

RESITUATING NARRATIVE AND STORY IN BUSINESS ETHICS

Accepted Jan 20, 2010 for publication in the journal, Business Ethics: European Review.

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Word count: 7572

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ABSTRACT

In this article we resituate a long-standing duality of (Western) narrative tradition over living story emergence and more linear narrative. Narrative with its focus on linear beginning, middle, and end coherence, retrospection and monologic is too easily appropriated into managerialist projects. We focus on the web of living stories as a Derridian deconstructive move, which allows us to say something important about their relation to narrative, and to develop a storytelling ethics. Our thesis is that resituating the relationship between narrative and living story invites exploration of the plurality of narratives that treat living stories as supplementary. We claim that this deconstructive move allows us to rethink politics and ethics anew. Storytelling ethics opens new spaces for marginalized other(s) voices and creates an awareness of our complicity and responsibility for others. Further, storytelling ethics allows for a more nuanced and varied understanding of business ethics and its inherent exclusionary truth and morality claims and paves the way for a more reflexive ethics.

INTRODUCTION

We suggest that taking a storytelling approach - where *being* is conceptualized as dialogical, plural and emergent and whereby the duality between narrative and story is resituated – changes contemporary business ethics. We follow Derrida to suggest that one look at Western narrative tradition as hegemonic over otherwise relational and pluralistic, even dialogic, living stories. Counsel for readers, narrative in business ethics becomes a distinctive apologetic – and sometimes perverted result.

Our suggestion is to look at how official narratives of business ethics interact spontaneously with emerging living stories. The notion of living story follows from Derrida's notion of story, which according to him has no borderlines. Where narrative seeks to be retrospective, and suppress and marginalize these living stories in favor of linear subjectivity, as one path, one truth, one rationality, one ethics etc., storytelling ethics takes a more dialogic path.

We organize the paper around three deconstructive moves. First, we briefly deal with business ethics and provide some introductory considerations of how deconstruction relates to business ethics.

Second, we reverse the duality of narrative and story and propose a resituated dialogical relationship between the two. This move includes a critique of what we call Western narrative tradition that privileges continuity, order, beginning, middle, end and closure of the text. Further, it includes a conceptualization of living stories.

Third, we draw the implications in relation to business ethics. This includes a description of some principles of what we call storytelling ethics as a particular reflexive ethics (e.g. Boje 2001; Jørgensen & Boje 2009) designed for questioning dominant narratives of good, responsible, answerable etc. We exemplify storytelling ethics by considering recent developments and discussions on business ethics, in particular corporate social responsibility (CSR)

BUSINESS ETHICS AND DECONSTRUCTION

At the outset, we consider business ethics as an oxymoron, a concept, which contradicts itself (Jones 2003; Boje 2008). This is because business ethics is embedded in a capitalist system, which rests on particular principles: liberalism, market forces, competition, consumption and growth. This system rests on the idea of the sovereign ego, which according to MacDonald (2005) has dominated Western philosophy since the Greeks.

MacDonald argues that this system rests on the idea of the rational meaning of being and remains an economic enterprise "...defined by its logic of circularity and its refusal of any expenditure without return" (2005, p. 184); a system which is opposed to the ethical meaning of being. The rational meaning of being is linked to the conception of modern society based on scientific rationality, objective truth, reason, causality, coherence, linearity etc.

The technology of the rational society was and is the bureaucracy with its hierarchical, functional and standardized division of labor, formal routines, rules and procedures etc. (Weber 1971); a technology that sought and seeks to efface the human face in business life and organizations in favor of objective and instrumental rationality.

As such, it is not surprising that Bevan & Corvellec conclude that corporate ethics is impossible viewed from a Levinasian perspective (2007, pp. 211-231) since Levinas' ethics is concerned with bringing back the human face by endlessly recognizing and taking responsibility for the other, received from the other (2007, pp. 209-211; see also Byers & Rhodes 2007, pp. 240-242; Jones 2007, pp. 196-197). Therefore, the term business ethics is an oxymoron in the sense that business and ethics exclude one another.

