

ILC meeting notes

April 10, 2018

Present at meeting: Claude (Prime Mover), Sergio, Roberto, Ruth, Catherine

ETHICS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Sergio shared a document about Quakers and Focusing. There are some points about what Quakers are and what they believe and what Sergio's reflections are.

Ruth: Based on Sergio's document, it seems that what we would take away is the importance of listening to all parts.

Sergio: It's like dynamic facilitation: listening deeply to what people want. All people have some wisdom of the body. We have to listen to all parts, even the "bad" or "ugly" parts. It's not so easy. It's a dynamic way where we don't have a rigid structure. It's not only listening; it's drawing out more, to carry forward.

Ruth: We would be asking what is the next right step, what is really needed.

Claude: The values of the Quakers seems very close to our values. We can use these excellent values in conflict resolution. But is it enough if we have a violation of an ethical rule or boundaries. Is this method strong enough to manage that kind of thing? In Flanders, we sometimes have people who have crossed a boundary.

Ruth: Somebody might come in and say that there is a Coordinator who has caused a problem. Sometimes it can be a personal conflict, but sometimes it's so egregious that it's dangerous; boundaries have been crossed. In either case, there would need to be some kind of triage to determine the best response for a particular situation.

Claude: For instance, during a Focusing exercise, let's say someone closes their eyes and their Trainer touches them and they didn't want it. In that case, conflict resolution isn't enough.

Catherine: We need a system that accounts for those kinds of problems.

Ruth: If someone feels they've been violated, we don't want to have them sit down with the person.

Roberto: Gross ethical violations belongs to local authorities, not the Institute. We don't have the authority to punish people for inappropriate touch. We can say it's unacceptable. An important step in NVC is that one part understands the other points of view.

Ruth: Yet we have to be responsible for our Coordinators and our Trainers. To allow someone to continue in that role if they've done something grossly inappropriate isn't right. If someone touched someone, we need to know, for instance, how egregious it was. We don't want to vouch for someone who acts inappropriately.

Sergio: We can't punish, but we have to say something. We have to respect the freedom of all persons. If we see something that is wrong, we can't be silent. We can't have the formal authority to punish, but we have an authority in the community to care about the persons inside our community. Some conflicts are paradoxes; one person says yes and another no. But another type of conflict is when somebody feels that he or she was abused. That's something different. We have to have words for both. Silence could be worse. Hannah Arendt spoke about the banality of evil.

Claude: If a Trainee feels abused, they deserve acknowledgement.

Ruth: I propose that we have a small group that people can contact if they want to make a complaint.

Claude: I would like to be in this small group.

Roberto: In a very serious offense, if we jump in, one person might make an accusation and the other person might deny it. A person would need to go to their local authorities. I agree with listening in a small group to the conflict. I have some trouble with the idea that we are "responsible" for the Coordinators and Trainers. We are not responsible for how they behave. We are responsible to certify them to teach, but we can't take responsibility for their actions.

Claude: For me, it depends on the point of view of the complainer. If a person feels abused, and the accused person is certified by an organization, they want to be listened to by that organization. And if the organization feels the way the person feels, then the organization should admit that; it can be very important for the person to be validated by the organization.

Sergio: When I have to prepare FOT classes, I look at "responsibility." In most languages, "responsibility" means the capacity to respond. We need to be able to respond. If someone in our body does something that is wrong, we have to respond. When we understand the process model, maybe we don't punish, but we have to say that it's wrong and we don't agree with it. We have to listen and to think about what is happening. Of course someone can deny it, but we can still say that a certain behavior is wrong. The community sees us as a body with a responsibility.

Claude: This is why I made the initial proposal about ethics. The board wanted something more fluid or flexible, so we put that document away. I still think that these kinds of handles are helpful to help decide if things are on the good or bad side of an ethical line.

Roberto: It's extremely difficult, but we have to have a line of action. Somebody feels that they were treated inappropriately and they tell us that. But we're also responsible to the one accused. Maybe the client has some transference issues. We are responsible to protect both parts. Maybe the first time, we have to wait and see if there's a second complaint. What would we do? Take away their Coordinator status? Make a public statement?

Ruth: I'd like us to put our attention on how someone initially contacts us. We need a place for people to send an initial complaint. If we try to hypothesize every thing, we'll be here for years.

CT: Maybe it would be helpful to go over the document I made which outlines a possible procedure?

Sergio: We have two basic steps

1. Listening

2. Carrying forward what is happening in that. The problem we have is if the conflict is something that goes against someone's freedom, such as abuse. We have an ethical code for humanity. I don't have an answer for that. We need a protocol for that. If I am crazy and I think I'm a Messiah and I get a group going, how does the community stop me? We need some step for that. One thing is a warning. We might need to suspend someone as a Coordinator; we need a protocol with steps.

Claude: First we listen deeply to both parties. At the other end of the line, the strongest "punishment" we have would be excommunication from our community. That would be the extreme. Between listening and excommunication there are many possibilities.

Sergio: I don't want to name that "punishment." In a monastery, the first step is to talk to the person, the second step is another talk. The third thing is a time-out, but with a companion who asks, "What do you need?" It's not to punish; it's radical acceptance, but to be careful with others, too. In Chile, if there is an accusation of abuse, we immediately separate the person -- the person would be taken away from the child immediately, because the child can't defend itself.

The ILC then read through the draft document "Complaints Procedure Revised 2018.02" and made edits to it. The revised document will be sent to the ILC and edits will continue at the meeting on April 24.