgstrup's ethical demand (see for example Løgstrup, 2008), Kant's deontological ethics (see for example Kant, 1999) and Mill's consequential utilitarianism (see for example Mill, 1995). Each theory is condensed by Etikos' consultants into its essential teachings, and is conveyed to Etikos' clients in ways that are pedagogical and educational in order to enable the clients to practically apply these ethics in an organizational context. As mentioned above, Etikos' consultants give their clients an introduction to applied ethics, in order to engage in an ethical reflection. This introduction is most often given through a workshop on either an employee or managerial level of organization.

The intention and assumption of the use of *The Ethical Method* is that if individuals are introduced to these ethical theories and principles and a shown how to apply them to work related scenarios and dilemmas, then they can better understand each other's different arguments and reflect together on the ethical implications on their possible actions in a given dilemma (Etikos.dk, 2015). The main premise is, that in any given situation individuals may judge differently what the right or good way to act is. However, if members of an organization have a shared understanding and language of ethics, then they can more easily talk about apparent misconceptions and their different opinions on a given matter and thus avoiding potential

conflicts and in the end helping each other making more ethically qualified and sound work related decisions.

The three ethical theories are also referred to by Etikos as *The Ethical Landscape* (Appendix B), and this visualization of the method, again refers to its intention; to be able to move around on an ethical hillside, and depending on which hilltop you are standing on you will have changing perspectives on a given act, a dilemma, an organizational culture, a customer or colleague etc.

If for example, I were to look at a given situation from the perspective of the ethical demand, then I would always have a responsibility towards other people and their lives, or as Løgstrup argues: *“The individual never has do to with another person, without holding a part of that person’s life in his hand.”*³ (Løgstrup, 2008: 25). Following this, Etikos in their ethical method would further argue that from the perspective of the ethical demand, I as an individual would always want to fulfil the needs and wishes of another individual (Appendix B, The Ethical Demand), and in doing so would qualify my action as ethically and morally sound. The same exercise of switching perspectives in the landscape can be done for deontological ethics and utilitarianism. I could see the situation from the deontological perspective, and then through my own reasoning determine what my duty is in the given situation (Appendix B, Deontological ethics), or as Kant in turn would argue with the categorical imperative: *“Act only according to that maxim which you can at the same time will that it should become an universal law.”*⁴ (Kant, 1999: 78). On the other hand, the final ethical theory in *The Ethical Method*, utilitarianism (Appendix B, Utilitarian ethics), would consider the ethical value of a given act through its total utility, or happiness, of its consequences rather than fulfilling the wants of an individual or using individual reasoning to determining one’s duty; *“... actions are right in proportion to how much they promote happiness, and wrong to the extent that they produce it opposite of happiness. With happiness is meant joy and absence of pain; with unhappiness is meant pain and deprivation of joy.”*⁵ (Mill, 1995: 17).

Yet, the three ethical theories are only one side of the coin that is *The Ethical Method*. The other side is the four basic ethical principles of autonomy, integrity, dignity and vulnerability (see also Kemp, 2003) which Etikos employs as an additional and more complex layer of understanding of the previous three ethical theories (see Appendix C). As mentioned above, the three theories makes us aware of the different ethical perspectives we can have as actors on a given action, but the four principles enables us to understand why these different perspectives can be in conflict with each other; because the ethical theories can value the four principles differently.

³ Author’s translation.

⁴ Author’s translation.

⁵ Author’s translation.

As an example we can take the ethical principle of autonomy, and briefly examine how the freedom of an individual is determined and valued by the three ethical theories. From the perspective of the ethical demand, an individual's degree of autonomy would be determined by my own want to help fulfilling an individual's own desires and wishes, so if the individual wished for freedom I would try and give it to him or her. Yet, this fairly unconditional individual degree of freedom of the ethical demand stands in contrast to both the deontological ethics and utilitarianism perception of autonomy. The former would argue that autonomy ought to be determined by reason, and the latter would argue that the freedom of each individual in relative to the total utility said freedom would result in. The same exercise can be repeated for each principle, and this again illustrates the beforehand mentioned intention with the use of *The Ethical Method*, which is better understanding of and reflection upon different arguments and implications of possible actions in ethical dilemmas.