Levinas' ethics is of particular importance here, because it is an important frame of reference for Derrida's thinking of ethics. Levinas transforms ethics to a question of being with and responsibility for the other, which follows from his idea that before being, one is always in a social world (Jones 2003, p. 226). Derrida's ethics follows this fundamental starting point of being in a social world and his writings on ethics reveal a close affinity to Levinas' ethics.

Applying Levinas ethics on the other hand constitutes a major widening of the responsibilities that businesses and corporations might be taking upon themselves compared to the responsibilities advocated by the discourse on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for example. De George argues that CSR "...deals with responsibilities that either a corporation has to society or responsibilities that society imposes on corporations" (2008, p. 74).

Here, the ethical question is reduced to fulfilling the legal and conventional obligations and responsibilities of society. Corporations in other words need to act according to the law or according to the moral conventions in the particular society in which the corporation is embedded. In this sense it is quite distinct from Levinas' ethics since the latter emphasizes the recognition of the other as other; that is "...as totally different from me but still in relation and making a demand for my responsibility" (Jones 2003, p. 227).

This demand is called a radical demand by the Danish philosopher K.E. Løgstrup (1956, p. 56). It is present even in the tiniest and apparently most insignificant situations as a basic responsibility for the other. It means that in each and every situation one holds the other's life in his or her hand. It is

radical also in the sense of being unconditionally unselfish or non-reciprocal by expecting nothing in return (Jones 2003, p. 227).

In this sense, Levinas' ethics represents ethics as pushed to or even beyond the limit when applied in relation to the ways in which businesses work. To push the question of ethics to the limit is however useful in shedding light on the continuous harmful effects of the capitalist business corporations and thus the continuous tensions between business and democratic society. It is useful in highlighting the important role that we believe Derrida's philosophy has in regard to business ethics, namely of continually questioning ethics.

The critical voice of deconstruction is thus not a destructive voice. The aporias emphasized by deconstruction are instead an opportunity to think again. Deconstruction is not aimed at leaving us speechless. Rather, it is a philosophy of the limit that challenges us continually to reopen the questions of ethics and politics anew (Patrick 1997, pp. 85-86).

This means that Derrida makes a different contribution to ethics than Levinas by approaching the question of the other in a different way. Derrida rejects the idea of the exteriority of the other in the sense that it presumes what he calls a naked face or the nudity of the face (2002, p. 105) referring to a central theme in Levinas' thought as noted above. The naked face is according to Derrida a face perceived beyond and independently of language and being. Levinas' ethics thus relies on a dream of pure thought which according to Derrida is rooted in empiricism. As Derrida notes (2002, p. 189), we "...say the dream because it must vanish at daybreak, as soon as language awakens".

It follows that the idea that Derrida sees in Levinas' ethics - that all violence is to be disquieted and disarmed (e.g. Derrida 2002, p. 105) - needs further attention and revision because a speech without violence would say nothing and would offer nothing to the other (Derrida 2002, p. 184). We believe that the implications of Derrida's writings on ethics is instead to broaden our notions of the other, to see how speech and actions affect the other and the others and how we implicitly constitute who the others are while suppressing and marginalizing other others. In this way, Derrida appeals to our senses of humanism and responsibility by creating an awareness of the other and the others.

We are concerned with this aspect of Derrida's ethics in this article. Our emphasis on Derrida's ethics is thus different from his writings on hospitality and friendship, which are dealt with elsewhere (e.g. Jones 2003, pp. 228-230; Introna & Brigham 2008). We see Derrida's work on deconstruction as an effort of developing a critical voice in relation to how the work of modern organizations and businesses continuously create and reproduce injustice. Here, deconstruction is aligned with the suppressed and marginalized (e.g. Cornell et al. 1992, p. ix); the immigrants, refugees, homeless, landless, poor, sick, underpaid, exploited, and other disadvantaged groups in complex societies and organizations whose voices are not accounted for.

We now begin developing a storytelling ethics approach. The first deconstructive move here is to reverse the duality of narrative and living story and propose a resituated relationship between the two terms. The next sections are devoted to this task.

