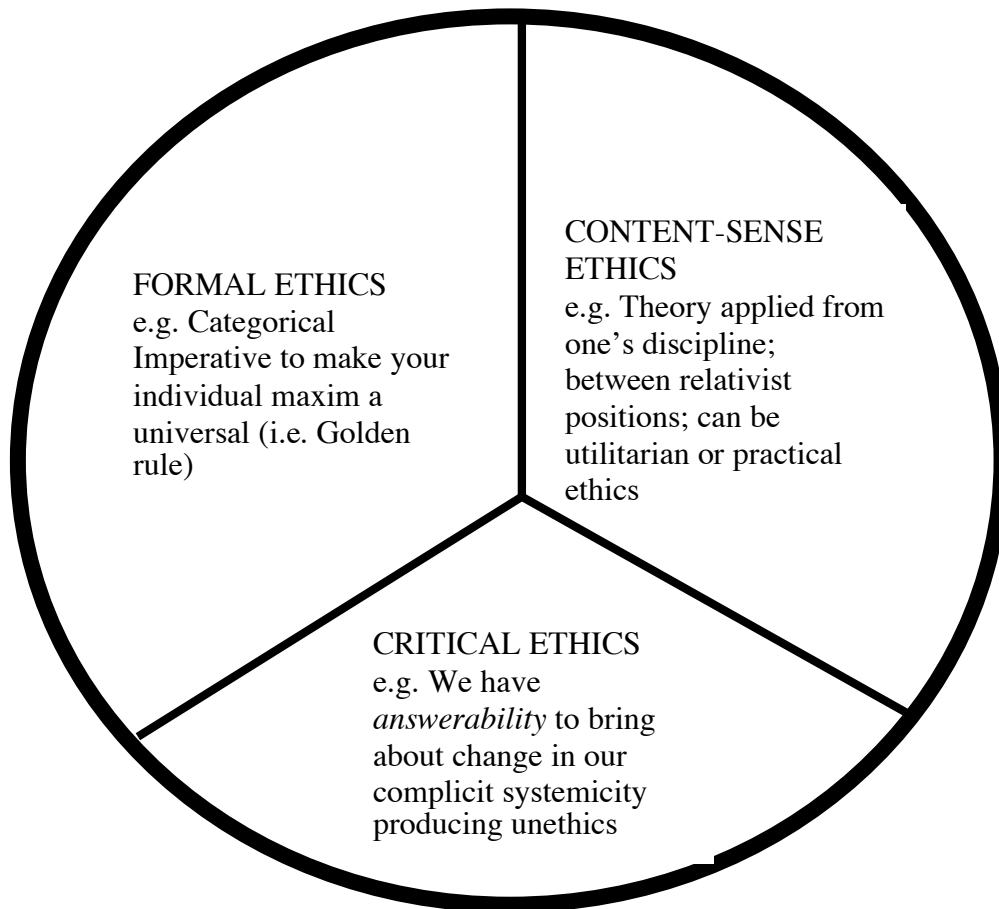


## Chapter 1 Contributions of CT Ethics For Business and Public Administration ---

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The structure of this book introduction is to give the reader a brief overview that addresses the question, ‘what is Critical Theory?’ The overview includes looking at the contributions of the two directors of the Frankfurt School Institute for Social Research, as well as the several historical phases that constitute shifts in the direction of its theory. I then look at several scholars associated with Critical Theory, and conclude with some contemporary work being done in lower-case ‘critical theory’ (the conventional way to designate those contributing to projects begun by the Frankfurt School directors and associates). I turn to the issue of ‘where are the feminist scholars in Critical Theory?’ I conclude by positing some ways to develop an ethics of responsibility in business and public administration, and situate the contributors to this book into ‘critical theory.’



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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Stuart Clegg for his helpful comments on this chapter

### **Figure 1: Interdependency of Three Types of Ethics**

Figure 1 represents the interplay of three interdependent ethical positions. The formal ethics of Kantian categorical imperative, and the content-sense ethics which takes in a more utilitarian ethics, compete in organizational discourse with what we propose in this book as a ‘*critical ethics*’ of answerability. Whereas formal ethics asks each person to do the right thing, it does not answer with a description of what is required to change systematically. As Adorno (1963/2000: 174) often repeats, “there is no right behavior within the wrong world.” One way of thinking of this is through the concept of answerability, from Mikhail Bakhtin (1990, 1993). “An answerable act or deed” according to Bakhtin (1993: 42) “is precisely that act which is performed on the basis of an acknowledgment of my *obligative (ought-to-be) uniqueness*.” What is necessary is an answerable organizing with others to bring the maxim about. It is recognizing that one is a unique participant in Being, in once-occurrent, irreplaceable times and places, where there is no alibi not to answer what is going on in an organization. Horkheimer (1933/1993) puts it this way: “In the attempt to actually apply the Kantian imperative, it immediately becomes clear that the general interest of the moral will is concerned about would not be helped in the least” (p. 22). Rather, to be answerable is to be witness, to organize with others to bring about changes.

Content-sense ethics can be defined as “an indiscriminant conglomeration of various principles and evaluations” (Bakhtin, 1993: 23). Bakhtin raises two challenges to content ethics. Content-sense ethics tries to find special grounding for its principles in ways that are sometimes quite relativistic and utilitarian (Bakhtin, 1993; Horkheimer, 1947: 22). Content-sense ethics bounces between universal and relativist concerns, grounding ethics in theoretic disciplines, in concepts such as equity, commitment, loyalty, and not blowing whistles on activities outside ones own job. In short, “the ethical ought is tacked on from the outside” by the theory/concept (Bakhtin, 1993: 23). When the content-sense theory tries to generalize, it becomes flawed in its attempts at universality (Bakhtin, 1993: 25). It then shares the same ‘radical defect’ as formal ethics (Bakhtin, 1993: 23-25).

A *critical ethics of answerability* does not ignore formal or content ethics. It adds the criterion that each unique participant in an organization (be it public or private) has a “concrete, unique and compelling oughtness” to change the system producing the ethical problems (Bakhtin, 1993: 46). We are complicit participants as consumers, producers, owners, or critics. We participate in *Being* and are answerable.

