

Chapter 10: Critical Theory approaches to Spirituality in Business

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This chapter reviews the work of Critical Theory (CT), to assess orientation to spirituality. It has been mistakenly assumed that, given its Marxist heritage CT is against spirituality. However, in looking at the work of Horkheimer Adorno, and Fromm of the Frankfurt school of CT, there are instances where they discuss their own religious and spiritual orientations. I would like to suggest some points of convergence between CT and spirituality. In particular, I want to extend the implications of CT approaches to spirituality in business.

In the past, I have been rather critical of the spirituality in business movement (Boje, 2000, 2007a, b; Boje & Rosile, 2003). First, spirituality (& religion) is too often used instrumentally as a way to motivate employees to higher levels of identification and commitment to so-called spiritual leaders, and to so-called spiritual business, in order to boost performance, lower resistance (e.g. obeying orders), promoting submission, and manipulation of servanthood mentality (e.g. serving the customer as sovereign king). Second, since there are a variety of spirituality and religious practices, there is a difference between the rhetoric of 'spiritual business' and the enactment of spiritual practices at work, between espoused religious theory of spirit and what is practiced in the name of business. Third, critical theorists focused on ways spirituality is abused in business, may be dismissed by the mainstream as anti-spiritual, or having no interest at all in developing viable spiritual practices in business.

In this chapter, I summarize spiritual abuse theory within Christian circles, then parallel work by several critical theorists, including Horkheimer, Adorno, and Fromm. I suggest some ways critical theorists take the role of a 'doubting Thomas,' opening up a space for being critical of spiritual abuse in business, but not dismissing spirituality altogether. I call this space a 'critical spirituality' approach to ethical leadership and business practices. It is a side of the story that has been forgotten. The contribution the chapter makes is for the first time, relating spiritual abuse theory to critiques made by several critical theorists, which open a door for ethical spiritual practices.

I contend that critical theory work comes at a particular stage of spiritual leadership and spiritual business discourse in post WWII when fascism was reaffirming its grip on business practice.

A Brief History of Spirituality

Spirituality and leadership has a long history. In each historical period the relationship has different emphasis.

Early Discipleship Model In the first three centuries AD, spirituality and leadership meant selecting leaders from the community that exhibited nine gifts of the spirit (Boje, 2007c).¹

1. Faith
2. Knowledge
3. Wisdom
4. Miraculous power
5. Discernment of spirits
6. Healing
7. Prophecy
8. Speaking in Tongues
9. Interpretation of tongues

The model of Christ was discipleship, apprenticeship, and mentoring of younger leaders, such as with Paul, Timothy, Silas, John, and Mark. Abuse of spiritual gifts for selfish gain or to manipulate compliance was well known. Spiritual abuse was socially discernable when nine Fruits of the Spirit were not observed: joy, love, peace, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5: 22-23).

Monastic Model By the time of Emperor Constantine (274-336 AD), spiritual gifts, and their fruit, ceased to be of great importance to the church. People sought spirituality by retreating into monasteries where celibacy, meditation (e.g. *lectio divina* of St. Benedict), ascetic discipline, and piety were thought to mold spiritual life. St. Augustine (354-430 AD) formalized the monastic model, integrating his Skeptical and Neo-Platonic philosophy with Christian-Gnostic practices, and seclusion from the outside world. Some monastic orders developed universities, which was the beginning of scholasticism. Scholasticism, the reconciling of classic philosophy with medieval Christian theology, relies upon the method of dialectical reasoning.

Protestant Reformation Model Martin Luther (1483 – 1546), Huldrych Zwingi (1484-1531) John Calvin (1509 -1564), building on work by John Wycliffe and Jan Hus, emphasized spirituality critical of Catholic practices, of selling indulgencies, elevation of saints, purgatory, worship of Virgin Mary, and general widespread church corruption (i.e. buying leader positions such as priest or bishop). Zwingi differed from Luther and Calvin, by going beyond grace in baptism, to a covenant of work as necessary for salvation. Another difference is the Eucharist. For Zwingi it is symbolic, not literal presents of body and blood of Christ. For Calvin Christ is spiritually, but not physically present (as with Luther). Despite differences, protestant reformation favored return to Christ-centered piety and an intellectual understanding of spirituality (head & heart). Monasteries were closed. A study of scripture (*sola scriptura*) was a way to educate the clergy. Greek and Hebrew were used in university.

Seminary Model In 19th century seminaries were founded, such as Harvard and Princeton. Seminaries began to form separate organizational identity from the university. It was in the seminaries where a kind of training workshop in the Holy Spirit, as well as pastoral training took place.

Holocaust and Fascism Hitler was baptized Catholic in Austria, was confirmed, was an altar boy, and attended monastery school. On 26 June, 1934, Hitler said, “The National Socialist State professes its allegiance to positive Christianity.” Such statements about his Catholic support are likely part of his propaganda to manipulate the public, to counter the criticism of the time that Nazism was anti-religious party (Barkun, 1994). Hitler said, “So it's not opportune to hurl ourselves now into a struggle with the Churches. The best thing is to let Christianity die a natural death" (14 October 1941). Hitler had Catholics killed, and nuns removed from public service. Hitler merged his anti-Semitism with anti-Marxism. Of relevance to this chapter is the critical theorists of the Frankfurt school were in double jeopardy. Further, Hitler was an advocate of Social Darwinism, a philosophy widely critiqued by the Frankfurt school of critical theory. Social Darwinism refers to an idea of natural selection that predates Darwin’s text. In particular, Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) held that competition among individuals, organizations, or nations in ‘survival of the fittest’ is said to be the driver of social evolution. Spencer’s (1866) book was released two years before Darwin’s *Origin of*

Species. Spencer equated survival of the fittest with progress as a matter of predestination, whereas for Darwin, evolution is spurred by random variation.

Civil Rights Model In 1960s education moved beyond the Ivy League universities and seminaries, and onto the picket lines of the civil rights movement. Spirituality was the basis to sustain people in the struggle for social justice.