3.2 The Ethical method in practice

The most common way which I observed *The Ethical Method* being used in practice by Etikos' clients, was by charting an ethical dilemma in a simple schematic on either a sheet of paper or a whiteboard. In these schematics Etikos' clients would fill in the columns and rows with different ethical arguments and implications of actions, all which depended on which individual made them and which ethical theory or principle were used to reflect upon the argument or action in question. During this process of mapping out a dilemma or situation which had occurred at the workplace, the employees of an organization would gain a better understanding of each other's motivation, and for why they acted like they did in the particular situation, or maybe to find out together how to act in the future if the dilemma was not yet resolved.

A short example and introduction to the practical use of *The Ethical Method* with a schematic can be illustrated through a fictional and simplified case. Imagine for example, how the employees at a fictional nursing home should to react to an unruly elderly resident, whom lives at said nursing home. This elderly resident which we base our example upon, wants to decide which television channel everybody has to watch in the nursing home's common area, however, this could lead to an uncomfortable dilemma for the employees at the nursing home with a potential conflict between them and the unruly resident wishing to dictate the television channel. To be aware of these conflicts in the dilemma, the employees decide to apply *The Ethical Method* in order to better reflect upon the different actions they could take and the arguments for each of them.

In order to fill out the schematic with *The Ethical Method* the employees first decide to use either the three ethical theories or the four principles. In this case we will proceed with the three ethical theories since they are best suited for this short introduction in the practical use of *The Ethical Method*. Furthermore, in

addition to the ethical theories we will also need to determine the different individuals or actors which are involved in the dilemma, so we are able to chart the different arguments and actions each actor can have according to the different theories (see table 1 for an illustration of schematic with the *The Ethical Method*).

Table 1: Schematic with *The Ethical Method*

Actors/Ethics	<i>The ethical demand</i>	<i>Utilitarianism</i>	<i>Deontological ethics</i>
<i>Unruly elderly resident</i>	The employees want listen to the wishes of the resident, and fulfil his or hers needs.	The single individual cannot decide on behalf of the group, if this reduces the total happiness at the nursing home.	The employees cannot let the individual resident decide, since that maxim cannot be a universal law, or at least a general rule at the nursing home.
<i>Other residents</i>	Should the employees also listen to the wishes of the other residents?	The majority of the residents and the employees decide which television channel to watch, in order to maximise happiness at the nursing home.	

After doing so the employees at the fictional nursing home, now have a better overview of the dilemma which they are facing. One of the employees might want to fulfil the need and wishes of the somewhat unruly elderly resident and act accordingly with the ethical demand. However, that does not solve the potential conflict in this dilemma as the employee might also want to fulfil the needs and wishes of the other residents in the common area, and these wishes might differ from those of the unruly elderly resident. Another employee argues from a utilitarian perspective, saying that the unruly resident cannot decide what to watch on the television, since the other residents or perhaps even the employees themselves might not want to watch the same channel. And finally a third employee might argue from the deontological perspective, that every single individual cannot decide for themselves what television channel to watch, since disagreement between just two residents would result in a constant changing of channels.

Even though the employees at our fictional nursing home might not agree on a single ethical perspective, through the use of *The Ethical Method* they have, in accordance with beforehand mentioned intention of *The Ethical Method*, heard each other's different arguments and reflected together on the ethical implications on their possible actions in a given dilemma. Now, from here they are able to make a more sound decision upon how to handle the unruly resident and might decide on a rule set for the television viewing in the common area.

4. Analysis of The Ethical Method and power in organizations

Now that we have an understanding of the practical application of *The Ethical Method*, we will move on to the first part of this paper's analysis. In the following I will introduce a type of power called discursive power through a reading of the French philosopher Michel Foucault's (1926 - 1984) concept of power, and other authors based on Foucault's authorship. I will show how the *The Ethical Method* operates within the perspective of discursive power and how the method functions as a technology of power.

Later in the analysis I will also introduce one of Etikos' clients, and argue that in said client's organization there is a type of power conceptualized as social power (French & Raven, 1959) amongst the employees. Furthermore in I will show how *The Ethical Method* as a technology of power is able to affect the social power amongst employees by introducing a new discourse and subject into the organization. In the final part of the analysis I will move on to the managers, and examine how *The Ethical Method* is challenged by a type of power termed as structural power (Dahl, 1957), that are prevalent amongst the managers themselves.