What underlies the unity of an answerable consciousness is not a principle [or set of ethic codes] as a starting point, but the fact of acknowledgement of one’s own participation in unitary Being-as-event (Bakhtin, 1993: 40, bracketed addition, mine).

I intend to trace how answerability has its parallel in the early writings of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory (Adorno, Benjamin, Fromm, Horkheimer, & Marcuse). Adorno (1963/2000) talks about it as the distinction between Kant’s ethics of conviction, and an ethics of responsibility.<sup>2</sup> Horkheimer’s challenge is how can any “society of isolated individuals”, acting with an ethics of conviction, bring about meaningful change in the social order (Horkheimer, 1933/1993: 25)? In short, individuals ought to organize to join the dialectical processes in history, hopefully joining the antithesis of exploitative global capitalism.

The *critical ethics of answerability* is a matter of contention in *business and public administration ethics*. I shall argue, in what follows, that answerability is being actively co-opted. To make this case, I must begin by defining terms, and provide a brief genealogy of Critical Theory and its influences.

## I. DEFINING TERMS AND CONTRIBUTION OF THE BOOK

**What is Critical Theory (CT)?** ‘Critical Theory’ (upper case, CT) designates the philosophy, theory, and practice of the directors and associates of the Frankfurt School Institute for Social Research from 1931 until several decades ago. The Frankfurt School

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<sup>2</sup> Kantian ‘ethics of conviction’ not measuring up to an ‘ethics of responsibility’ comes from Horkheimer (1947: 6-7). Horkheimer is convincing that ethics is an emasculation (p. 24) of moral philosophy. Business Ethics, in particular, is an ethics of conviction (or as Bakhtin 1993 calls it a content ethics) created outside of moral philosophy. As more philosophy professors have begun to teach ‘business ethics’ the avoidance of responsibility/answerability by Business Ethics, as taught by those growing up in the Business School is more obvious gap.

was founded in Frankfurt in 1923. The Frankfurt School learned from the work of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Weber, Lukacs, and Freud (Held, 1980: 16).

Key directors include Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer. Jurgen Habermas' recent leadership sought to refocus Critical Theory. Key associates include Walter Benjamin, Henry Gossmann, Arkadij Gurland, Eric Fromm (often excluded by historians), Otto Kirchheimer, Leo Lowenthal, Herbert Marcuse, Franz Newmann, and Freidrich Pollock. CT developed a critique of moral philosophy that still provides a way to associate the 'ethics of conviction' (how to reflect upon moral good of our own life) and the 'ethics of responsibility' (what is our answerability for changing the macro social, political, economic, and cultural systems that are responsible for exploitation, oppression, injustice, and inequity around the world).

**What is 'critical theory (ct)?** The 'ct' (lower case) is what is commonly referred to as the work of contemporary scholars, particularly in the fields of business management and public administration, who are making contributions by changing, revising, and critiquing the earlier work of CT (Frankfurt School).

I am working with Bakhtin's (1993) *Toward a Philosophy of the act*, written in his notebooks between 1919-1921. We effect our signature in an emotional-volitional-tone that we give to sense-content in the once-occurrent act of a domain such as telling or hearing a story with the signature of answerability. Our emotional-volitional-tone is a signature acknowledgment of one's obligation. It is "answerably acting or acting-performing" of story "consciousness" that participates in the actual moment (p. 38). When I tell a story in emotional-volitional-tone or hear it and the tone is experienced in my living consciousness then, in that moment, I make a unique answerable signature to some ongoing event that has being-as-event with an "ought-to-be-attitude" or morally valid answerability (p. 36). This is the power of a story. "This is the way in which a living consciousness and a cultural consciousness becomes embodied in a living consciousness" (p. 33).

**What is Critical Postmodern Theory?** Put simply, critical postmodern theory is defined as the intersection of Critical Theory with Postmodern Theory. There is a nexus of some Critical Theory and some avenues of postmodern theory that focus on human

subjectivity, on the interpretation of socioeconomic conditions. As with Critical Theory, Postmodern Theory is not one theory, but many theories (some quite co-opted) and some not. My own work is situated in this nexus of Critical Theory and Postmodern Theory.

**What is Managerialism?** One of the barriers to the emergence of the revolutionary agent, the Critical Business Ethicist, is managerialism. Managerialism is defined as ethics seen through the viewpoint of managers, the owner's agents of capital. Managerialism is a *reification* of the multi-faceted panorama of logics and worldviews of diverse stakeholders (employees, unions, community, Nature, etc.). *Reification* means to treat a subjective process as objectified, treating social phenomena as an object or thingness. Authority, power, justice, and ethics are frequently reified. The social relations that constitute ethical phenomena become redefined as object-like relations.

**What is Surplus Value?** Surplus Value is produced by surplus labor, the labor in excess of what is needed to compensate the laborer plus cost of tools and materials used in the production process. Classical Marxism views surplus value (& surplus labor) as the primary source of exploitation in capitalism. In short, in Classical Marxism, *Surplus Value is the primary form of capitalist exploitation of labor*. Analytic Marxists, on the other hand, regard "organization exploitation" as the primary source of capitalist exploitation. *Organizational exploitation* is defined as "exploitation based upon unequal control of organizational assets" (Mayer, 1994: 333). *Status Exploitation* is defined as "economic inequality based upon possession of organizational or bureaucratic position" (Mayer, 1994: 338).

## II. DEFINING CONTRIBUTION

**Contribution - *Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics*** has been co-opted, and can be reinvented with *Critical Theory*. In this book we shall assert that what passes for ethical theory and practice is a co-opted version of Moral Philosophy that denies the responsibility of citizens to change and resist the exploitations of late modern capitalism. In our time, *Business Ethics*, its conferences, journals, and consulting has taken the low road: corporate codes of conduct, compromised monitoring of said codes, creative accounting to subvert accountability, submission to Neo-Liberal market ethics legitimating exploitative practices, bait and switch to make it appear unethical business practices are not happening, and a lack of critical thinking skills being taught to students.