RESITUATING THE DUALITY OF NARRATIVE AND LIVING STORY

Jonathan Culler asserts that Derrida's work on deconstruction reverses hierarchical positions in dualities (2003, p. 54) thus privileging the weak term over the other "hegemonic" one. Following

Derrida, we argue that the hegemony of narrative over story is a violent duality of oppositions (e.g. Derrida 2002c, p. 41), where narrative, at least in the Western tradition, has had the upper hand and has governed the other term. The deconstructive move is to overturn the hierarchy and to reorganize the textual field of narrative and story (e.g. Derrida 2002c, p. 42), in order to establish the ground for a new balance of views between the two (e.g. Boje 2001, p. 21).

In his essay on Antonin Arnaud's notion of the theatre of cruelty, Derrida compares narrative tradition with Western theater, which is one, that can only be reproached with a terrible lack of imagination. This theater must make itself the equal of life but not an individual life in which characters triumph but "...the sort of liberated life which sweeps away human individuality and in which man is only a reflection" (Derrida 2002b, p. 295).

In contrast the theatre of cruelty is an authentic theater (Derrida 2002b, p. 295-296). "It is not a representation but is life itself, in the extent to which life is unrepresentable" (Derrida 2002b, p. 294). The theatre of cruelty is a pure theater that is stripped from the violence of speech and text and thus produces a non-theological space (Derrida 2002b, p. 296).

The stage of Western theater is theological in the sense that it is dominated by speech, and by the layout of a primary logos, which does not belong to the theatrical site, and which governs it from a distance (Derrida 2002b, p. 296). Western theater comports an author-creator, "...who, absent and from afar, is armed with a text and keeps watch over, assembles, regulates the time or the meaning of representation" (Derrida 2002b, p. 296).

In this sense, Western theatrical practice is dominated by totalizing narratives. These narratives are hegemonic about life or living stories by imposing a linear coherence of beginning, middle and end (e.g. Boje & Durant 2006) thus overlooking discontinuity, fragmentation, ambiguity and furthermore the differences, the other voices and complex interactions inherent in living storytelling.

This Western theater thus refers to a simplistic representation of the complex relationships between layers of textual, bodily and oral representations. According to Derrida, the narrative of this theater seeks to represent a transcendental principle. It is a representation which is imprinted not only in art but in the entire culture of the West including politics, religions and philosophies (2002b, p. 295). Each agency is linked to all the others by representation whereby "...the irrepresentability of the living present is dissimulated or dissolved, suppressed or deported within the infinite chain of representations" (Derrida 2002b, p. 297).

The narrative is directed by an author-god (e.g. Derrida 2002b, p. 299) who arranges the language while others become his slaves in translating his language into another and in accepting his language as superior to others and in admitting that the theater only admits this one language (e.g. Derrida 2002b, p. 297). In speaking of narrative as a tyrant over meaning, Derrida takes a much more critical position towards narrative compared to perspectives which conceptualize narrative as construction of identity, experience and meaning (Bruner 1996; Ricoeur 1984).

In management studies, Czarniawska (1997, p. 11) has argued that the narrative paradigm is based on a notion of narrative rationality where narrative replaces conventional models of formal rationality (1997, p. 22). We would argue that narrative rationality is characterized by an obsession of form over context and a preference for theoretic structure or plots of cause and effect.

The idea of narrative as a theoretic monologic is concisely captured by Bakhtin (1973, p. 12) "...narrative genres are always enclosed in a solid and unshakable monological framework. "Theoretic narrative posits mono-system-wholeness, mergedness, representational coherence, and finalizedness. His counter-move is to treat story as a dialogic; what he terms the "polyphonic manner of the story" (Bakhtin 1973, p. 60).

Modernity has thus implied the hegemony of one particular Western narrative that has marginalized and suppressed other narrative and storytelling genres. This Western narrative is characterized by a simple theoretic, petrifying beginning, middle and end structure; a structure that Walter Benjamin denotes as information. What characterizes information is that it supplies a handle for what is nearest and gets the readiest hearing. It lays claims to prompt verifiability and its prime requirement is "...that it appear "understandable" in itself" (Benjamin 1999, p. 88).

