

# Ethical issues and situations in HRM

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# Ethical issues in HRM

# The role of the VPRH

- \* Managing people will be one of the key dimensions of tomorrow's HRM The HRV will need to pursue two objectives (Scouarnec, 2005):
  - \* the quest for competitiveness
  - \* CSR (corporate social responsibility).
- \* Paradoxical management: can we serve two masters? (Pérezts et al., 2011)
- \* If HRVs assume these two functions, should they be conceived as a dynamic relationship between compromise and transgression?

# Ethical dilemma for HRDs

# Problem situations: the case of dilemmas

- ✓ A situation that questions and challenges the power of HR managers is the critical event symbolized by the ethical dilemma.
  - ✓ confronts the HRD with a conflict of values.
  - ✓ also challenges the power of HRDs through the solution adopted to resolve this dilemma.
- ✓ It is through these two elements that we will explore the nature of dilemmas and the solutions adapted to resolve them.

# Problem situations: the case of dilemmas

- \* Moral dilemma: a difficult possibility or choice between two equivalent moral possibilities (Williams, 1994).
- \* Ethical dilemma in management: a problem, situation or opportunity that forces people to choose between several bad solutions or unethical decisions (Treviño and Nelson, 2003; Ferrell et al., 2006).
- \* The principle of choosing between what is fair or unfair
- \* Situations that give rise to dilemmas include discrimination, sexual harassment, conflicts of interest, customer confidentiality and organizational resources (Treviño and Nelson, 2003).

# Study of 50 HRDs (Quebec)

- \* We discover that there are two stages in the dilemma: awareness of the tensions, and analysis of the issues involved.
- \* Both moments are worth exploring, as we can see that it's at this second moment that the selection of possible attitudes and behaviors begins.
- \* The tensions raised are characterized by notions that relate either to the individual (his or her reputation) or to the company (the quest for organizational efficiency).
- \* If we draw a parallel, we see a friction between seeking the usefulness of our actions and fulfilling our obligations.

# Reputation and personal effectiveness

- \* «It's about the salary review. My client, VP of Supply Chain, [...] asked me not to tell anyone and to grant [a] favor to the employee. I refused and told her it was against my ethics. I didn't want to make an exception for this employee, nor for the VP, so that she would have more money in her budget for her team [...] It was an ethical dilemma, because the question is: do I obey the VP - who is also my boss! ?» (HRM # 25)



# Reputation and organizational efficiency

- \* «You could say we have a role to play, and here I forget to be Mr. [His name]. I have to play the role of plant manager's right-hand man. Be supportive of the organization as a whole, not just my business unit. [human resources] [...] the Americans were going to close the factories. I had this in mind [...] Organizational values must be conveyed and adhered to.(HRM # 12)
- \* «[My challenge was ] To break up a professional life that had serious consequences for my personal life, but at the same time my position was one of work.» (HRM # 5)

# Tension between organizational obligation and personal conviction

- \* « Complaint of psychological and sexual abuse, a girl complaining about her colleague. I met the person and saw that there were certain inconsistencies. Following an investigative process, I discovered that it was she who was committing acts of this nature. It was a relationship between colleagues that had ended badly [...] It's the concept of the black widow. She had strong sympathy from those around her at work, and was perceived as a victim. The dilemma was: if I was wrong - or not - what do you do in this situation? End it or not? It eventually got out of hand, even with the VP, because she didn't believe the young man's version of events.» (HRM # 8)

# The dilemma faced by HRMs

Recognizing the dilemma

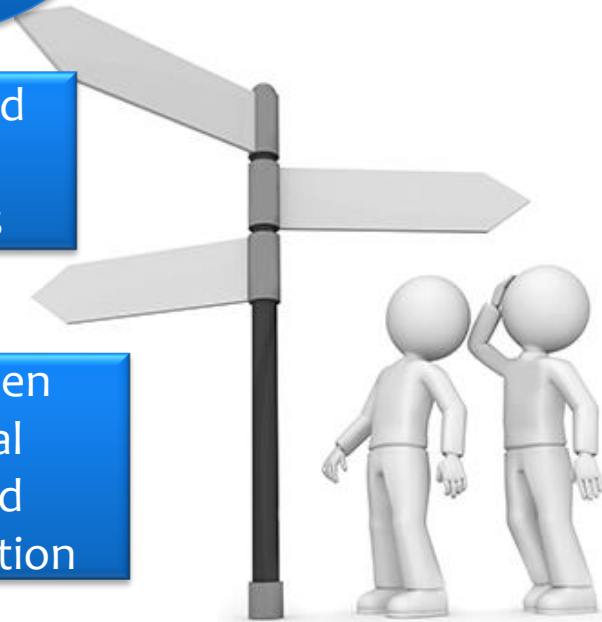
Conflict moral insoluble

Reputation and personal effectiveness

Event or situation  
(e.g. Job terminated)