**What is ethics and moral philosophy?** *Ethics* is defined simply as “doing the right things in the right way” (Clegg, Kornberger & Pitsis, 2005: 253). In CT, there are two types of ethics, and both are necessary. First, there is the ‘ethics of conviction’ to lead a right life in the right way. Second, is the ‘ethics of responsibility’ or what Mikhail Bakhtin (1990) calls the ethics of ‘answerability’ to understand the systems we are a part of, and to take action to change those systems so they stop producing the same, let us say ‘evil’ results. For me, Bakhtin is an example of someone doing ‘ct’ (lower-case). Like CT directors and associates of the Frankfurt School, Bakhtin critiqued Immanuel Kant’s work on moral philosophy. Moral Philosophy is much more encompassing and less shallow and mundane than what passes for Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics in our time. Indeed we are in a crisis. We inherit ethics from Greek moral philosophers who asked what is the meaning of the “Good Life” and “what is ‘good’ and what are ‘bad’ relationships to the *Other* (Jones, Martin & ten Bos, 2005: 2, 75)?

The academic fields of Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics are in crisis. Their ethics serves as a shield to hide unethical practice. These fields emerged in the 1970s and have become apologists for doing the least that has to be done, ethically. These ethics disciplines present Kant’s categorical imperative (to make each individual’s maxim a universal law in human conduct) into an alternative to Kant’s practical reason (sorting out what is in our self-interest). The problem with this line of ethical theory and practice is that it ignores the teachings of the ‘ethic of answerability’ with its injunction to become involved and change the status quo, and the recognition that it’s impossible to lead the good moral life within a society or global capitalism that frames a bad moral life. For practical business purposes, contemporary Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics endorse a *Supposed Right to Lie* and to *Right to Exploit* because of practical concerns; it is co-opted! It does this by privileging the individualistic explanation, that our society and global capitalism gives us freedom by making us responsible only for being individualistic, and not social. In our administered business and public world, organizations are said to be in charge of changing the systems that exist, while we ‘individuals’ are just supposed to not lie, cheat, or steal (thus making us ‘good’ corporate workers and good citizens). As apologists for the status quo, and non-involvement of citizens in changing the practices of global capitalism, Business Ethics and Public

Administration Ethics writers do debate the ethics of child labor, bribery, and pollution, while treating most other issues, such as wage rates and right to organize, as if they do not present ethical concern to business or public sector.

The result is dumbing down of ethics by acts of exclusion of answerability. A short list of the excluded topics includes employment contracts, 9 to 5 routines of work, inequalities of race, ethnicity, and class, as well as our concern with areas of Critical Theory (& critical theory) such as business participation in postmodern war, Biotechnology, sweatshop labor in computer, apparel, sneaker, toy and other industries; wage slavery, the supposed right of corporations to lie in advertising, and the virtual control over consumption practices CT calls the Culture Industry (the control of media by big business and big political parties). The main objective is to keep any thoughts of an ethics of answerability from entering the minds of citizens. Otherwise these individuals might get self-organized (instead of administratively-organized) in their local community, and petition the state to de-charter and dissolve the unethical corporations and recall politicians who are taking the moral low road.

Business Ethics, as well as, Public Administration Ethics substitutes '*McEthics*' in what sociologist George Ritzer (1993/2002) calls the 'McDonaldization of Society' where 'Just Lovin It' substitutes clown-fun and exhalation of performativity for an ethical inquiry into paying poverty wages, anti-unionism, robotic jobs, exploiting children in advertising, and a diet of unhealthy food, killing animals, and the destruction of the rainforest for cattle grazing. Add to this list Wal-Martization, Disneyfication, and Las Vegasization.

Business Ethics refuses to question or challenge basic assumptions about 'normal' business practices. And in Public Administration Ethics, the collapse of Enron and Arthur Andersen did not raise questions about the complicity of consultancy fees, role of SEC, Congress/Senate contributions, Whitehouse campaign contributions, or endowments to the Business School. A few individuals are handcuffed, and put on trial; the judicial spectacle of theatrics forecloses the need to investigate the wider, systemic areas of contemporary business practices. Anything to keep citizens from beginning to adopt an 'ethics of answerability!'

### **III. DIRECTORS OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL AND THEIR CRITICAL THEORY**

Theodor Wiesengrund Adorno (1903-1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895-1973) were each directors of the Frankfurt School Institute for Social Research. Horkheimer was director after 1931. After their death, Jurgen Habermas assumed the mantle of leadership of the Frankfurt School. Next I put the history into historical phases. My caveat is that as scholars translate more of the early work of CT, that history does change, the history tends to focus on the directors and forgets the work of the associates, and as I shall conclude at the end of this introduction, that the work of feminist CT and 'ct' authors is largely being marginalized.

### **IV. HISTORICAL PHASES OF THE DIRECTORS OF FRANKFURT SCHOOL**

Critical Theory (hereafter, CT) has three phases of historical development.

**CT Phase One** - The early phase of CT was to develop an empirical and historically ground interdisciplinary research program to overcome the inadequacies of Hegelian, Marxist, and Kantian theories. There was hope that the Enlightenment could be salvaged in critical interdisciplinary projects. Then the Nazis came to power. Horkheimer's (1974: vii) *Critique of Instrumental Reason* (a collection of his writing from mid-forties to 1967) asserted that business goals once achieved become instrumental-means to new goals, and that this progression is without ethical moorings). Reason without spiritual (transcendental reflexivity) substance becomes the curse of science made into technology instrumentally deployed by business and public administration. Horkheimer (1974: ix), for a time thought that CT would, after Nazism's defeat, begin a new day of "authentically human history' brought about by "reforms or revolution." Yet new forms of dictatorship emerged.

Critical Theorists, such as Adorno and Horkheimer, contend that ethics is an emasculation of moral philosophy, an emasculation that would horrify Kant. Nevertheless Kant's work has been instrumentally transformed in ways the promote Business Ethics, as emasculated Moral Philosophy. In short, Business Ethics since Kant has privileged an ethics of conviction over an ethics of responsibility. And the ethics of conviction is a



specific product of the Culture Industry, Business and Public Administration schools (& their academies).