4.1 Discursive power and the self-reflecting subject

When conceptualizing discursive power through Foucault, there are several significant notions to emphasize; first off, contrary to traditional theories of power such as those of Hobbes (1588 -1679) where power can either be owned or conquered, or those of social power where power is based on personal attributes, to Foucault modern power is not something which an individual possesses due to either formal positions or personal abilities; "*Power is not an institution or structure, nor is it a special strength (puissance) which some may be equipped with; power is a name which you give a complex strategic situation in a given society.*"⁶ (Foucault, 1976 quoted in; Raffnsøe et al, 2008: 51). Instead, modern power in Foucauldian terms are conceptualized as something that produces certain subjects, because power is not understood as a negative or oppressive force, but rather as an enticing, subtle and positive power that are inherent to the way individuals act and give words to things (Thyssen, 2012: 358-359). Therefore, notion in Foucault's studies of power is that it is not the phenomenon of power itself that is analysed, but rather how human beings are being made into subjects through power (Foucault, 1982).

A focal point as to how human beings are made into subjects is through the discourses in society, which are ways that dictate how individuals can conduct themselves: "*Power thus unfolds between people and functions unnoticed as discourses and the organizing principle of practices.*"⁷ (Fogsgaard & Elmholdt, 2014: 27). Discourses are themselves a certain set of rules and selection of words through which they guide how

⁶ Author's translation.

⁷ Author's translation.

we can perceive, think and talk about things in the world, in short discourses are what allow us to give meaning to things the world around us (Thyssen, 2012: 705-709).

How then specifically can we conceptualize in which ways human beings are made into subjects by discursive power? Through certain concepts that are called technologies of power. To Foucault, these technologies do not necessarily have anything to do with machines, computers or the like, but rather these technologies are systems of certain practices (Villadsen, 2013). The technologies of power are practices that seek to influence the behaviour of individuals by objectifying them as subjects (Villadsen, 2007: 160-161). According to Villadsen, technologies of power can be seen as instruments of guidance and observation with an inherent rationality within them with certain ends and means (Villadsen, 2007: 160). The most famous example of this kind of power is Foucault's analysis of the *Panopticon*, where the prisoner in the Panopticon is always visible due to the architectural layout of the prison, and this leads the prisoner to discipline himself due to the constant possibility of being under surveillance (Foucault, 1995). This illustrates the point of Foucault's analysis, that beforehand mentioned is to show how human beings are made into certain subjects, which in the case of the Panopticon is the prisoners when they adjust themselves to act accordingly with the prevalent disciplinary discourse in the prison (Fogsgaard & Elmholdt, 2014: 28-29).

Were we then to examine *The Ethical Method* from the perspective of discursive power, I will argue that the method itself can be understood as a technology of power. *The Ethical Method* introduces a new discourse of ethics into the organizations that come in contact with Etikos' consultants, and also a system of practices so that the individuals adjust to said discourse. As mentioned earlier, the intention of the method is to give an organization a shared basis of understanding of ethics, and the language to reflect upon dilemmas with ethical implications. This is a distinct discourse wherein Etikos' clients gain new selections of words, and a new set of rules through which they can think and talk about and act upon things in the world. During my internship I experienced just how quickly individuals took on the perspective of the three ethical theories and four ethical principles, and used terms and words they had learned from Etikos' introductory workshops to *The Ethical Method*. Yet, the question that remains is; which subject is being produced by *The Ethical Method* ?

Just as the Panopticon represents a discourse of discipline, *The Ethical Method* represents a discourse of ethics and reflection. However, Etikos' clients are not prisoners in a disciplinary prison even though comparatively there can be drawn some similarities between the two technologies of power. Just as the prisoners survey themselves so too does clients introduced to *The Ethical Method*, but instead of becoming a *disciplinary subjects* as the prisoners in the Panopticon does, they instead become *self-reflecting subjects*.

This is due to the fact, that the discourse of *The Ethical Method* is not that of discipline and social order but instead a discourse of ethical reflection.