Modernity Model The last fifty years of modernity has stressed a CEO approach to spiritual leadership, where the spiritual leader is a transformational, not a transactional leader. It is in the last fifty years of modernity that the managerial paradigm has taken root, where spirituality is subordinated to profit and hierarchy. Transformative leadership is confused with leading a spiritual life in the previous periods: Early Discipleship (gifts of the spirit); Monastic (discipline & meditation); Reformation (intellect & heart); Seminary (Holy Spirit workshop); Civil Rights (social justice).

Next, we examine spiritual abuse.

II. SPIRITUAL ABUSE

There is ample writing on spiritual abuse occurring in churches and organizations, especially those with top-down authoritarian structures (Blue, 1993; Boje, 2007c; Burke & Burke, 1992; Enroth, 1994; Henke, 1996, Johnson & VanVonderan, 1991; Lawless & Lawless, 1995; Wikipedia, 2007; Yeakley, 1988). Spiritual abuse is defined as a misuse of position power, manipulative charisma, and authoritarian structures to enslave followers to pursue leader's self-interests (often fraudulent ends), in a culture of exclusivity. The Bible presents two opposing spiritual systems. The first is under the reign of God (bringing life & freedom to people), while the second is false or pseudospiritual practice (bringing bondage & sheparding to people).

There are many biblical examples of spiritual abuse and its correction. The most famous is Christ overturning the tables of the money changers, and using his cords as a whip, driving out the people buying and selling doves, cattle, sheep in the Temple (Matthew 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-18; Luke 19:45-47; John 2:13-16). Matthew (21: 12-13) says, "Jesus entered the temple area and drove out all who were buy and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves." In John (2: 16), "How dare you turn my Father's house in to a market?" In Ezekiel (34: 1-

10) when God says “Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?” The charges include leaders (shepherds) feeding themselves rather than the flock, ignoring the healing of those hurting, and ruling over them by force and cruelty. Not binding up the hurt, healing the sick, strengthening the weak. Instead they are ruled over with harsh brutality. In Matthew 23:1-4, Christ said, “The teachers of the laws and the Pharisees sit in Moses’ seat... [But] they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them” (bracketed addition, mine). Then there is the servant leadership construct developed in Matthew and Mark. In Matthew (23: 10-11) the concept of servant leadership is developed as follows: “The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.” In short, those who are lording spirituality over others are “hypocrites” and “blind guides!” (Matthew 23: 13, 16). In Mark (10: 41-45) instead of “lording it over them” the style of the servant leaders was stressed” For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark, 10: 45). In Acts (7: 51-56) Stephen was called before the high priest to defend against (false) charges of speaking against God. Stephen in his testimony said, “You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers. You always resist the Holy Spirit!” (7: 51). For this he was stoned to death. Life by the spirit is summed up in Galatians (5: 13-15): “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.” There are certainly many other examples of spiritual abuse.

While the authors working on ‘spiritual abuse’ theory focus on mainline church and cultic offbeat church abuse, I think the dimensions are applicable to the spirituality in business movement. There is no reason to assume that spiritual leadership is always positive or used for the greater good. My thesis here is that spiritual abuse can occur in any business organization, reinforcing a top-down, highly authoritarian, hierarchical

structure. Some spiritual leaders are authoritarian, developing spiritually-addictive, rather than socially healthy organizations. They contend the practice is as old as religion as itself.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Table 1 provides a comparison and summary of spiritual abuse dimensions in Ronald Enroth (1994), Agnes and John Lawless (1995), David Henke (2005). We can summarize the six main dimensions that cut across studies of abusive spirituality as follows:

- 1. Authoritarian position or charismatic leader power** - abusive leaders (& groups of followers) distort spiritual authority and charisma concepts by arrogating power to certain leaders (usually office holders), over-emphasizing authority, and making it inappropriate for followers to question or challenge leader's decisions in forums of open accountability. Leaders establish an abusive spiritual system as they claim God himself gave them their leader position and the right to command followers (which goes against Mathew (22: 1-23) passages about servant leadership and woes against those who are spiritual hypocrites and blind guides. Such leaders and organizations, claiming God blesses their submission and servanthood distort moral authority.
- 2. Manipulative control of loyalty by anger and intimidation** - The office bearer appropriates spirituality to themselves, making unquestioning submission a condition of loyalty. abusive spiritual leaders (& groups) use fear, guilt, and threats to produce unquestioning obedience, group conformity, and tests of loyalty. Biblical concepts of leader-disciple relations distorted to emphasis hierarchy, leader decision control, and usurpation of disciple's right to make choices on spiritual matters or on daily routines (employment, diet, clothing, etc).
- 3. Elitism and righteous image maintained by exclusivity, and elitism** - abusive

spiritual leaders (& groups) separate the group from other organizations or institutions, thus diminishing possibility of criticism and evaluation that would bring reflection and correction. There is paranoia about critics. Critics of the abusive system are labeled ‘evil people’ or as outsiders who are so worldly they would not understand. Outside critics evaluations are dismissed as disruptive. Leaders manage their image of righteousness to outsiders, often misrepresenting organization history, covering up or denying character flaws of leaders. The result is being secretive about spiritual practices of the group since the spiritual practices and beliefs cannot stand up to scrutiny. At the same time abusive spiritual leaders keep secrets from members, while imposing impossible standards on them, as leaders are held up as superior examples. Failure of followers to live up to or submit to stories of spiritual leader’s standards is a constant reminder of follower’s inferiority.

4. **Life-style is unbalanced spiritual practices to claim new revelation** - abusive spiritual leaders (& groups) foster rigid beliefs and behaviors that require unswerving conformity to leader and group ideals and mores. Instead of grace available unconditionally, in abusive spiritual organizations grace, salvation, and blessings come through performance. The result is perfectionism, a sort of following the spiritual rules, or even pride in following them. Over time perfectionism by performativity can lead to spiritual burnout. Those who fail to perform to standards are labeled weak (apostates), and can be ostracized and abandoned.
5. **Discipline in enslaving authoritarian structure to suppress criticism** - abusive spiritual leaders (& groups) suppress internal challenges and dissent over leader’s decisions by acts of discipline that can include emotional humiliation, physical violence, deprivation, and severe acts of punishment. Dissent is curtailed by claiming submission to a hierarchy (or chain of command) will be a spiritual ‘covering’ or ‘umbrella of protection’ to those who submit and conform to punishment. The result is the critic becomes the problem, rather than the issue raised about so-called anointed leadership and hierarchy. All criticism is taken as a challenge to leaderly authority, or as a sign of unbelief in God. Thinking for oneself, or questioning, is discouraged. Only leaders think and hand down decisions. The result is followers self-discipline their own thoughts for fear of

being in doubt about God's leaders.