According to Benjamin, information has gradually replaced the art of storytelling, which in turn is coming to an end (1999, p. 83). What has destroyed storytelling is the apocalyptic progress of history – of modernity and modern capitalism. Storytelling is coming to an end because we have lost the ability to exchange experiences. In Benjamin's words, experience has fallen in value (1999, p. 83). This is a symptom of the secular productive forces of history where the realm of narrative has gradually been removed from the realm of everyday speech (Benjamin 1999, p. 86) - that is from living day-to-day interaction and oral storytelling.

As such narrative has lost touch with peoples' practical interests, the fabric of real life and it does not contain any immediate practical advice or counsel for the readers (e.g. Benjamin 1999, p. 86). The result is a cold, causal, flat, stylized and stiffened language, where the attempt is to marginalize subjectivity, art, poetry, spirit etc. that cannot be ordered around a plot with a clear beginning, middle and end.

"Every morning brings us the news from the globe, and yet we are poor in noteworthy stories. This is because no event any longer comes to us without already being shot through with explanation" (Benjamin, p. 89). Life-less and conservative language incapable of creating dynamics and change are the results of such writing that are obsessed with wringing out the pure essence of the thing (e.g. Benjamin 1999, p. 94). In comparison here, Derrida speaks of a demand for narrative, which is also a demand for truth.

Derrida argues (2004, p. 72) that the demand for narrative is to tell exactly what happened and further that it demands an "I" capable of organizing a narrative sequence and telling the truth (2004, p. 81), where the word "demand" should be used as similar to inquisitional insistence, an order, a petition." (2004, p. 72). Derrida metaphorically uses the name *the police method* to capture this demand. This demand for narrative is "...a violent putting-to-the question, an instrument of torture". It works to wring the narrative out of one in ways that may vary from the most archaic police methods to refined, neutral and polite ways of talking (Derrida 2004, p. 72).

It follows from Derrida's writings that he believes that Western life including business life has been dominated by narrative ethics that claims one voice, one truth and one justice. It is an ethics that is institutionalized in language, institutions, organizations, architectures, art works, in the law, in markets, financial systems and ultimately also in the discourse of business ethics.

As such narrative has been hegemonic over story. Story, or living story as we call it below, is important in the development of storytelling ethics. We will deal with living story in the next section.

LIVING STORY

Derrida uses the term “story” in the essay *Living On*. As noted above, Derrida speaks here of the demand for truth, which implies the assumption that texts have beginnings, middles, ends, borders and boundaries. For Derrida, narrative implies a closure of text and an attempt to monopolize truth as noted previously. But this monopolization is false and misleading. The text or even the word is never produced only by one voice or one language. “Following the triumphal procession of an “on,” they trail more than one language behind them” (Derrida 2004, p. 63).

The notion of living story follows from Derrida’s notion of story, which according to him has no border lines. It is at once larger and smaller than itself, it is entangled in a play with other “stories”, is part of the other, makes the other a part of itself etc. and remains utterly different from its homonym, narrative (Derrida 2004, p. 82). Story is living in the sense that it is becoming, i.e. prospective sense-making. Living story can morph, therefore, into narrative, into a state of beingness, and it shapes our individual identity, or our organization or communal identity and imagined future. It is not finished, not whole, and is still alive in the “now” and “here”.

While narrative presumes that the meaning of language may be determined once and for all, living story implies that we can never exhaust the ambiguity of language (Derrida 2004, p. 63) and that we can never stop the procession of one language into another (Derrida 2004, p. 64). In short “...no meaning can be determined out of context, but no context ever permits saturation” (Derrida 2004, p. 67).

History, in other words, does not lead to any metaphysical roots of truth. In any text, multiple texts are interwoven. Therefore the history of a text is never a straight line (Derrida 1997, p. 101). Rather we may see text as having intertextual roots or rhizomes. As rhizome, history is manifested in the continuous co-construction, reconstruction and modification of texts. Texts (representations) refer to other texts, which refer to other texts etc. Interpretations of texts thus never capture essential meaning because behind them are only other texts and other interpretations and so forth.