Tension between organizational obligation and personal conviction

Reputation and organizational effectiveness



# The eye of the ethical dilemma

- \* Contemplating the answers provided by managers in our various interviews, we see that the underlying conflict remains a question of basic moral philosophy between the choice of freedom or determinism.(Cayla, 2007).
- \* In choosing their own freedom of action, however, managers must become creative with standards and rules to avoid breaking them... **in order to be Authentic**
- \* How do they do it? The comments are unanimous: they use their imagination and creative morality to get out of the ambiguous situation created by this dilemma.

# The HRM dilemma

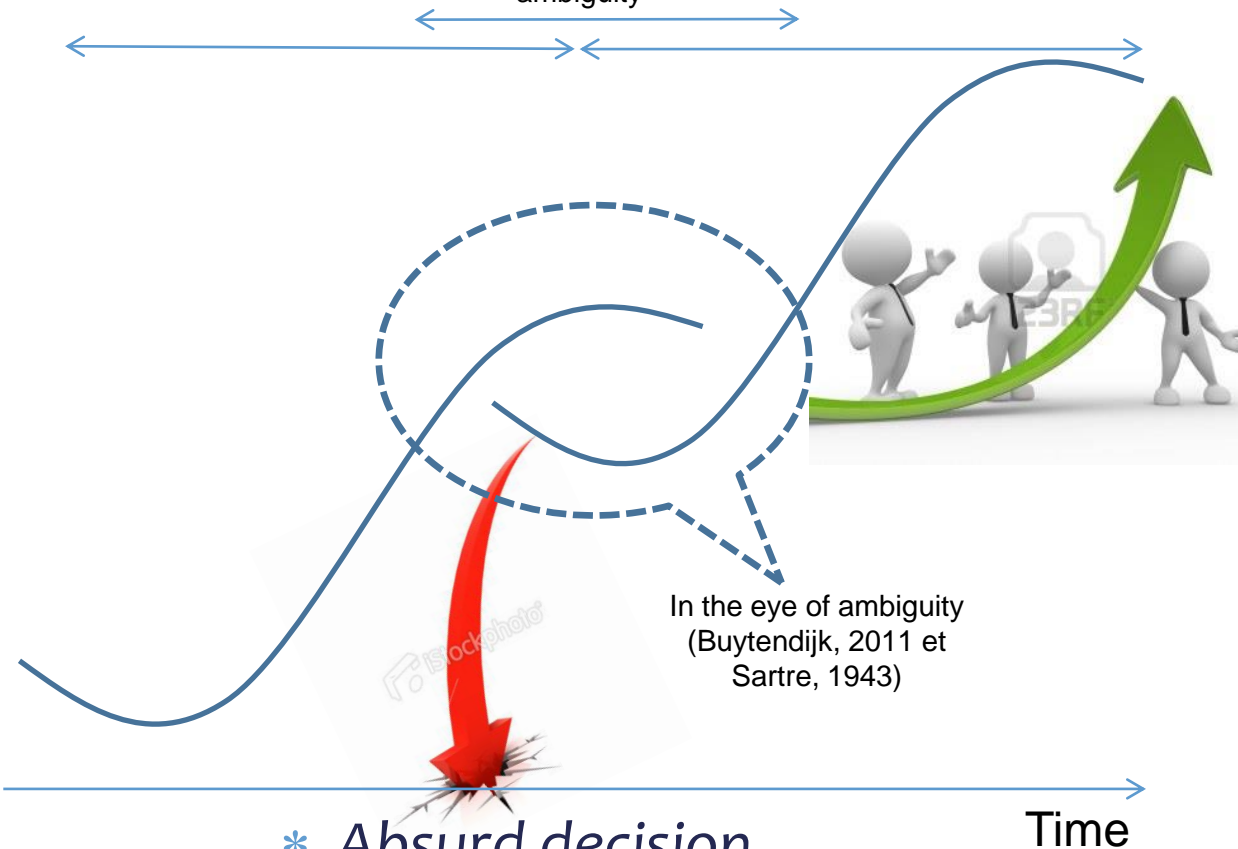
- \* To resolve a dilemma, Buytendijk (2011) takes up the S-curve theory known in strategy to explain the creativity dilemma - S - curve metaphor (Christensen, 1997)
- \* Sartre. *Existentialism is a humanism* (1945). Student's dilemma

# The dynamics of an ethical dilemma

Values and ethics

Discontinuity dilemma ambiguity

New Values and Ethics System



\* **The eye of the dilemma**

- \* Authenticity
- \* Moral creativity

In the eye of ambiguity  
(Buytendijk, 2011 et  
Sartre, 1943)