6. **Greed & fraud, or other immorality** – Absolute power corrupts, and shepherding styles of abusive spirituality are no exception. Spiritual abuse is used to hide and perpetuate fraud and other immorality. This is not a new phenomenon. For example in history of Catholic Church, indulgencies were sold to raise money. In the revival movement of the 1920s a healing was accompanied by a collection of donations for that ministry. In contemporary time, TV evangelists put on a spectacle to raise money.

Next, I look at how critical spirituality by several critical theorists anticipates several of the dimensions of spiritual abuse.

II. CRITICAL SPIRITUALITY AND CRITICAL THEORY

Critical Spirituality is defined as the study of how people at work engage the transcendental. I believe critical spirituality makes an important contribution to business practice, theory, and research. For me, critical spirituality is an inquiry into the dark side of managerialism and our late (post) modern global capitalism. Managerialism is taking the manager's (owner's agent) perspective, while marginalizing other stakeholder perspectives. One way this marginalization takes place is by avoiding direct discourse among the stakeholders, and instead letting managers presume to speak for everyone else.

There are several uses of the term 'critical.' The word "critical" refers to Critical Theory (in capitals to represent early work by the Frankfurt School between 1931 and the decade following WWII), 'critical theory' (in lower case is usual designation of a variety of approaches since, including 'critical postmodern' of which I am part).

Big CT Big 'Critical Theory' (hereafter CT) refers to the *Frankfurt School Institute for Social Research*, including work by its directors, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, as well as numerous associates including Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, & Erich Fromm. The Frankfurt School was founded in 1923, and Horkheimer became its director in 1931.

Little 'ct' Little 'ct' refers to critical theory that follows the Frankfurt School. This would include critical postmodern. 'Critical postmodern,' in which I work, is defined as a combination of 'critical theory' and 'postmodern theory,' that moves beyond

the supposedly "radical postmodern" positions of Lyotard (incredulity to grand narrative) and Baudrillard (all is simulacra) by recognizing the interplay of grand narratives of modernity with the spectacularity of virtuality and hyper-competitiveness that is the basis of global predatory late modern and postmodern capitalism. The critical postmodern position does not do away with all grand narratives.

Several versions of less critical postmodern theory, such as the appreciative postmodernists, embrace the transcendental, spiritual, mysticism, and metaphysical in their various pre-modern and New Age guises. The critical approaches to postmodern are decidedly more skeptical about the supposed 'good' that spirituality can do for the human condition. Other postmodern version is decidedly rational, such as versions of postmodern complexity theory focused on emergent processes. In short, there is as much variety in postmodern approaches as there is in religions.

Critical spirituality, the focus of this chapter, is skeptical of the appropriation of spirituality and religion into strategy practices. It is fearful that it is yet one more example of Social Darwinism. Social Darwinism is a corporate reading of the transcendental forces of an invisible hand of competition that sorts the rich from the poor. Horkheimer's (1974b) book *Critique of Instrumental Reason* is mostly about spirituality, with essays on, 'Theism and Atheism,' 'The Soul,' and 'The German Jews.' His essays from 1957 to 1967, I will argue, are an attempt to resituate spirituality and business, (& the state), rather than the common conclusion that critical theorists are against their interrelationship. Adorno's later works also seem to me to be about finding a resituation of spirituality in relation to late capitalism. For example, Adorno (1951/1974: 242), said "The great religions have either, like Judaism after the ban on graven images, veiled the redemption of the dead in silence, or preached the resurrection of the flesh." Given its doubting Thomas stance, critical spirituality can find throughout CT (& ct) support for spirit at work, but one with eyes wide open to its potential for abuse. Before continuing our exploration of the relationship of Critical Theorists to spirituality, I would like to provide a brief overview of the phases of CT scholarship (Boje, 2007d; Boje & Al Arkoubim 2007). I do this digression now because part of the confusion in doing an inquiry into the relation of spirituality and business in the work of critical theorists is that

their position changes. I will argue that it is in the second phase of CT that one finds more support for a relationship between spiritual and business.

Phase 1 of CT In early phase of CT Theodor Wiesengraund Adorno (1903-1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) were directors of the Frankfurt School Institute for Social Research. Besides Adorno and Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Erich Fromm (1890-1980), Henry Gossman, Arkadij Gurland, Otto Kirchheimer, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), Franz Newmann, Freidrich Pollock, and successor Jurgen Habermas are recognized figures in CT. The Frankfurt School was founded in Frankfurt in 1923, but it was Horkheimer's directorship after 1931, that gave it prominence. Horkheimer and Adorno led the 1st Phase CT focused on an empirical and historically ground interdisciplinary research program to overcome the inadequacies of Hegelian, Marxist, and Kantian theories. With Hitler's holocaust of the Jews, the Frankfurt school's Jewish faculty went into exile, reconstituting the school in Columbia University (NY) from July 1934 to 1943. At the end of this phase, it became clear to some CT writers that the *Culture Industry* made even a reformed Kant unable to be the basis of reform.

Phase 2 of CT Horkheimer and Adorno's (1944/1972) *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is regarded as a turning point in CT, and the marker of its second phase, the aesthetic critique of the Culture Industry. The Nazi fascism of World War II left them disillusioned that any positive program of empirical interdisciplinary study would curtail it. Clearly their goal of ultimate emancipation from fascism lies elsewhere than scientific Enlightenment. They turned to more Weberian and Nietzschean skepticism to contend with the dark reality of post World War II. In particular, Phase 2 work indicates a distrust of state and corporate control over culture industry. Adorno (1963/2000: 170) ends his series of 1963 lectures by declaring, "There is no ethics... in the administered world." Adorno says he owes Nietzsche "the greatest debt" for his skepticism (p. 172). After WWII, Horkheimer and Adorno returned to Frankfurt. In Phase II of CT, Horkheimer and Adorno tried to find the German-Jewish intellectual roots.