Adorno and Horkheimer are particularly critical of Immanuel Kant's (1781/1900) *Critique of Pure Reason*. This jeopardizes Habermas' reading of Kant as a 'communicative ethics' with 'communicative rationality.' As Hunter (1993: x) puts it, "Horkheimer's 1933 essay 'Materialism and Morality,' [is] arguably the most decisive materialist critique of Kantian ethics ever written." Horkheimer (1933/1993: 25) points out, for example, how the Kantian doctrine of the categorical imperative anticipates the end of morality, and helps it along by making a "distinction between interest and duty." Adorno (1963/2000) talks about it as the distinction between Kant's ethics of conviction, and an ethics of responsibility. Their thesis is that Kant's writings were influenced and contextualized by the dawn of the industrial revolution. This revolution is the gemstone of the Enlightenment, the purge of the transcendental from science, technology, and for our purpose, administrative reason in business and public administration. As the industrial revolution gave way to the post-industrial revolution of late modern capitalism, Kant's writings on Moral Philosophy have been transformed to achieve currency in a field known as 'Business Ethics' in the Academy of Management, and Public Administration Ethics, in the academy of Public Administration.

Kant (1785/1993; Section 421, p. 30) wrote of categorical imperative, "Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Horkheimer's (1933/1993: 25) critique is the basis for an ethics of responsibility:

If people want to act in a way that their maxims are fit to become universal laws, they might bring about an Order in which this intention – so dubious in the cases invented by Kant – can really be carried out according to criteria.

Horkheimer's challenge is how can any "society of isolated individuals" acting with ethics of conviction bring about meaningful change in the social order (Horkheimer, 1933/1993: 25)? Each individualistic ego in the administered marketplace is concerned for their own property, consumption, and profit. Kant's is an impossible, idealist philosophy that becomes appropriated by power, "the structure of the bourgeois order"

(Horkheimer, 1933/1993: 9). Kant's conceptions of morality are "idealist delusions" (Horkheimer, 1933/1993: 24). Concerns for the moral will of individualistic culture does not help in the least and, in fact, is appropriated by exploitative power to further the spread and depth of exploitation. A conviction of individualistic consciousness (ethics of conviction) to do 'good' in their own life does not change oppressive organizations or global patterns of global exploitation. It's what Horkheimer derides in Kant as a "refined form of the primitive belief in the omnipotence of thought" by the individual.

At the close of phase one of CT, it was business as usual for the capitalist *and* Marxist-inspired states: exploitation reined. Horkheimer and Adorno's (June 1947) introduction could well be describing 2006:

When public opinion has reached a state in which thought inevitably becomes a commodity, and language the means of promoting that commodity, then the attempt to trace the course of such devaluation has to deny any allegiance to current linguistic and conceptual conventions, lest their world-historical consequents thwart it entirely.

**CT Phase Two** - Horkheimer and Adorno's (1947/1972) *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 study or the goal of ultimate emancipation were derivable, or useful from the Enlightenment. Why, because even after the fall of the Third Reich, disaster radiated triumphant (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/1972: 3). Horkheimer and Adorno turned in this second phase to more Weberian and Nietzschean skepticism themes to contend with the dark reality of their age: "This skepticism" according to Hunter, 2000: ix) "regarding the emancipatory potential of science as a whole during this period lead them to abandon the former goal of an empirical, scientific interdisciplinary research program and to focus their theoretical attention increasingly on culture and aesthetic criticism." 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). The individualistic society is absent the social to protest against the administered world. The skills of moral reflexivity, so important to redeem in phase one of CT have atrophied.

## V. ASSOCIATES OF CRITICAL THEORY

Besides the directors, Horkheimer and Adorno, CT has several prominent associates.

**Walter Benjamin (1892-1940)** achieved posthumous fame. In Germany, one writes two dissertation theses. The first that Benjamin wrote insured he would not be invited to write a second. It criticized the very scholars who, understanding power, insured nothing else would follow. Benjamin could not get a regular position at university, so became a contributor of literary criticism to magazines and newspapers. Along the way Benjamin, who wrote few books, but many essays, became more of a poet than a theorist (Arendt, 1955/1968). He chose suicide on Sept 26 1940, during the fall of France. He left safe Paris for the front lines, thinking it was safer. Ironically, Paris was never bombed. Few outside of Adorno, Horkheimer and the playwright Bertolt Brecht knew the name Benjamin. Fifteen years later, his only disciple, Adorno (1955/1966), edited and published two volumes of his writing in Germany, and Benjamin's fame spread. Arendt (1955/1968), writing the *introduction* to Benjamin, compares his posthumous fame to that of Kafka, a genius, who introduces absolute originality (p. 3). Arendt (1955/1968) writes that Adorno and Horkheimer considered what "Benjamin's thinks... undialectic" (p. 10). Yet, these leaders of the Frankfurt School ensured Benjamin's financial support. "Benjamin probably was the most peculiar Marxist ever produced by this movement, which God knows has had its full share of oddities" (Arendt, 1955/1968: 11).

Benjamin's curse was to be a surrealist, to "attempt to capture the portrait of history in the most insignificant representations of reality, its scraps, as it were" (*Beiefe* II, 685, as cited in Arendt, p. 11). Benjamin set about discovering archetypes in the world of seemingly insignificant appearances. Benjamin's refusal to do metaphysics, and his undialectic approach to Marxism could have ended his financial support by the Frankfurt School, but for one good fortune. "Adorno and Scholem blamed Brecht's 'disastrous influence' ... for Benjamin's clearly undialectic usage of Marxian categories and his determined break with all metaphysics" (Arendt, 1955/1968: 15).

Benjamin (1936) essay "*The Storyteller*" sets up my own contribution to this book. Benjamin argues that the only proper way to view the storyteller is from a great

distance. “It teaches us that the art of storytelling is coming to an end” because “less and less frequently do we encounter people with the ability to tell a tale properly” (Benjamin, 1936: 83). Our ability as storytellers to exchange experience is dying. Why? Because “experience itself has fallen in value” (pp. 83-84). Ardenndt (1955/1968) has argued that Benjamin is a surrealist. It is then no accident that another surrealist, Gertrude Stein (1935) would make a similar claim, a year earlier. Both saw that storytelling has left the newspaper business, unable to tell stories of the external or the moral world. We have grown poorer in communicative experience so that we can barely storytell with word of mouth or in writing: reality, meanwhile, grows ever more surreal.