\* **Absurd decision**

- \* loss of meaning.
- \* errors in reasoning
- \* collective mechanisms

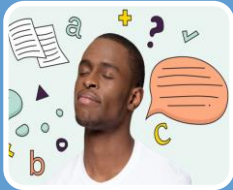
Christian Morel "Les décisions absurdes" I et II  
(Gallimard, Bibliothèque des Sciences Humaines, 2002 et  
2012).  
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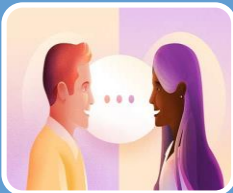
# ***Components of authenticity***

# THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF AUTHENTICITY



## Being yourself

- Processus de devenir et de surmonter qui nous sommes vers un projet qui nous définit,
- Réécriture de son projet , qui débouche à une nouvelle manière d'être authentique
- Conscience vraie et lucide de la situation



## To be with others

- If he knows his actions and accepts responsibility for them, both towards himself and towards others.
- Cooperative action is a form of mutual recognition between self and others
- Co-construction of identity through freedom

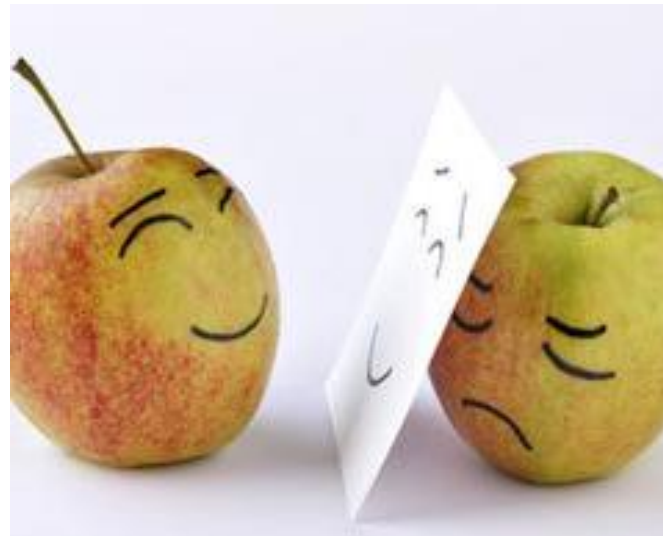


## Rejecting bad faith

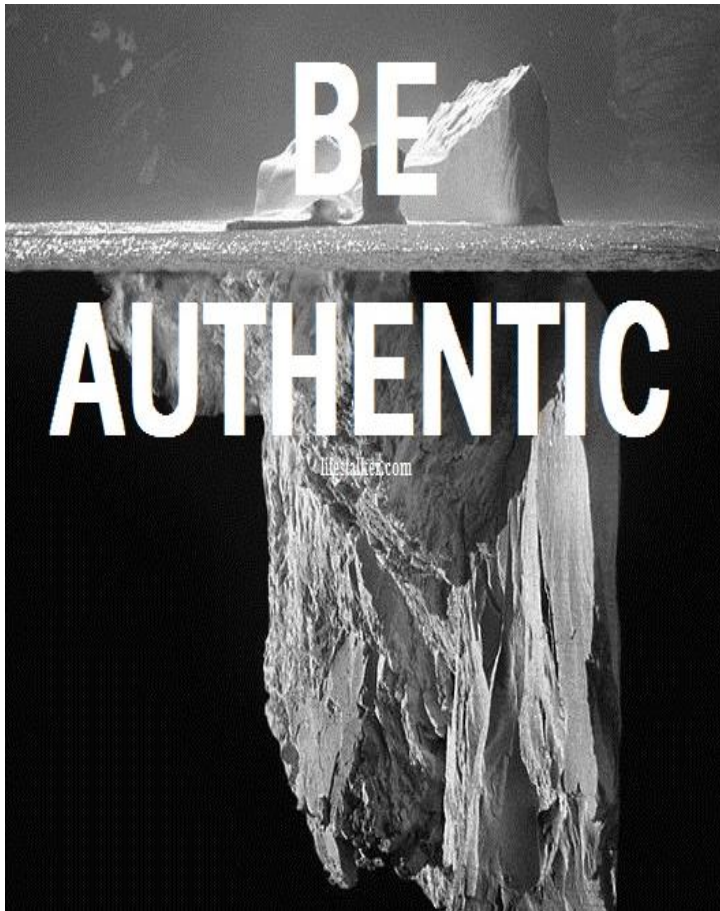
- Refusal of deterministic excuses
- Passivity as consciousness
- Refusing alienation