Phase 3 of CT Since 1970, Jurgen Habermas has led the third phase of CT into its linguistic turn. I would argue that Habermas has turned the clock back to redeem Phase 1 CT, in proposing a linguistic-communicative rationality. Habermas seeks the

Enlightenment ideal, an emancipatory potential attainable by neo-Kantian moral philosophy applied to social science. This can be seen in Habermas' communicative ethics. More recently Habermas picks up on Luhmann as well as Parsons, in a turn that can only be described as structural functionalist system theory. The result is whereas Horkheimer Adorno, and Fromm (as well as Marcuse) were moving away from formal, absolutist, universalistic ethics to one Bakhtin (1990, 1993) calls an ethics of answerability, Habermas is headed in the other direction. Bakhtin (1993: 42) defines it as "an answerable act or deed is precisely that act which is performed on the basis of an acknowledgment of my obligative (ought-to-be) uniqueness" For Bakhtin (1990, 1993) it is our unique standpoint in-the-moment of Being, in participation with others, where we have no alibi, since no other person is there to listen or tell, to make a valuation, and to act, to put signature to story. Bakhtin (1993) called for "seeking an answerable life" (p. 5-6) for there is no universal ought, no moral ought that *is* (p. 6).

Next, we examine the kinds of critical spirituality, a seeking of an answerable life, that various key figures in CT pioneered.

III. CRITICAL SPIRITUALITY ACCORDING TO CRITICAL THEORY

The theme of spirituality grew out of the CT group's concerns over the WWII holocaust, and the fascism and anti-Semitism in forms of capitalism after WWII. For example in Horkheimer's essay, "The Jews and Europe" he says, "No one can ask the émigrés to hold a mirror up to the world that has produced fascism in the very place in which they are being offered asylum. But those who do not wish to speak of capitalism should be silent about fascism" (cited in Weininger, 1995). While Wiggershaus (1993) chides Horkheimer and Adorno for not being more radical and revolutionary in resisting fascism, for being too much about theory and not enough about practice, I see the history quite differently.

To me, Horkheimer and Adorno change course from the phase one project of some union of diverse theory disciplines in an empirical science of CT. Rather, like their colleague Benjamin, they realize that the *Culture Industry* is leading the masses to support the marriage of fascism and capitalism. They therefore set out to develop tools to deconstruct the *Culture Industry*, to show how the Spectacle (in Debord's terms) of

consumption has overtaken production processes, as a means of social acculturation and control into hierarchical servitude.

In Adorno's (1951/1974) *Minima Moralia: Reflections From a Damaged Life* he remembered the Jewish culture destroyed by WWII fascism and Holocaust. Adorno (1981/1977: 34) said in his most quoted, and misunderstood phrase, "To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric." The context of the phrase, its entire sentence, gives us deeper insight (Claussen, 1997: 12). "The critique of culture finds itself confronting the last stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism: to write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric— and that fact, that situation devours even the insight and intelligence that speak out about why poetry has become impossible." To write poetic utopia is to effect amnesia about the Holocaust. For this essay, the insight is that for spirituality to gain any right to exist, it must be critical of spiritual abuse, its attempt to ignore the history of spiritual barbarism. "Abstract utopia is all too compatible with the most insidious tendencies of society" (Adorno, 1951/1974: 102).

My position is closer to that of Douglas Kellner (1995), who says that rather than advocates for spiritual (or religious) approaches to organization, Horkheimer and Adorno, were ambivalent:

The Frankfurt School had a highly ambivalent relation to Judaism. On one hand, they were part of that Enlightenment tradition that opposed authority, tradition, and all institutions of the past -- including religion. They were also, for the most part, secular Jews who did not support any organized religion, or practice religious or cultural Judaism. In this sense, they were in the tradition of Heine, Marx, and Freud for whom Judaism was neither a constitutive feature of their life or work, nor a significant aspect of their self-image and identity.

Ambivalence is one way to look at what I am proposing as a critical spirituality. That is, that while spiritual practices are appropriated by the state and by business capitalism in order to co-opt the masses, there is opportunity, now and again, to use spirituality as a form of resistance, as a way to bring about distributive justice by making power aware of the embedded mechanisms of exploitation and oppression.

Next we look more closely at Adorno, Horkheimer, Benjamin, and Fromm's critical spirituality views.

ADORNO: DIALECTIC SPHERES

Adorno's oeuvre has frequent reference to the theology of Kierkegaard. Adorno's (1989) first major philosophical work, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic* appeared in bookstores on Feb 27 1933, the day that Hitler revoked freedom of the press (p. xi). Adorno believes that is something flawed in Kierkegaard's three spheres of existence:

1. **Aesthetic Sphere** – an immediacy where desire acquires no object (except erotic reflection); it is a naive idealism, such as the emotional freedom of one's first love kept in a diary.
2. **Ethical Sphere** – desire seeks its object in multifariousness resulting in repentance & obligation, such as in marriage as freedom of necessity.
3. **Religious Sphere** – the synthesis of the receding two spheres (turning them into stages of desire).

Adorno's reading is Kierkegaard, who is polemic against Hegel, nevertheless posits a dialectic between the first two spheres (the aesthetic & the ethical) that becomes synthesized in the third (the religious).

However, there are several problems. The way Kierkegaard does his dialectic places actuality into a subjectivity that is outside of existence (i.e. outside of history, and outside of social and economic questions). In Hegelian dialectic, the three spheres would "articulate their development in time" (Adorno, 1987: 88).

Adorno accuses Kierkegaard of a "circular argument," where ethical is not a true antithesis, religious is not a synthesis, there is an "idealist origin of the 'spheres'" (p. 90). In the three spheres is an "appropriation of grace" into a mythical harmony that relies on astrological categories (Adorno, 1987: 91). As result, "the totality of the infinite is closed [by Kierkegaard] to contingent human consciousness" (p. 92).