Furthermore, if there is surveillance of the individual present in *The Ethical Method* it is the objectification of the subject as a conscious ethical actor. This objectification occurs through either the schematics, when an individual uses *The Ethical Method* to map out a dilemma or uses the method in general, and clearly signifies how the subject utilizing the method ought to reflect upon a given situation where actions have ethical implications. In short, the goal of *The Ethical Method* is to produce a *self-reflecting subject* and the means to do so is to make the individual aware of the ethical implications of a given act by reflecting and shifting perspectives between different ethical theories and principles. Finally, by becoming this *self-reflecting subject* the individual consequently adjust him or herself to the new discourse of ethics introduced into the organisation by Etikos.

4.2 Social power amongst employees

In order to investigate how *The Ethical Method* is able to impact existing power structures and relations of power in organizations, especially amongst the employees in the next part of this analysis, it is necessary to first establish which types of power are already prevalent in the organization we are analysing. The clients whom I interviewed for this paper are, as mentioned earlier managers from the same organization in the public sector, and the services which this public organization offers are housing and day care to citizens with permanent physical and mental impairments. The different departments of the organization all have a separate middle manager who oversees a staff of employees, and the middle managers meet regularly in their management team with the general manager of the organization. Four of the interviewees are middle managers and the fifth is the general manager of the organization. The entire management team as well as their employees have had several workshops with Etikos' consultants, and are as such introduced to *The Ethical Method*, and the different departments of the organization have incorporated the method to varying degrees.

The interviewed managers were asked in a broad sense, to describe if they had experienced power to be present amongst their employees, and how they would describe said power amongst their employees. In response to this and throughout the interviews, it was observed that the managers focussed on the professionalism of their employees as a way for them to influence and exercise power over each other. This indicates that the type of power we encounter amongst the employees is that of social or personal power which is described by French and Raven (1959). French and Raven argue that there are five predominant bases of power, all of which depends on specific personal abilities and attributes, and the exercising of power is described in psychological terms as change in an individual's behaviour, opinions, needs etc.

(French & Raven, 1959: 260). To French and Raven, the source of social power is the relationship between individuals which they term as the basis of power, and they identify the five most common bases of power as; reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert power (French & Raven, 1959: 262-263). Again, it is important to notice that these power bases is dependent on personal abilities and attributes of an individual or group, and so the exercise of power only succeeds in influencing the behaviour of another individual, if the bases of power, the personal abilities and attributes are acknowledged by the individual being influenced.

This acknowledgement of personal abilities and attributes can be seen in the observations of professionalism amongst the employees, described by the managers. One of the managers explains just how, that even though there are no formal or hierarchal positions between the employees in the department, the professional argument of one employee can still foster respect amongst the others:

“... even though nobody has a certain status, or has a function, then there is a little in it compared to those who can argue professionally well, then there is a good form of respect ...”

A second manager describes just how there is a clear distinction between her employees, because of the difference in professionalism stemming from different levels of education. This means that certain work tasks are out of reach for those that are described as the non-educated employees, and even though the manager argues for the reason behind this division of labour it is still acknowledged that is a form of informal power:

“There are informal power, yes, there is sometimes a knowledge, there is also a difference between the educated and non-educated [...] So, we don't ask an assistant to do a written presentation, it is the pedagogically trained personnel who do so, and I think there is a great deal of reason in that, but then it is also a kind of power one has ...”

A third manager reinforces this observation of division of work tasks based on professionalism, by explaining how the employees that are the most competent and professional at given area of work are also the first to take on assignments which matches their professional skillset:

“... I definitely think your professionalism and competences, it is clear that if you know there is someone who is good at this area, well then that is the person who first raises his hand and says I will take that task ...”

All of the observations above point towards the base of social power that is called expert power, which is again one of the five bases of social power described by French and Raven. The personal abilities and

attributes which expert power is based upon are, as the term suggests an individual's expert knowledge within a given area of expertise (French & Raven, 1959: 267). The strength of expert power depends then on the area of expertise in question. In the case of the interviewed managers' employees, the employees with the most knowledge about the care of citizens with permanent physical and mental impairments have a stronger base of expert power, than their lower educated and lesser professional colleagues. Therefore according to the theoretical perspective of social power, the more professional employees with a strong base of expert power are more capable of influencing their colleagues with a weaker base of expert power, even though they have no hierarchal authority or a special function to do so.