# ***The dynamics of authenticity***



# Patern



**Authenticity**

**Inauthenticity**

**AUTHENTICITY...  
A PRECARIOUS  
BALANCE  
BETWEEN SELF  
AND SOCIAL  
ROLES**

Being yourself  
- Freedom  
- Responsibility

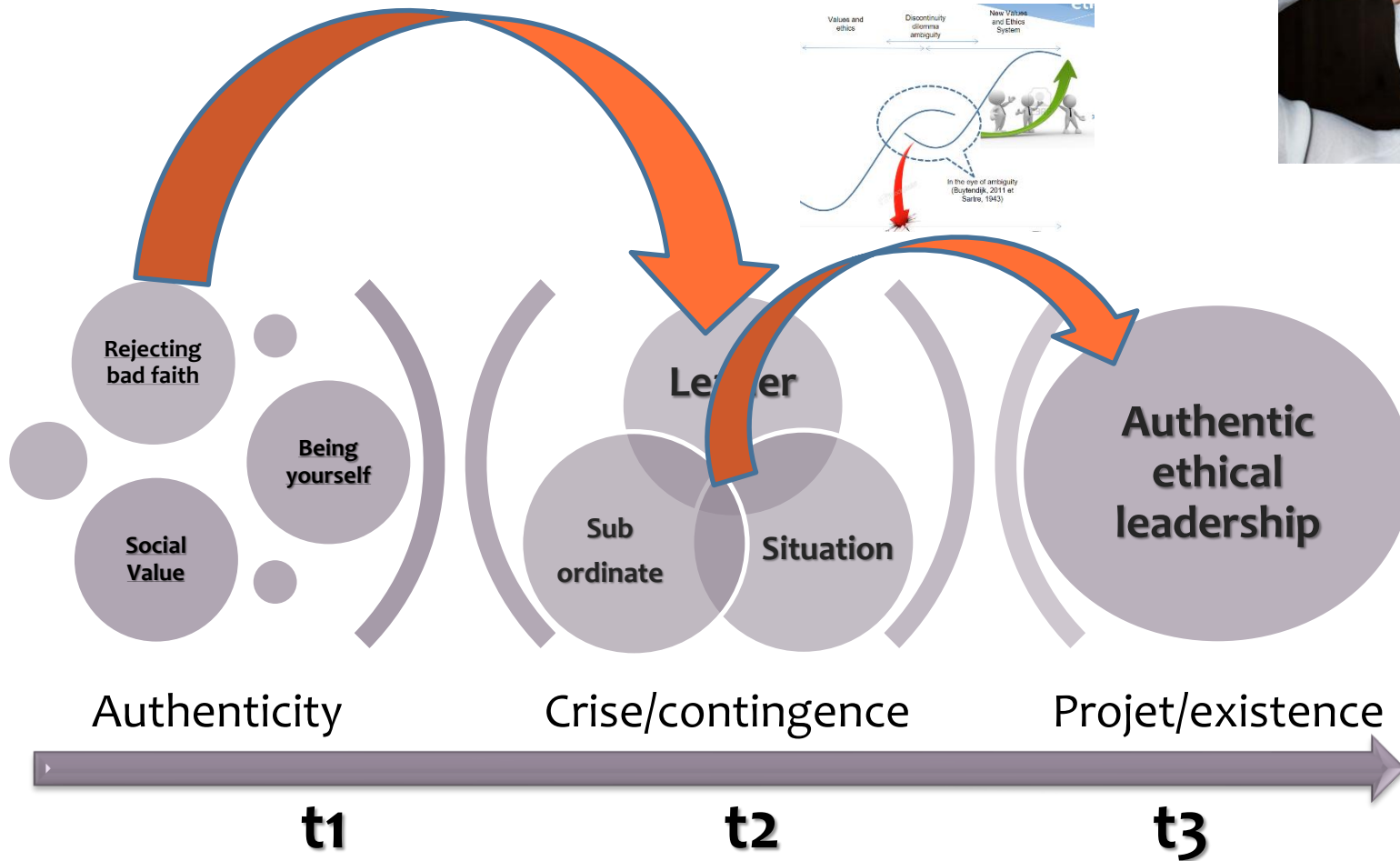
Social Value  
- Commitment  
- Others

Rejecting bad faith  
- Determinism  
- Alienation

Bad Faith,  
Alienation,  
Determinism,  
Cognitive Bias,  
Lucifer Syndrome...

**AUTHENTICITY AS A  
SOURCE OF STRESS...  
AND EXISTENTIAL  
ANGUISH**

# Authentic ethical leadership: a process



What do you think?  
What kind of ethical  
manager do you think  
you are?

## Further reading