Kierkegaard views humans as living in "mythical deception" which for Adorno puts them at a distance from ontology (historical concretion that is fundamental to dialectics) (p. 93). Kierkegaard's spirituality is necessarily melancholic (p. xix). We live life that is a riddle looking to scripture that is so cryptic as to be unreadable (p. 25).

Further, the dialectic of the spheres in Kierkegaard is hierarchical, where the good versus bad is set out in the aesthetic, carries through the ethical, and into the religious. The aesthetic sphere is situated prior to decisiveness. In addition, redestination becomes the foundation of Kierkegaard's dialectic theology (p. 99). And with reconciliation and repentance in the religious sphere, the dialectic comes to a full stop (p. 101). The hierarchy of the spheres only grants authority to the aesthetic and religious spheres, making the ethical sphere, a kind of transitional stage (in a three stage model). In sum, for Adorno (1987: 104): "Theological truth crashes down to human level as aesthetic truth and reveals itself to man as a sign of hope." The aesthetic sphere transcends the religious, while devaluing the ethical (as a passage point). "Thus the system of the spheres finally collapses over the question of concretion, which originally distinguishes from Hegelian systematic universality" (p. 105).

What I think we can learn from Adorno's critique of Kierkegaard is to place spirituality in its social, economic, and historical contingency.

Adorno's (2000/1963) book, *Problems in Moral Philosophy* finds Kant's formalistic ethics to be more critical than Kierkegaard, or even Hegel's "content-based ethics" (p. 165). Ironically Hegel is the one who engages with the social phenomena, whereas Kant's universalistic ethics do not. On the other hand Kierkegaard critiques Hegel's dialectic, without addressing Kierkegaard's own "thoroughgoing idealism" in his theological idealism, his "radical philosophy of interiority" (p. 148). The reason for Kant's critical stance is his radical exclusion of everything empirical (p. 106).

The result is we can posit several types of critical spirituality. Hegel's critical spirituality is realized in the mediation of thesis and antithesis, with Spirit as the "prime mover" (p. 48) in history and political economy. Kierkegaard and Kant each reject the empirical, but in different moves. Kierkegaard relies on sensual desire, and its corruption in the aesthetic to prompt an obligation to ethics, which is mediated (synthesized) in the theological (where, as pointed out above, the dialectic stops). Kant's critical spirituality, on the other hand is opposed to empirical (sensemaking perception) and to theology, because for Kant the world is thoroughly evil (p. 149). For Kant there are three cardinal principles: (1) human freedom of the will, (2) immortality of the soul, and (3) existence of God (p. 67) The role of God in Kant's critical spiritual philosophy is as the "guarantor

of the moral law that emanates from pure reason” (Adorno, 2000/1963: 148). In the absence of God, the world is a living hell.

We turn now to Horkheimer, who works out a different version of critical spirituality.

HORKHEIMER: SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM

In Horkheimer’s essays (in *Critique of Instrumental Reason*), there is a plea to return to a kind of spiritual activism, such as when Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers, or aligned himself with the poor and more marginalized, rather than with those more well off and in power. In Horkheimer’s *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, several of the essays are explorations of various spirituality/religion constructs as they relate to business.

Theism and Atheism – In this 1963 essay, Horkheimer (1974: 34) points out “crimes committed in the name of God are a recurrent theme in the history of Christian Europe.” Horkheimer’s concern is that, over time, Christianity moved away from the founder’s utterance. Unlike Buddhism, there is in the more contemporary Christianity, a renewed pact with worldly wisdom that can be a “readiness for fanaticism” something that its founder was put to death for (p. 35). Horkheimer points out several facets that Christ as founder of a spirituality portrayed, for which he was put to death:

1. The last would be first
2. Out of hope, not fear
3. Being on the cross [of suffering] rather than putting the ruling order first
4. Help the poor in spirit rather than being primarily oriented toward riches, power, prestige, or affairs of state

Business spirituality seeks to reconcile Christianity with what by most accounts is a corrupt world: burning women accused of witchcraft as heretics; sending children to work before they could read; making and blessing bombs, etc. (Horkheimer, 1974: 39-40). And, more so, in this age of Enron, Haliburton, and WorldCom. Horkheimer prefers the Christian spiritual path of Kierkegaard, who extolled suffering as a virtue. He is distrustful of the patchwork scholasticism (since the Monastic period, see summary

above). Its barbaric foundation gives Christianity its most essential link to business. Hitler in WWII manipulated the masses using claims of ‘positive Christianity’

In contemporary work, this patchwork includes organizing spirituality around competitive business practices, servant leadership being hailed by Wal-Mart in its 1993, 1994, and 2002 annual reports -- confusing servanthood with serving the business customer, and making acceptance of leader decisions a sign of one’s spiritual maturity (Boje & Rosile, 2007). CEO Lee Scott writes “Our founder Sam Walton, believed in servant leadership... wove it so skillfully into our culture that our Associates are naturally committed to community service with compassion and integrity” (Wal-Mart, Annual Report, 2002: 12).

In the 2002 Wal-Mart Annual Report, the claim of Servant Leadership appears hypocritical, made in a year of record class action lawsuits against the corporation for various unethical practices. Horkheimer (1974: 37) seems nostalgic for ‘Talmudic spirit’ in interpretations of the Torah. In other instances, the revival of the Protestant work ethic degenerates in to Workaholism and performativity.

As Marx (1867: 233), observing child and female sweatshop labor practices in US and UK put it, “Capital is dead labor, that, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labor, and lives the more, the more labor it sucks. The time during which the laborer works is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labor-power he has purchased of him.” To Horkheimer (1974: 38), as with most other critical theorists, “each [wo]man’s life had a meaning, not just the lives of the prominent” (bracketed addition, mine).