However, it is important to note that even though the strength of expert power can be high within a given area of expertise, the range of expert power is in turn restricted to the same area of expertise. As such, the interviewed managers' employees cannot begin to give legal advice to each other based on their professional knowledge about the care of citizens with permanent physical and mental impairments, since legal matters are dependent upon the professional knowledge of the law and are usually associated with other experts such as attorneys. Other bases of social power, such as for example referent power has a wider range when compared to expert power. Comparatively to expert power, the strength of referent power lies in an individual's wish and desire for identification with another individual or group, and the greater this desire is the broader the range of referent power becomes (French & Raven, 1959: 266-267).

4.3 The self-reflecting subject and the base of expert power

So far we have examined discursive power, how *The Ethical Method* operates as a technology of power within this certain perspective on power, and furthermore we have established the type of power amongst the employees of the interviewed managers to be that of social power. Now we will move on to examine how *The Ethical Method* through its discursive power can affect the employees' professionalism and thus their base of expert power.

The interviewed managers were asked if and how they experienced that *The Ethical Method* affected the power between their employees, and if they were able to describe situations wherein their employees had utilized the method. In relation to this all of the managers had a clear impression that *The Ethical Method* affected the existing power between their employees. The effect was notably described in several situations where the managers experienced that their employees were able to see a given situation from multiple perspectives.

One of the managers describes in particular how the employees are able to reflect upon their interaction with the physically or mentally impaired citizens from different perspectives. In turn, according to the manager this means that the employees are able to see new possible actions that they may take:

“... they [the employees] go in and get a look at this interaction, what is it in the interaction with the citizens, at the same time I also see in their reflection, then there are new possibilities for action, just as they have talked themselves warm and then get a look at it from different perspectives, that is what our ethical method of reflection does ...”

A second manager describes another example, where the use of *The Ethical Method* is incorporated directly into the daily procedures of the day care services. Here the planning procedure of the day care's daily activities were affected, and resulted in a higher degree of inclusion of the physically or mentally impaired citizens to accommodate for their autonomy and thus self-determination:

“... when I am up in the practice and we are talking about some situations, then we are talking about what we are to do, or that, and then we say well we have to remember to ask the citizens because they have autonomy, so we just cannot, so we can plan overall, but we have to ask them when they arrive and so on right ...”

These two examples illustrates first of that the intention of *The Ethical Method* is being met. The employees are reflecting upon different perspectives on a given situation, the possible action and outcomes that the dilemma may result in. Furthermore, these observations of increased reflection amongst the employees indicate that there are signs within the organization of a discourse of ethics and therefore a production of the *self-reflecting subject*. Yet, a third manager expresses this discourse and formation of the *self-reflecting subject* even more clearly:

“I think that our ability to put us beyond ourselves, that is being strengthened in the ethical profile [...] because right now there is a lot of focus on that now I have to say something about the principle of autonomy, now I have to say something about vulnerability, now I have to say something about integrity and so on, so there is a lot of focus on it and a lot structure around ...”

As explained above, a technology of power influences the behaviour of individuals by objectifying them as subjects. Thus when the employees or the manager quoted above is able to go beyond themselves, I will argue that this is a clear indication of *The Ethical Method* acting as a technology of power and objectifying the subject as an ethical actor. This result in the formation of *the self-reflecting subject* which, as we can see above follows a certain discourse, a set of rules and words to give meaning and to adjust to the situation which he or she is in.

This newly formed subject of *The Ethical Method* has a profound effect on the bases of social power specifically the base of expert power which we have established is already present amongst the employees.

Since the managers describe that their employees are more able and capable to see dilemmas from different perspectives, this signifies a dilution of the basis of power regarding the expert and professional knowledge of the employees utilizing *The Ethical Method*.

I will argue that this is mainly due to two factors: First of, as new knowledge and conduct is introduced into the organization by the discourse of ethics, which allows alternative perspectives on a given work related dilemma or situation, the consequences are a weakening of the basis of expert knowledge. Professional arguments are thus no longer the only way in which the employees are able to talk and perceive a dilemma about citizens with permanent physical and mental impairments, since ethical reflection and arguments are now a new part of the organizational discourse. This weakening of the basis of power corresponds with a hypothesis put forth by Raven and French; "*For all five types, the stronger the basis of power the greater the power.*" (French & Raven 1959: 268), and since the opposite can also be argued then the weaker a basis of power is the more reduced the power is. Secondly, since the base of expert power has such a limited range to the given area of expertise it has a little chance to make pure professional arguments against the discursive power of *The Ethical Method*. Furthermore, due to another hypothesis put forth by Raven and French; "*Any attempt to utilize power outside the range of power will tend to reduce the power.*" (French & Raven, 1959: 268), if an employee would try and utilize pure professional arguments and expert knowledge in an ethical dilemma it could further reduce and weaken the base of expert power said employee has in advance.