**Erich Fromm (1900-1980)** His CT mixes Freud’s psychoanalysis of unconscious drives (biological determinism) with Marx’s socioeconomic context (economic & class determinism) (1941, 1947, 1956, 1955, 1973). Fromm joined the Frankfurt School Institute for Social Research, as their psychology expert in 1929. In 1934 he left Germany for New York, continuing his association with the Institute for Social Research. According to Douglas Kellner, Fromm was one of the few associates of the Frankfurt School that seriously developed a Marxist feminist critique of gender differences in relation to class.<sup>3</sup> Fromm held that “psychoanalytic characterology... is indispensable to the development of ethical theory (1947: 32). The same words in traditional Aristotelian virtue ethics can take on radically different meaning with psychoanalytic differences of human character’s unconscious. “The subject matter of ethics is *character*, and only in reference to the character structure as a whole can value statements be made about single traits or actions” (Fromm, 1947: 33). Fromm critiques Freudian ethical inquiry for being relativistic (p. 34-35).

**Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979)** His CT takes a more radical revolutionary position. Marcuse’s (1964: xv) *One-dimensional Man* had two hypotheses: “(1) that advanced industrial society is capable of containing qualitative change for the foreseeable future; (2) that forces and tendencies exist which may break this containment and explode the society.” One-dimensional man is that “*happy consciousness* which facilitates acceptance of the misdeeds of this society” (p. 76). “It reflects the belief that the real is

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<sup>3</sup> See Kellner’s web site Erich Fromm, Feminism, and the Frankfurt School accessed 28 August 2006 <http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell8.htm>

rational, and that the established [technological-economic] system, in spite of everything, delivers the goods” (Marcuse, 1964: 79, bracketed addition, mine). The “technological rationality” of the private sector has become the “political rationality” of the public sector (Marcuse, 1964: xvi). The result is a tendency towards totalitarian society, defined as “economic-technical manipulation of needs by vested interests” (p. 3) using the “indoctrinating power of the ‘media’” (p. 8). In public and private spheres all opposition to economic-technical rationality is absorbed (p. 18). Marcuse (1964: 32) explains the failure of the working class to change the established society since working class and managerialist class are being absorbed into the “technological veil” that conceals “inequity and enslavement.” A two-dimensional or dialectical thought does not emerge. Marcuse (1964: 15) references Kant’s agreement with Locke, “in justifying revolution *if and when* it has succeeded in organizing the whole and in preventing subversion.” One-dimensional thought and behavior as such as subversion. Marcuse held that in late capitalism the social conditions for revolution had changed, since opposition of the dialectic was being “rendered illusory or meaningless” (p. 15). One-dimensional habits of thought were being socialized in the masses by education and media that made opposition to established universes of discourse unthinkable. Opposition lines are blurred and opposition has no easy target. Centrifugal forces of social change or revolution do not go beyond the framework of national or group interest (p. 37). “And, to the degree to which the slaves have been preconditioned to exist as slaves and be content in that role, their liberation necessarily appears to come from without and from above” (Marcuse, 1964: 40). Marcuse’s (196: 32-33) *Essay on Liberation* questions Kant’s transcendental reason for limiting it only to space and time a priori thinking, when Marcuse wanted a more material constitutive form, and “rupture with the vocabulary of domination.” In terms of my figure 1, at the beginning of this introduction, Marcuse (p. 37) is setting out a social liberation, as a revolution in sense-content, as a “new sensorium” that could critique the “reason and rationality of the established system” and fulfill Kant’s aim of “reconstruction of society” which is consistent with the *critical ethics of answerability* which I have been summarizing in CT scholars.

**CT in Phase Three** – Since 1970, Jurgen Habermas has led the third phase of CT, by steering it on the famous “linguistic turn” (Hunter, 2000: ix). Habermas rejected

the phase 2 CT focus on aestheticized critique and tried to redeem the phase 1 CT project: the Enlightenment ideal of emancipatory potential of social science using neo-Kantian moral philosophy (ix), which Habermas calls “communicative ethics” (x). Habermas has most recently changed his lens from Frankfurt School (phase 1) to elaborating Luhmann as well as Parson’s structural-functionalist system theory. The result, in my view, is a move away from *critical ethics of answerability*, and a return to formal, absolutist, universalistic ethics to which Adorno, Horkheimer, Fromm, and Marcuse, would, I think, most certainly see as insufficient to the problems posed by the culture industry.

## VI. ‘critical theory’ IN LOWER-CASE

I shall use lower-case ‘*critical theory*’ to refer to critical theory authors who came after the Frankfurt School. The ‘critical theory’ (ct) authors include Douglas Kellner, who writes the introduction to this book. I like to include Mikhail Bakhtin as a critical theorist, as well as Frederick Jameson, and my neighbor in Texas: Steve Best. Contemporary writers in this volume are not all self-identified with ‘critical theory.’ These are regular presenters at ‘critical theory’ and ‘critical management studies’ conferences, and in journals serving that community, such as *Ephemera*, *Electronic Journal of Radical Organization Theory* (EJ-ROT), *Critical Perspectives on International Business*, *Critical Discourse Journal*, *Organization: the Critical Journal of Organization, Theory and Society*, etc, as well as the fledgling journal I founded: *Tamara: Journal of Critical Postmodern Organization Science* (whose title is meant to be ironic). Several I recruited with the assignment to read Critical Theory, and critical theory, to explore the ‘unfinished ethics thesis.’ The ‘ct’ movement has resulting in regular ‘Critical Management Studies’ (CMS) meetings in the UK, and in a full-fledged division forming in the Academy of Management under that name. In the UK, there are several universities that have CMS programs of study. In particular, Leister and Essex Universities have such programs. In the US, there are token faculty in some of the Business and Public Administration Schools doing ‘ct’ work, but they do not run the curriculum for the mass of students coming through their doors. I would say the same is true of ‘ct’ faculty in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and elsewhere. On the horizon is the possibility that ‘ct’ will be gaining increasing control of the curriculum of a Business

or Public Administration school near you. There is something about the current historical era that is prompting this intrusion of ‘ct’ into the belly of the beast.

Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics are fashioned differently in each historical age. What these two bedfellows do not want is any close encounters of their ‘administered life’ with Moral Philosophy, especially Critical Theory. It would become painfully obvious that Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics have emasculated Moral Philosophy. Ethics, in our contemporary era, has removed something effective, the forces of answerability and responsibility from the playing field. To act with Moral Philosophy of answerability is considered offensive to Business and Public Administration.