Horkheimer emphasizes Martin Luther’s hatred of scholasticism as the ‘Whore Reason.’ The difference between scholasticism and CT approaches to business spirituality is that scholastics glorify existing social conditions, whereas for CT socioeconomic transformation means widening participation. Horkheimer (1974: 39) is skeptical of Luther, as well as Kant’s, (1785/1993) limitation of metaphysical speculation, which leaves Reason free to room in commerce. With Social Darwinism, people justify exploitation using theological and evolutionary terms. One ruthless competitive business practice, or competition among nations, becomes just as spiritual in it’s unfolding as any other, using trite comments, as “God’s ways were peculiar”

(Horkheimer, 1974: 39-40). Horkheimer concludes that with each phase of capitalism, theology and spirituality are adapted to fit the socioeconomic situation.

Horkheimer (1974: 43) describes “The Spirit of the Gospels” is the thesis, but the antithesis of once militant atheism, has atrophied. Instead of dialectic synthesis, Christ “could not longer be distinguished from the radiant Being of the Neo-Platonists.” Atheists, in the main, adopted Nature as Eternal guideline of self-preservation. Their position was little different than Social Darwinian spirituality. A rebel voice, would post an antithesis, more consistent with Christianity’s founder, and ask for “liberty and justice” for all (Horkheimer, p. 43). The integration of business and spirit, for theist and atheists, after the French Revolution, becomes an ideology of individual self-preservation.

“The new spirit” for Horkheimer (1974: 45-46) would improve the lot of workers, provide them more equitable share of the wealth, liberate them from brutal oppression under backward dictatorships, build middle-class virtues for a new socioeconomic order, including a more active part in shaping society. For this to happen the kinds of scholasticism spirituality where God and Son of God are as mythical as king and prince in a fairy tale would need revision. Horkheimer (p. 46) stresses that “without God one will try in vain to preserve absolute meaning.” Instead of love of the Other as an abstraction, dim historical memory, or empty talk, for Horkheimer it is part of action. A deconstructive resituation in which “various implications contained in this principle [would] be made explicit” (Horkheimer, p. 48). What directions could Christian love have today in business and society? For example, to eradicate injustice and world hunger. For Horkheimer, nihilistic works on political economy have equally empty rhetoric as scholasticism. To Horkheimer, Christ’s speeches are much like those of Marx and Engels. Certainly, atheism is no longer providing the opposition. Rather, a new spirituality, a more honest theism focused on justice, ethical practices of answerability to the situation of workers and the poor, is called for.

The Soul In Horkheimer’s (1974) 1967 essay on the *The Soul*, he develops the interplay of its scientific and theological conceptions. The idea of a soul that outlives the body is a development Horkheimer says is independent of scripture. Its roots are in ancient Greece, not in Judeo-Christian sources. Scholasticism overlays the Greek

concept of soul onto visions of hell and heaven. Thus the duality of soul and corporeal (body) was established as the non-spatial and the spatial. In Islam and Pomponazzi (15th century Europe) the heretical idea of a union of individual soul with world-spirit (world-soul) emerges among theologians, and is consistent with Hegel's dialectic doctrine. In Leibniz's view, the individual soul is a monad, an immaterial spirit essence: "The lower monads live vague, unspirited lives. Consciousness, spirit, and soul are essential attributes of the higher monads" but for Nietzsche, "we have a nervous system, but not a soul" (pp. 55, 57). Horkheimer concludes that "'soul' in retrospect is becoming a pregnant concept expressing all that is opposed to the indifference of the subject who is ruled by technology and destined to be a mere client. Reason divorced from feeling is now becoming the opposite of *Anima* or soul" (P. 60). Soul, then stands beyond what science dismisses as transcending senses and outside what theology can provide. The problem for critical theorists is that soul is romanticized so that oppression, murder, Auschwitz and the Warsaw ghetto (& those of NY), the Vietnam war, and starvation are ignored. Which leads Horkheimer to ask if God is also not paying attention, on a journey, or dead. We long for the spirit (or soul) that is so easily rejected in the rebellion of young writers. To keep alive the idea of spirit, to the critical theorist, means to also keep alive the skeptic's doubt regarding any alignment of spirituality and business in global capitalism.

The German Jews The (Horkheimer, 1974) 1961 essay, *The German Jews*, points out that since the 1920s, pluralism has been on the decline. People are persecuted, even in democratic society, for their religion, politics, national origin, or skin color The plight of the Jews, for Horkheimer, is to overcome prejudice. He asks if the collective memory, and spirit, of this particular group has become so different, so embittered, to further rupture unity of the people? The aim of democratic society is for groups with different beliefs and customs, or spirit, to be able to co-exist peacefully. "Since the twenties of this century, however, the pluralist society has been in decline." (Horkheimer, P. 103).

Intense competition between individual entrepreneurs, now on a global scale, is leading to far-reaching uniformity. Yet, as in Germany, in Russia Jews were, and more recently in the Middle East are targeted for elimination. After 9-11 the diversity of

cultural, religious, ethnic, and racial identity has lessened. Spirit has become less about 'we' and more about the 'I.' The point here is that the forces of globalization and post 9-11 combine to exacerbate individualism.

Patterns of thought, association, inclination, and repugnance have developed for Catholics, Protestants, and Jews in ways that extend to business matters. Concrete thought-forms, gestures, and emotion reactions distinguish one spiritual practice from the other. Here, Horkheimer, brings home his thesis: being combined into one, totalized spirituality is neither assimilation nor emancipation. It is a collapse of spiritual diversity. In the case of assimilation, to the global empire, persecuted spiritual paths, identify themselves with the dominant order, which means more highly conservative traits than majority culture. In the case of liberation, criticism lacks the grounded point of departure one finds in orthodox community. The decline in diversity through assimilation or liberation constitutes its own form of spiritual abuse. That is, globalization has its sense of spirit, one that is acculturated worldwide. And this is what makes Horkheimer's essays so unique. He extends his criticism of business and society, as well as global capitalism, from the vantage point of Jewish heritage. And it is neither a "critico-negative spirit" nor a positive Christianity spirit, it is one admitting diversity, plurality, and tolerance (Horkheimer, P. 109). Horkheimer argues, "The Zionist movement, with its refusal to trust any longer in the prospects of pluralism or of the civilization of the autonomous individual... is the radical yet resigned reaction of Judaism to the possibilities thrown open in the last century" (P. 110). The result is to allow opposition, but not extermination.