So far I have answered the first of this papers research questions, which is how *The Ethical Method* produce a *self-reflecting subject*, if it is seen in the perspective of discursive power, and how this subject affects the existing power in organizations amongst employees. We have established that *The Ethical Method* can be understood as a technology of power within the perspective of discursive power. Through this understanding and perspective we have seen how the method objectifies subjects as conscious ethical actors through a system of practices, and thus it produces a *self-reflecting subject* which corrects itself to the discourse of ethics introduced by Etikos into an organization. Furthermore, the subject the affects the existing social power amongst employees by reducing the basis of expert power and are thus weakening said social power.

However, we will now move on to the second research question and the final part of this analysis, which will concentrate on the power amongst the managers themselves. Because there is an observable discrepancy in the empirical material, which indicates that *the self-reflecting subject* is not present amongst the managers, and therefore we have to understand which types of power challenge the discursive power

of *The Ethical Method*, and how these might be overcome in order for the management team itself to attain a higher degree of reflection.

4.4 The power of management and the self-reflecting subject

Even though it is now established how the implementation and use of applied ethics in the form of *The Ethical Method* have an impact on existing power structures and relations between the employees of the interviewed managers, it is not observed in the empirical material that *The Ethical Method* form a *self-reflecting subject* when managers interact on a managerial level. In the final part of this paper's analysis I will therefore clarify how the managers themselves perceive their own power, and this will be done in the perspective of structural power (Fogsgaard & Elmholdt, 2014; Dahl, 1957). Furthermore, we will examine how this type of power challenge the discursive power of *The Ethical Method* and its formation of *the self-reflecting subject*.

Throughout the majority of the interviews the managers described their own use of *The Ethical Method* at their management meetings, and it can be observed that said use does not correlate with their employees' use of the method. Most notable is the fact that even though *The Ethical Method* is a regular item on the management meetings' agenda, the time which the managers spend reflecting on a given dilemma together is negligible, and the method is not used as a common practice meaning that it rarely extends beyond the allocated time it has on the meetings' agenda. Therefore the managers' use of the method does not indicate that *The Ethical Method* as a technology of power is forming a *self-reflecting subject* on the managerial level. Even though one of the managers expresses that there is a desire for the method to be a more implemented practice on the at the meetings, and even though the managers themselves are not observed to be directly opposed to the use and application of the method at the management meetings, it is clear that some type of power is challenging the discursive power of *The Ethical Method*. For example in the following observation we can clearly see one of the managers wants *The Ethical Method* become a more integral part of the management meetings, and that there is a clear desire for *the self-reflecting subject* to be formed, however, it is challenged and opposed:

"It could be everything we are talking about, about that, now this dialogue, now we ought to talk about everything, how it is that we listen to each other and just how it is we do these things all the way through, and it should not be that now we have agreed upon so long to talk a dilemma through, it ought of course to be like, I think in any case that it should become a part of us ..."

In order to determine what type of power that are opposing *The Ethical Method*, we can look at how the managers describe power if and how power is present at their workplace. Four out of the five interviewees

described that power is present because of their own formal position as manager. This indicates that the managers have, at least partly an understanding of their own power due to their elevated position in the organizational structure. One of managers explains that the power which the individual has due to the function of being a manager is somewhat obvious:

“Well, of course you do have power due to your function as a manager, of course there is, we might as well say that, that is how it is.”

A second manager further describes that there is an inherent power of decision making to that of being a manager:

“... since I have the manager role, as you can say, then per definition I also have the power to decide some certain things ...”

From these observations we can deduce that the managers see their own power differently from both the expert power amongst the employees, and the discursive power introduced with *The Ethical Method*. I will argue that this type of power is a much more traditional and conventional perception of power, which entails that power has resource-like aspects that are tied for example to an individual's formal position in the social structure of a society or organization. The power of an individual or of a group in this perspective is used more directly to influence other individuals, or to overcome the resistance to the power being exercised.