There is nothing outside of the text meaning that there is no essential referent or transcendental signified. “*There is nothing outside of the text*” (there is no outside-text; *il n’y a pas de hors-texte*) (Derrida 1997, p. 158) where the text means something much broader than the pages of the book and includes the politics and ethics of action, material conditions etc. (Boje 2001, p. 22). The production of texts is thus the production of words, concepts, materials, actions, architectures, institutions, technologies etc.

Any beginning, middle and end of a text then represent an illusion of closure. The notion of living story is linked to the point that deconstruction happens (e.g. Derrida 1991, p. 274). Deconstruction in other words takes place and represents the livingness of all writing, speech and action. That it takes place refers “...to the way that the book is exceeded by its relation to that which is outside it, and that deconstruction is not something that is then applied or done to a text. Deconstruction happens. It takes place” (Jones 2007, p. 520).

Living story implies as such the continuous movement of language, which derives from the impossibility of language signifying essential truth. There is nothing essential being signified by the signifier. There is no underlying or universal deep structure or grammar that overlays socially constructed reality. What we have instead is what Derrida calls a differential network, that is "...a fabric of traces referring endlessly to something other than itself, to other differential traces" (2004, p. 69).

Contrary to narrative, living story is much more emotional and spontaneously expressive, and it takes places within a multiplicity of different force relations present in any situation. This emergence is always produced through a particular stage of forces (Foucault 1984, pp. 83-84). As such plurality and many different voices are always embedded in living stories. Texts are affected by innumerable, conflicting wills and intentions, and this is actually why action, according to Arendt, almost never achieves its purpose. In other words, nobody is the author or producer of her own life story. Stories reveal an agent, but this agent is never the sole author or producer (Arendt 1998, pp. 184-185).

In short living story emphasizes the dialogical, plural, emergent, interactive and spontaneous nature of being and becoming. It emphasizes that texts are the results of the interactions of plural, conflicting and opposing voices. As such deconstruction emphasizes the multiple layers of language embedded in the emergence of the texts and opposes the narrative tradition of representing the text as unity, one voice, one ethics and one essence.

In its attempt to wring out the essence of the text, the Western narrative tradition becomes a force for taming the complexity of living storytelling and deadening living stories. It is the fundamentalist urge to misunderstand the text in wringing out the truth – telling the truth – which is the problem, and which distances the narrative tradition from the practical circumstances of everyday life. What narrative does in this situation is to remove the ambiguities, complexities and paradoxes of living day-to-day storytelling thereby granting privilege to some stories and silencing others.

This does not mean that we wish to efface narrative from the face of the earth. Narrative is, after all, an established mode of representation and has been claimed to be a condition of human existence (Ricoeur 1984, p. 52) in creating identity, continuity, order and meaning. What we do seek, however, is a democratization of storytelling voices where story engages on a more equal playing field with narrative in ways in which we do not transform living stories into theoretic narratives of otherness, because this is an obvious risk.

The challenge, as we see it, is to create living story webs of relationships and to confront established and dominant narratives in order that these dominant narratives lose their self-sufficient and narcissistic character; and further, that we become more aware of how our stories intertwine with others' stories and thus we may regain our senses and feelings of responsibility, answerability and complicity in our relations with and to other people. In other words, we look at the transitioning between living story and narrative and vice versa.

It is to look at the text as a dynamic text, which has emerged in particular circumstances, written by particular people in particular positions and privileging particular voices instead of others. This transitioning does not only involve looking at the emergence of narrative but also involves exploring what voices were left out, marginalized and overlooked. Furthermore, we propose to look at the transitioning from narrative to living stories. This includes looking at how narratives are

continuously challenged by other voices in living day-to-day storytelling, and how narratives are continuously interpreted, modified and reinterpreted to fit new ends and circumstances.