Horkheimer (1974) closes with an apocryphal story about Hegel. To paraphrase the story, Hegel presented a course on the development of ideas. Audiences came to hear Hegel expecting the mystery of the "Absolute" to be resolved. Instead Hegel moved from Asiatic empires via slavery to Christian nations, and finally to the history of philosophy, beginning with logic. Each work was discussed and how the limitations of an absolute truth gave rise to the impulse for more inquiry. Expecting that the series on philosophical concept would culminate in Hegel's own discourse on the dialectic, the audience was disappointed when instead he began again with logic. "The story sounds like one from the Talmud, and the similarity is more than accidental" (p. 113). Dialectic philosophy is

part of Jewish tradition. What becomes explicit is only a moment in the process of thought striving toward truth, but never arriving.

Horkheimer turns to spirituality in his essay on The Jews: “Yet the understanding of the Jews, of which we are speaking, depends on a spiritual change and the disappearance of the trauma” of the violence practiced by and on the Germans (Horkheimer, 1974: 116). Converting the spirit of an anti-Semite into one who overcomes prejudice is part of the transformation. Demagoguery took hold of Germany in a time of socioeconomic crisis. Anti-Semitism was peddled as propaganda of hatred. That is why critical theorists are so sensitive to injustice.

The End of the Fairy Tale of the Customer as King Finally, the (Horkheimer, 1974) 1964 essay from Critique of Instrumental Reason, ‘*Feudal Lord, Customer, and Specialist: The End of the Fairy Tale of the Customer as King*’ brings together the business aspects of soul (spirit) in the other essays reviewed. Horkheimer expresses the irony that capitalism, having won freedom from feudal king, has now made the customer the absolute ruler. In both, subordination and hierarchy are adopted. Business people accept the phrase ‘customer is king,’ as basic manners and civility in the market place. Suppressing the memory of feudal servanthood, with its pauperization and other economic limits, would be retrogressive. The suppression serves to let Western civilization claim “spiritual advantage over the rest of the world; the East, of course, challenges this view” (P. 135). Worldwide, over 1 billion people live below the international poverty line, earning less than \$1 per day (World Development Indicators, 2006).

Today hospitals and universities have adopted the ‘customer is king’ terminology. Yet, if we compare the ethic of care in hospitals before patients became (insurance) customers, the *medical business* is radically different. Similarly, the corporatization of the university, where president is CEO, students are customers, and faculty perform to dashboard assessment indicators is a radically different *university business*. I am skeptical of the idea that patients and students are customers, in corporately managed versions of hospitals and universities.

In advanced capitalism, with its far-reaching uniformity, standardization of production and consumption (e.g. Disneyfication, McDonaldization, Wal-Mart effect) the

individual identity presupposes the social uniformity of economic situation in which one is embedded. What I read in Horkheimer's essays is a distrust of the spiritual regression in the application of servant leadership, suspicion of 'to serve the customer,' and skepticism of a self-development centered positive spirituality version, so popular in contemporary business.

This is a theme that one finds in his work with Adorno. In the book, *Aspects of Sociology*, Horkheimer and Adorno say, "spiritual regression must be counted among the most threatening symptoms of total sociation" (p. 33). He sees a danger in fascism aligning with spiritual regression because of "hypostasizing the ephemeral" (p. 30). In other words, reifying some complex and dynamic phenomenon into something where the important differences, in this case, in spiritual traditions and practices, get truncated to some fundamental coherence. Horkheimer and Adorno critique Herbert Spencer for transforming spiritual freedom and equality into a legitimation of economic conservatism. Similarly, in the case of Hitler's fascism, spirituality and religious practice becomes a way to sort people into the Holocaust and to legitimate it. Further, in truncating spirituality to its most maniacal diabolical terrorist practice, fascism accomplishes the Holocaust with progressive rationalization, standardization, and other facets of the division of labor (as a postmodern writer, Bauman, 1989 has written about this persuasively). Part of the truncation of spiritual is to focus on subordinating ego interest to the social, or 'common good', effectively talking people out of a more 'critical sociology' (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972/1956: 42). A truncated spirituality, here, means taking a myopic view, looking the other way, being the bystander to atrocity.

In particular, Horkheimer and Adorno (1972/1956) are concerned that in the conceptualization of the individual in 18th century capitalism there begins the substitution of the ethic of competition for the ethic of cooperation. It is the ethic of competition that results in instrumentalism, treating people as means, rather than in the more Kantian sense of humanity as end unto itself. Instead of collaboration of mutual exchange, the individualistic competition ethic lends itself to the Social Darwinian thesis inspired by Spencer (& Adam Smith) in Darwin's work.

The turn of Horkheimer and Adorno toward critiques of the *Culture Industry* is precisely to counter the illusion of economic competition as being progress, when in their

view, it is degenerative of cooperative exchange. Further, their critique of division of labor, its standardization, routinization, and individuation (standardized specialists) seems to me to anticipate George Ritzer's (1993/2002) McDonaldization thesis (i.e. that the Weberian dimension of rationalization have allowed a dehumanization to occur). The irony as Horkheimer and Adorno (1972/1956: 46) point out is "the fewer the individuals, the more the individualism" because with individualism there is enthronement of competition and hierarchy. The individual becomes a free market cog. Horkheimer and Adorno also are skeptical of the way spirituality has been wrought in the Protestant Ethic, as a concept of moral compulsion to duty. In individualism there is an ideal of equity and freedom of choice promised by the idol of market forces that is not realized in political economy self-determination.

BENJAMIN: ANGEL OF HISTORY

Walter Benjamin was a German-Jew writer, a literary critic of German literature after his superb essay on Goethe spoiled all chances to get into a Ph.D. program in Germany, having critiqued the only academics doing Goethe that might have served on his committee (See Ardennt, 1955/1968: 8). Benjamin was one of the Jewish CT scholars fleeing Hitler was Walter Benjamin. He believed that the Nazis were ready to close in on him, because the Gestapo had seized his Paris apartment and his library. Benjamin got as far as the Franco-Spanish border, where a manuscript he was working on was confiscated, where upon, that night Benjamin took his own life (Ardennt, 1955/1968" 18). The very next day, the guards relented, and let refugees cross their borders. Ironically, the Jews in Paris were only shipped back to German if they were political opponents.