I will argue that we can understand type as that of structural power, and it can be formulated and defined by the political theorist Robert Dahl (1915 – 2014) as; *“A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would otherwise not do.”* (Dahl, 1957: 202-203). The direct and apparent notion of power as an oppressive and compelling force is thus emphasized in the concept of structural power, which is a very different understanding of power than the social and discursive types of power which we've already covered. However, as in social power Dahl also includes the notion of the bases of power, but this basis of an individual's or group's power is not necessarily limited to personal abilities and attributes but rather to every conceivable resource that can be used to influence the behaviour of others; *“The base of an actor's power consists of all the resources – opportunities, acts, objects, etc. – that he can exploit in order to effect the behavior of another.”* (Dahl, 1957: 203). In addition to this, Dahl underlines that the basis of power must be actively used by an individual if he or she wishes to exercise power since the base itself is passive; *“In a sense, the base is inert, passive. It must be exploited in some fashion if the behavior of others is to be altered.”* (Dahl, 1957: 203). This is again a deviation from both the discursive and social types of power, for example in discursive power where the technologies of power is always present as they subtly

produces individuals into subjects.

Moving on, Dahl provides us with a conceptual framework that perceives power as a hard and quantifiable resource, and this will help us understand the managers' perception of their own power and the power structures that are present on the managerial level.

When asked if and how the managers experienced the power at the managerial meetings, it was observed that there is a latent or veiled power struggle amongst the managers when they meet with their general manager at management meetings. Even though one of the managers directly states that there is some form of power struggle going on between the managers, it is described as arguments with the characteristics of debating amongst the managers:

"Both from the top, but also a little but between us, it becomes a bit like, well what can you call it, just a power struggle as such, uh... I think that it is a little about how to find the good, you have to have good arguments, but you know, but it is like that is weighing so heavily instead of saying well, we will listen just a little ..."

The environment and what can be understood as a focus on debating is further described by another manager. This manager describes a typical decision-making process at the management meetings, and it is emphasized that the more experienced managers are those that are able to quickly take control of the debates and influence the decisions that are being made at the management meetings:

"... the pace is quick at those management meetings, they are not very long and well those people who are being listened to are those who quickly can grasp things and say oh well such and such and such, who can just figure out what it is we are talking about, and what is my opinion then about that, and then it is just like, well fine then there is a decision about that ..."

Here it is observable how some managers have are more capable than others to seize opportunities and act to influence decisions made during the management meetings, and in the perspective of structural power the managers exploit the resources they have at their disposal in order to alter the behaviour of the other managers.

To get deeper understanding of the structural power present amongst the managers we can also ask ourselves, what the beforehand mentioned power struggle is about. A clue of this can be observed the quote above where manager is mentions that there is an indication of some managers being listened to more than others. This observation is also confirmed in the interview with the general manager, when the power amongst the managers is being described:

"... there is also power between them, but I do not really think it is as bad as uh, they have a reasonable respect towards each other, but sometimes there is someone who is listened to more than others ..."

The general manager further describes how the organization has developed, and during this it is described how the previous general manager had a very different management style. Contrary to today, it is described how the managers had been used to a much more attentive and caring management style which left little room for the managers' own independence and decision-making. The general manager starts this off by describing how his middle managers see his own management style:

"... if one needs help from you [meant as help from the general manager himself] then you have to ask for it, but then you also have it, and then comes the best part and that is that they [the middle managers] feel really good that way because there is trust in the fact that they as managers are able to solve tasks themselves [...], but it is a different management style right, where she [the former general manager] was very caring and the like, I can be that as well it is not that, but it was almost before they asked for help, and that did that they were not very independent, I would say, but they are so today, some of them are still practicing right, but they feel really comfortable by having a more independent role, they do."

I will argue that it is a distinct possibility that the power struggle amongst managers have its foundation in the apparent and relatively new degree of independence in their management roles. Seen in the perspective of structural power, it can be argued that a larger degree of independence increases the managers' base of power since it gives them a larger amount of opportunities and autonomy. Therefore, it is in the managers' interest to maintain or if possible increase their degree of independence. This independence is allocated to them from the general manager, since the organizational structure allows him to do so due to his role as general manager, and the structural power that is tied to that formal position. Thus in an attempt to demonstrate themselves capable of their independence to the general manager, the managers engage in a power struggle in an effort to dominate and influence the decision-making process at the management meetings.