**State of the Ethical Arts** – In the current Ethics texts, one finds apologies for free market capitalism, which is seen to be quite capable of sorting out the good life. Business Ethicists, in particular, have become apologists for global sweatshop practices. Maitland (1997), for example, defends letting the market alone determine sweatshop wages and standards. He argues that attempts to create living wages may have unforeseen tragic consequences. Raising sweatshop wages, he argues, penalizes those in the informal sector, discourage further multi-national corporate investment, and lead to higher unemployment, greater poverty, less exports, and more inequity. Therefore, the Business Ethicist is advised to pay market-determined rates. He mouths what the World Bank advocates, pay minimum wages in industrialized nations, but never in the Third World. He gleefully quotes Nike’s Phil Knight, pointing out his ethics. Is it any wonder that Nike has been accumulating Business Ethics awards? The moral compass is broken! For Maitland, and the Business Ethicists, what does not conform to free market determination is excess baggage. It’s just another step in the progress of the Enlightenment. “For the Enlightenment, whatever does not confirm to the rule of computation and utility is suspect” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/1973: 6). The Enlightenment is a program to disenchant the world, dissolve myths, and everything transcendental, especially Moral Philosophy.

**The Culture Industry** – Public Administration Ethics does not provide a critique of the administered life. The enlightened public administrator radiates disaster triumphant. Public administrators govern by opinion polls, focus groups, and the advice

of consultants to the Culture Industry. Business Schools and Public Administration Schools are training those who are running the Culture Industry of mass deception. In the Culture Industry all is identical: Home Depot, Wal-Mart, and McDonald's make the housing décor, the apparel, and the food all identical. Wal-Mart is no longer concerned to conceal its monopoly, proud of the "Wal-Mart Effect." Movies, radio, video games, and Internet are just businesses, not art, which needs some kind of ideology that legitimates the artless rubbish produced (H&A, 1947/1973: 121): Culture industry...

It is alleged that because millions participate in it, certain reproduction processes are necessary that inevitably require identical needs in innumerable places to be satisfied with identical goods.

Now the Culture Industry claims that global standards are based upon consumer needs, that sweatshop workers in the Third World cannot possibly be paid living wages, and for these reasons globalization is accepted with so little resistance. The Culture Industry advocates a Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics that sacrifices any distinction between ethics of conviction at work and ethics of answerability for the system of globalization. The Culture Industry controls individual consciousness, advocating the ethics of conviction, without the ethics of answerability. We listen to radio stations, videos, films, and school lectures, and read newspapers and magazines that are all exactly the same. There is no rejoinder to the conservative talk shows babbling hatred across the airways of the U.S. Bible belt. The public favors the Culture Industry system, and wants to be part of the system, but does not look too closely at who owns the mass media. Films, music, videogames, etc are put into consumer classifications (X, R, PG-13, PG, G), so that none may escape (p. 123).

Critical Theory Ethics argues that an ethics of responsibility is necessary compliment to the ethics of conviction. Individuals ought to organize to join the dialectical processes in history, hopefully joining the antithesis of exploitative global capitalism. Ethics of responsibility insures that the external arrangement to effect changes in the power structure come into being.

The ethics of conviction is all about obedience, sacrifice, and is a path to postmodern mysticism. Do the right thing in your cubicle, and all will be well. Leading a virtual life is admirable, but it does not change anything about the contradictions and



miseries in late modern global capitalism. It takes, at the very least, a “constellation of social groups” to effect any meaningful change in the balance of power of dialectic forces of history (Horkheimer, 1933/1993: 21). If the dynamic network organizations of the Empire (WTO, G8, NAFTA, World Bank, etc.) are to be balanced with an antithesis, it will take more than postmodern street theatre actors wearing masks and waving signs. Rather, it takes organizing the grassroots individuals to bring about a counterforce of change.

To be sure the individual cannot fulfill the demand to rationally shape the whole (Horkheimer, 1933/1993: 21)

The individual is already incorporated in the directed labor process and being asked to act with the ethics of conviction, while scuttling the ethics of responsibility to change the whole production and consumption system of global capitalism, and its bed-partners, business and public administration.

Joining, one side or other of the dialectic of history is a Critical Theory that rescues *Business and Public Administration Ethics* from being another emasculated Moral Philosophy. Business Ethics stands on shaky ground by invoking Kantian categorical imperative (ethics of conviction) as an alternative to instrumental ethics (free market capitalism). It is shaky because both are ways to give power over responsibility to the greedy. Kant is mired in egoistic activity of consciousness, moral reflection, and idealism that in contemporary culture is filtered through the distorted lens of the Culture Industry.

Adorno’s critique of Marx’s *Capital* critiques the deducing of society from the principle of exchange (Hullot-Kentor, 1989: xvi). “As Adorno became a Marxist, a complete break from [Kantian] idealism was made” (Hullot-Kentor, 1989: xvi). Adorno’s critique of ‘false immediacy’ (or false organic nature) has as its outcome, the resituation of a ‘true immediacy.’ That is because, in the aesthetics of film, as well as organic system theory, the composition of image and voice into some stylistic organicity tends towards ‘stiltedness’ (Hullot-Kentor, 1989: xvii). It is the role of Business Ethics to obscure this stiltedness, so that spectators do not deconstruct the spectacle. Kierkegaard’s critique of

idealism is destructive. Yet, Adorno situates Kierkegaard in the Enlightenment idealist tradition.

**The Subterfuge of Ethics** – I claim Business Ethics, in particular, is a subterfuge. The ethics of conviction is a doctrine to establish islands of individuals who do not enter the economic struggle on any ocean whatsoever. As Adorno put it “Freedom from the economy is nothing else than economic freedom and remains restricted to a small circle of people as a luxury” (Adorno, 1973: 56 as cited in Hullot-Kentor, 1989, fn 34, p. xvii)

CT acquires its socioeconomic content in resistance to modern capitalism. Business Ethics coverts the positive good it portends into negative evil. Business Ethics joins the brotherhood of what Moral Philosophy formerly rejected. “The metamorphoses of criticism into affirmation [of Business & Public Administration] do not leave the theoretical content untouched, for its truth evaporates” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1947/1973” xii, additions mine).