Benjamin's path to critical spirituality is a unique surrealist experience of epic dialectic method. This comes forth in his uncompleted *Arcades Project* (Benjamin, 1999). The flâneur (stroller, walker, & idler) strolls leisurely through the 19th century Paris arcade. The arcade is the forerunner to the department store and the indoor mall, where one walks through faux nature without intention to buy, gazing the death of nature, deciphering visual images of what Horkheimer and Adorno called, *The Culture Industry*. The poet, Goethe, informs Benjamin's critical spirituality, a poetic-angel's view of the world set down in an epic poem that would juxtapose primary documents, trading the

historical roots of fascism, and the economic battles in Europe. Benjamin's Goethean concept is that of an "*Ur*-phenomenon extracted from the pagan context of nature and brought into the Jewish contexts of history" (p. 462). Benjamin is the flâneur—angel strolling through the crowds, turning his back to those crowds, looking backward as an "angel of history" (Ardendt, 1955/1968: 12) retrospectively looking not at some dialectic chain of events, but at "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet" (p. 12).

Benjamin's work on a dialectical method of history in his arcades project, is concerned with fathoming an origin of the visual forms and the Paris arcades in socioeconomic facts, then show its unfolding, and decline as a historical form orality, and the eruption of visibility as a medium of sensemaking (p. 462). Whereas, in earlier generations, history of oral generations was explained to people in terms of religious doctrine (p. 388), or "old traditional experiences of nature" (p. 447), Benjamin's dialectic method offered a way of awakening, as if from a dream to a visual nightmare. For Benjamin (1999: 389), "The new, dialectical method of doing history presents itself as the art of experiencing the present as waking world, a world to which that dream we name the past refers in some new visual truth." Each now is a now bursting into spacetime, casting its light onto what is present, what is past, coming together in a flash, dialectics at a standstill, where a critical reading is founded (p. 463).

Benjamin (1936) did his classic article "The Storyteller..." asserting that storytelling competencies have eroded, changed and been destroyed forever by the new rhythms of work. Once storytelling was tied to the crafts, to the rhythm of workers doing weaving and sewing before they were forbidden to tell and listen to stories, before they were divided and put under the noise of machines.

FROMM: THE ABSOLUTE SPIRIT GETS SICK

Erich Fromm was a Jewish-German-American social psychologist. He joined the Frankfurt Institute in Critical Theory in 1930, moving to Columbia University in 1934 to escape Nazi persecution. In his doctoral work, Fromm studied with a rabbi, and was influenced by rabbis and Talmudic scholars in his family. He drew upon his knowledge of the Talmud and Torah in fashioning his theory of authority and personality. For example, in the Adam and Eve story, Fromm (1951: 246), using his knowledge of the

Talmud, but departed from Orthodox Judaism, when he fashioned a theory of existential angst, where Adam and Eve had learned independence from authoritarian moral values by taking independent action (eating the apple of the Tree of Knowledge). Adam and Eve had become aware of their nakedness, separateness from the universe, and powerlessness within a dominant society, resulting in their guilt and shame. To state another example, Fromm was inspired by the Torah, in an interpretation of the story of Jonah. Jonah refused to be controlled, and did not want to interfere in the affairs of Nineveh. For Fromm the resistance to or escape from authoritarian and repressive socioeconomic structures was healthy. Fromm's (1951) work includes a Talmudic interpretation of the Sabbath commandment, where work is a violation of a day of rest. "The Sabbath is the day of peace between man and nature; work is any kind of disturbance of the man-nature equilibrium" (Fromm, 1951: 244). The Sabbath, for Fromm, symbolizes a day of harmony between man and nature, as well as between man and man (p. 245).

In short, in terms of dialectic, Fromm's critical spirituality, informed by Talmud and Torah, is a Hegelian *Absolute Spirit* that has gotten mentally sick, and become neurotic (Fromm Wikipedia entry, 2007). In Hegelian dialectic, *Absolute Spirit* guides history in a rational path. But in Frommian *Absolute Spirit* the road to liberation from self-emancipation from misperceptions never escapes repression. The struggle is to escape the love of one's chains and to love one's self. As Fromm (1947: 126) put it, "To love another person is only a virtue if it springs from this inner strength, but it is a vice if it is the expression of the basic inability to be oneself."

Conclusion and Implications

Benjamin, as well as Horkheimer, Fromm and Adorno critique Kant's ought (categorical imperative). Kant skirted the ethics of answerability. It was enough for Kant that we not lie or steal because of the Golden Rule. But, this was perverted in Business Ethics. It is now just a stakeholder theory, that we do not lie or steal from the corporation, that we treat that surrogate for market forces, the customer, as always right. Great, do you see how answerability becomes nothing but conviction ethics, and how that is enfolded into stakeholders of the mind. God forbid real stakeholders engaged in the dialogic and did direct democracy and asked for answerability. Fromm challenged authoritarian rule as an escape from freedom, be it in theology, the state, or corporation.

Each of these CT scholars presents version of a critical spirituality, one that dovetails with my review of spiritual abuse.

If my thesis is correct, CT founders have had an ambivalent conception of the relation of spirit and business. On the one hand, they object to spiritual abuse, the way it plays a role in instrumental performativity, injustice, and oppression. On the other hand, there seems tacit recognition in the essays reviewed that a spirituality that seeks equality, social justice, and plurality is beneficial to business and society. For CT, the relation of spirit and business is dialectical. The thesis of positive spirituality with its emphasis on individualism is opposed by the antithesis of critical spirituality with its emphasis on social justice. In this view critical spirituality is not a dismissal of all spirituality, it is merely incredulity to self-development individualism and abstract scholasticism. At issue is how is love thy neighbor as thyself put into practice.

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¹ For gifts of the spirit verses: 1 Cor 12: 8-11, 27-31; 1 Cor 13: 1-13; 1 Cor 14: 26-39; 2 Cor 4: 13; Acts 2: 4, 17; Eph 1: 17; Ex 31: 3; James 1: 5-6; Mark 16: 17-18; Rom 15: 19