In this power struggle, there are signs of *The Ethical Method* itself is being transformed and exploited as a resource for the managers' structural power. An instance where this exploitation of the method has occurred is described by a manager when *The Ethical Method* has been used at management meetings to make fun of each other at the other's expense:

"... I am thinking about, there have been some direct statements to some managers, between them right, like, you are also so much of a 'feeler' [person whom situates him or herself within the perspective of the ethical demand], or something."

The same manager comments late on that it is worth considering whom it is they are pleasing so to say, by indulging in this sort of behaviour, and in light of my previous arguments and analysis of the managers power struggle I will argue that they quite clearly are trying to please the manager and prove capable of handling their independent management roles.

The very dominant presence of structural power at the managerial level, and the power struggle for maintained and increased independence within this type of power, is clearly challenging the discursive power of *The Ethical Method* by exploiting the method to be a resource for the structural power itself. Therefore, *the self-reflecting subject* is unable to be formed since the discourse of ethics is not as established at the managerial level, as it is in the different departments amongst the managers' employees.

A possible solution to this managerial dilemma might lie within the problem itself, as it can be argued that the general manager's own position within the perspective of structural power can be used to more firmly establish the discursive power of *The Ethical Method*. If the assumption is, that the managers' increased degree of independence is a factor that is causing the structural power struggle at the managerial level, then the general manager, as the source of this independence must also be able to use his position within the organisational structure to put a greater focus and emphasis on *The Ethical Method* and its importance as a broad practice at the management meetings.

Hereby, we have answered the second research question of this paper as it is argued that the structural power which is present at the managerial level challenges *The Ethical Method* and hinders the formation of a *self-reflecting subject* at the managerial level of the organisation. Yet, this challenge might be overcome by the general manager and structural power itself, if the general manager can succeed in exploiting his own position within the organizational structure to increase the emphasis on the application and broader use of *The Ethical Method* at the management meetings.

5. Discussion and conclusion

During my time as an intern at Etikos I have experienced first-hand how applied ethics in form of *The Ethical Method* have had a profound effect on the power dynamics between individuals in the organizations where it is implemented. I therefore set out to increase the understanding of this effect, and in order to so have covered a lot of theoretical ground regarding different perspectives on power.

I have shown how *The Ethical Method* can be understood in the perspective of discursive power as a technology of power. Through Foucault and other authors, it has been established how the method introduces a new discourse of ethics into an organization, and through this *The Ethical Method* can be conceptualized as a technology of power that objectifies subjects by making them conscious of themselves

as ethical actors that must engage in reflection and a shared of understanding of different arguments and different ethical perspectives, when dealing with dilemmas where their actions can have ethical implications. Hereby *The Ethical Method* through its discursive power produces a certain subject which I have termed as the *self-reflecting subject*.

I have then argued that this subject is able to affect the social power amongst individual, in this specific case the expert power amongst the employees of the interviewed managers. This effect occurs as a result of the introduction of a new discourse of ethics into the organization where it is legitimized and furthermore expected of individuals to reflect and look at a given situation from varying perspectives. This practice weakens the base of expert power because of the social power's limited range and inability to argue against the arguments made by applied ethics. This may also mean that the individuals in an organization, whom from the start does not have a strong base of expert power, will be more likely to adjust themselves the new discourse of ethics in the organization.

In addition to this understanding of *The Ethical Method* as a technology of power and its effect on power amongst individuals, I also set out to understand why the method was being challenged at the managerial level of the interviewed managers' organization. I have argued that the structural power of the managers is the main type of power that prevents *The Ethical Method* from producing the *self-reflecting subject* at the management meetings where the managers mainly interact. This is due to a subtle power struggle amongst the managers based in a goal for maintained independence and what might be termed as self-management. In this power struggle the method is exploited as a resource in order to increase the managers' base of structural power, by transforming the method into arguments with elements of refined critique in the form of jokes in order to gain the upper-hand in the decision-making processes that occurs at the management meetings.

A proposed solution to this power struggle and exploitation of *The Ethical Method* is for the general manager to use the structural power of his hierarchal position in the organization, which is perceived by the managers as the source of their independence, to use his position within the organisational structure to put a greater focus and emphasis on *The Ethical Method* and its importance as a broad practice at the management meetings.

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