**Lack of Reflexivity** – Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics lack reflexivity on issues of answerability in terms of the administered global world order. The administered world of organizations, including the network organizations of WTO, NAFTA, World Bank, IMF, etc. rule the world more than United Nations, or nations singly. Business Ethics and Public Administration Ethics churn out their apologetic ideology. As Adorno (1963/2000: 174) often repeats, “there is no right behavior within the wrong world.” BE and PAE are ideologies imposed upon the oppressed, schooled to act with ethics of conviction, cogs in the global machine. We are told by the Business Ethicists that there is no social change outside of market forces that can deal effectively with the circumstances giving rise to injustice, oppression, imperialism, and the Globalization Empire. BE and PAE have degenerated into ideological masks to cover-up dirty business and market forces with ethics plaques.

## **VII. ‘critical theory’ and FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP**

The usual candidates for CT (Frankfurt School) are all males. Yet, there are feminist scholars who have contributed to CT. At the 2006 Academy of Management meetings in Atlanta, several feminist scholars (Joanne Martin, Linda Smircich, Marta Calas, and Anne Cunliffe, among others) put out a challenge to ‘ct’ and ‘CT’ to begin to

do more than cite the usual list of white male scholars. To be answerable to this challenge, I would like to suggest how several feminist not usually cited in 'ct' can contribute: Susan Bordo, Judith Butler, Hélène Cixous, Donna Haraway, Lucé Irigaray, and Julia Kristeva

**Susan Bordo** – Her work links the spectacle of consumer image-dominated Culture Industry (TV, Ads, etc in CT) to formation of gendered bodies, to how images of the slender body train women to a constellation of disorders: agoraphobia, anorexia, bulimia, and hysteria (Bordo, 1993, 1997, 1999). Knowledge of the body is produced by spectacle from a standpoint of male/female dualism. Bordo is critical of treating body as just text. For example, the body-spectacle on popular media-TV, ads, and magazines is a form of domination over sensemaking, i.e. what is beautiful-body. Resistance to the received body style depends upon being able to decode and deconstruct the images. Recent work looks at male bodies from female (image) perspectives.

**Judith Butler** – Her work is related to other poststructuralist & critical theorists: Kristeva, Lacan, Irigaray, Derrida, & Foucault (Butler, 1990, 1993, 1997, 1995, 2003, 2005). She cites Adorno in her desire to break with the bonds of traditional academic styles of writing and language. Sex, sexuality, and gender categories are narrated with an apparent natural-seeming coherence construction that is accomplished through stylized rhetorical acts of telling. Sex and gender control narrative coherence which is accomplished within what Foucault calls regulatory discourse. Butler challenges biological accounts of body to decode what I call *control narrative constructions*, i.e. how systems are constructed as 'natural,' 'organic,' etc. Control-narratives are products of regulatory discourses of sensemaking (Boje, 2006). Butler's ethics approach is that we should assume responsibility (what Bakhtin, 1990, 1993 terms 'answerability') for our narrative accounts, their incompleteness (or unmerged parts, unfinalizability wholeness). This is where, as George Herbert Mead puts it, our "I" is dialectical in relation to many "We's". Since we are in the ontology of intertextuality, our I-We has ethical responsibility, an answerability to change the social situation. This critique of narrative-control is at the core of an ethic-answerability practice.

**Hélène Cixous** – She founded the first center for women's studies in Europe (Paris) and is one of the mothers of feminist poststructuralist theory, with Irigaray and

Kristeva (Cixous, 1975a, b). For Cixous sexuality is socially constructed by what we narrate in society. Her critical theory is influenced by Derrida and Lacan. From Derrida stems her interest in phallogocentric (masculine centered hierarchy of language terms) binaries and, from Lacan, the split of unconscious self by duality of language and emotion.

**Donna Haraway** –She began by looking at the function of masculine (biased) metaphors and narratives in shaping biology science, i.e. toward reproductive competition by aggressive males seeking receptive females (Haraway, 1985, 1989, 1991). She also looks at persistent narratives of racial and gender differences (1989: 377). She turned her focus to our love/hate relation to machines. In terms of answerability ethics, Haraway cannot be silent about the masculinity bias in science narratives. In terms of critical postmodern theory, she argues against any kind of essentialism or universalism.

**Lucé Irigaray** – She is one of the founding mothers of feminist poststructuralist theory, with Kristeva and Cixous (Irigaray, 1974, 1977, 1984). She attended Lacan’s seminars, and applies Derrida’s phallogocentric concept. Irigaray deconstructs male ideology underlying whole-system thinking. She creates a feminine counter-systemicity with positive sexual identity for women, and intersubjectivity between man and women.

**Julia Kristeva** is another of the mothers of feminist poststructuralist theory, with Cixous and Irigaray (Kristeva, 1984, 1995). She was influenced by Bakhtin’s (1968, 1990, 1993) philosophy of language and the carnivalesque, and Lacan’s Psychoanalysis (from a less structuralism perspective). Kristeva’s work develops carnivalesque reading of intertextuality (See Boje, 2001). It is in the intertextual in-betweenness that the local responsibility for our ethics is situated, rather than some universalistic claim.

## **VIII. HOW TO BE ANSWERABLE IN A WRONG WORLD?**

I resist what the world has made me. I am answerable for what I consume.

- I don’t wear Nike
- I don’t shop at Wal-Mart
- I don’t eat at McDonald’s
- I don’t vote for Empire

These are acts of resistance, but these acts alone do not serve the ethics of answerability. Getting arrested for non-violent protest against the war, being told by the university administration that I am not ‘corporate-enough’ to be an administrator of anything --- that gets closer to Kierkegaard’s self-sacrifice, but is still not bringing about answerability by creating viable alternatives.

My writing and speaking can begin to reflect upon how I am involved and totally complicit in the systemicity I protest. I am no saint, and cannot avoid the temptation to join in the *Culture Industry*, to go to its movies, read its news, rent its videos, ride its motorcycles and cars. The *Culture Industry* is my biggest addiction. What I obtain from the *Culture Industry* is so deformed and distorted, that I must meditate hours to get clarity about how to live the Good Life. Yet, as CT writers have stressed, my ethical convictions are not changing the systems that exist. To do that, I would need to actively change the *Culture Industry*. In truth, I am no match for it. My fledging website does not change consumer behavior, does not change corporate behavior, and barely interests students.

### VIII. SUMMATION

There is a critical ethical tradition represent by CT and ct that informs CMS (Critical Management Studies). The purpose of this book is to develop those ethical traditions. For example Horkheimer’s books (1974a, b) *Eclipse of Reason* and *Critique of Instrumental Reason*, and his (1933) early and now classic essay on *Materialism and Morality* ask for a reformation of Kantian ethics. The reform sought is that categorical imperative in an individualism capitalism serves to worsen the difference between business ethics and moral philosophy. That is, it is not enough to try to be good or ethical as individuals when it is the systemic processes than must be dealt with. Therefore Horkheimer asks that the maxim that would be made universal, be done at the level of people organizing with others to change the social system that is producing the unethical behaviours.

Adorno’s (1963/2000) writing, in *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, also call for an reformation of ethics to a higher plane of moral philosophy. As I have summarized the history above, in the early phase of CT (Frankfurt School), Horkheimer and Adorno

sought this reform of Kantian ethics to make it into what Bakhtin (1990, 1993) would call ‘answerability’ ethics. Indeed Horkheimer and Adorno were quite sceptical of the term *ethics* because it had been given over to instrumental and practical reasons to legitimate many forms of exploitation.

In their second phase of CT, Horkheimer and Adorno (1972: 120-167) switched to a *Culture Industry* (aesthetic critique) in 1944 (German Edition of the book). The Culture Industry was “enlightenment as mass deception” (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1972: 120). They thought that a reform of *business as well as public administration ethics* was not going to get to a moral philosophy plane. Adorno (1972/1991: 98) followed up (without Horkheimer), writing a second book on *The Culture Industry*. The Culture Industry sufficiently socializes and manipulates people to be docile and complicit in exploitation. “The entire practice of the culture industry transfers the profit motive naked onto cultural forms” (Adorno, 1991: 99).

Besides the directors of CT (Frankfurt School), associates had their contribution to a *Critical Ethics* (the theme of this book). Erich Fromm’s (1947) book, *Man For Himself*, has the subtitle of, *An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*. Fromm’s differentiation between *Absolute Authority Formalism* and more *Practical Ethics* is not quite the same as where Adorno and Horkheimer go in their early phase of CT. It is however another critique of Kantian ethics. Fromm brings Freudian and Marxism together into an ethical treatise.

Herbert Marcuse (1964, 1969) develops an ethics that is much more akin to early Marxism, to promoting the revolution. He misses the realization that Adorno and Horkheimer had made, that the *Culture Industry* rules, effectively subverting and co-opting ethics from achieving the ideals of moral philosophy.

Walter Benjamin (1955/1968) has his own approach to ethics. Benjamin foresaw the demise of storytelling, and its reduction to rather formalistic beginning, middle, and end, control narratives, where storytelling was once a product of oral community practices. Changes in the division and hierarchical control of labor did away with the community fabric where crafts people practiced their telling and listening skills. *Managerialism* and *The Culture Industry* took over narrative, incorporating it into socialization and other forms of control over the labor process. The result is a narrative

ethics that co-opted story ethics. I will develop this point in my chapter in this book, and will not belabor the point here.

In the late phase of CT, Habermas' project constitutes a return to the formalist, even absolutist, and universalism ethics, in ways Adorno, Horkheimer, Fromm, Benjamin, and even Kant himself would object to. The objection would be that it remakes the critical ethics of the Frankfurt School into an overly rationalist ethics and communicative principle ethics. Some CMS scholars are persuaded by Habermasian ethics, others by the Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, and Fromm reforms of Kant, and still others by the vision Benjamin had. I think these strands need to be sorted out in CMS scholarship. It is my hope that this book contributes to such a project.

After the various strands and phases of CT, what came after was little ct. In this introduction I have focused on Mikhail Bakhtin, whose writing preceded the writing of the Frankfurt School. Bakhtin's project, like that of CT, was neo-Kantian. However, Bakhtin sorted Kant differently than the Frankfurt School. Bakhtin (1990, 1993) in writing between 1919 and the 1920s, looks at differences between his preference for answerability ethics, and the stalled Kantian formal ethics (e.g. categorical imperative) as well as content-sense ethics. Bakhtin calls for answerability, in ways similar to Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse, to go beyond Kant's maxim (golden rule) and actually change the systemicity, a term I use in my own work to describe unfinishedness and unfinalizability of systems (Boje, 2006a) so that it produces less unethical, and more ethic behaviors. Bakhtin, Adorno, and Horkheimer call for intervening in the systemicity. Marcuse goes further and calls for revolution in the Marxist sense. Fromm has concerns with authoritarian ethics for it was part of the Holocaust, and the genocides before and after.

Besides Bakhtin, I have tried to show the contributions of a number of feminist scholars to ct. I recall at a CMS conference a few years back, Joanne Brewis saying CMS was cynical, but not prone to intervening.. In short, for me, there is too much on Alvesson and Deetz, and not enough coverage of the roots of ethical positions in CT and ct.

## **IX. ABOUT THIS BOOK AND CRITICAL ETHICS THEORY**

Robert A. Giacalone, Ph.D. and Carole Jurkiewicz (Series Editors) approached me to request I undertake this project. They gave me freedom to choose whom I wanted to invite to write chapters. For their gracious freedom, I am eternally thankful. Each chapter was peer-reviewed, and revised. I invited philosopher Douglas Kellner to write the preface to the book. I am thankful to the contributing authors of this book for taking on the topics I outlined, and for changing them into what they wanted most to do. The book is organized into several sections.

The first section sets the stages, beginning with a challenge to the field of social responsibility in business and public administration (Jones, Ten bos & Parker have a new book out that is smashing). Then, we turn to Carr, and to Zanettic who each have done critical theory work in public administration. This is followed by Heather Hopfl, who edited an issue on Ethics of goodness, and does the kind of writing that makes deep connections.

The next set of chapters make topic connections: rhizomatics, dialogics of co-experience, story/narrative, and postmodern

The third set of topics focus on application: technofuturist, international business, economics, university, environment, accounting, spirituality, strategy, and ending with Mills work on silence of race/ethnicity in business (and public administration) ethics writing.

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