For us this does not mean to destroy narrative. Rather, it is to regain narrative to the realm of everyday speech instead of elevating it to a sacred position. Removed from its vital context, narrative becomes some sort of mummified narrative. Storytelling reduced to a narrative object is what Pavel Florensky (1997, p. 101) would certainly call an "immobile, stagnant, dead mummy of artistic production." Living story, by contrast is in a storied space, one that is a "beating flow of creativity itself" (e.g. Florensky 1997, p. 102) that creates living in a social context.

In this way, deconstruction implies a much more dynamic and reflexive relationship between narrative and living story than usually offered in organization studies and in the business ethics literature. In next sections we will look closer at the business ethics literature, in particular the literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and develop a storytelling perspective on business ethics.

THE STORY OF BUSINESS ETHICS

CSR is a description of the moral responsibilities and obligations that a corporation has towards its stakeholders. CSR is thus embedded in the law, in corporate codes of conduct and in norms and standards of behavior. It regulates relationships and defines more or less specific boundaries of acceptable and non-acceptable behavior.

In 'Friedman with Derrida,' Jones (2007) deconstructs some of Milton Friedman's texts on CSR. Milton Friedman is well known as one proponent for the extreme stakeholder perspective on CSR where it is proposed that the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits (Jones 2007, p. 513). By deconstructing these texts, Jones argues for the relevance of Derrida's deconstruction in the business ethics literature.

De George (2008) raises a number of critical points in regard to Jones' text. This is reflected directly in the title of his article: 'An American perspective on corporate social responsibility and the tenuous relevance of Jacques Derrida.' We find some of the argument interesting for our own justification of the relevance of storytelling ethics. Interestingly De George argues that the story of CSR was different in USA than in Europe and thereby that CSR has a different content in USA than in Europe.

Some of the contextual characteristics which are important for the differences were the environment, discrimination, social issues and differing structures. Interestingly, at the same time that he is critical of the relevance of Derrida and deconstruction, De George is looking at CSR as living storytelling where CSR is influenced, modified and changed by the social conditions in which it emerges.

As such De George's text is an example that deconstruction takes place because these legal and moral responsibilities cannot be isolated from the wider context from which these responsibilities emerge. In other words, what we call CSR - no matter if it is embedded in the law, in corporate codes or in norms and standards of behavior - is already exceeded by their relations to what is outside of it. So CSR is not being deconstructed. CSR is already deconstructing itself (Jones, 2007).

A second issue in De George's text is caught in his notion of CSR as dealing with responsibilities that either a corporation has to society or responsibilities imposed by society on corporations. In defending this conception of CSR, De George continuously argues that corporations reflect the societies of which they are part. He states for example that "... corporate social responsibilities, to the extent that they are not ethical or moral responsibilities, reflect the expectations and demands of the societies in which the corporations are found and/or where they operate" (De George 2008, p. 76).

We find this argument problematic for two reasons. First it doesn't question the notion of society as a unity and thus as speaking with one voice. Speaking from an institutional perspective, Schaefer and Kerrigan note that firms are seen to align their activities with the concerns of powerful stakeholders and that companies may use CSR to respond to institutional pressures of adopting a socially responsible stance (Schaefer & Kerrigan 2008, p. 173).

In other words, the expectations and demands of societies rely on complex relations of power, which privilege some voices and silence others. This means that the critical questions asked by deconstruction are important in this respect: namely "how does CSR work?", "which actors, groups etc. are privileged by CSR?", "what kind of interests and intentions do CSR serve?" and "who are marginalized and even suppressed by CSR"?

The notion that CSR reflects the societies in which they are part is in deconstruction conceived in the way that CSR has emerged from complex relationships, differing intentions, conflicts and struggles. Therefore, the notion that CSR reflect the societies in which they are part cannot stand as a justification for CSR or for the justice of CSR for that matter.

Second, even if we presumed that the notion that CSR reflect the societies in which they are part, actually meant that CSR embraces the many different voices of society in an appropriate way, we would soon run into the problem that any justification of CSR would be self-referential by referring to dominant narratives embedded in dominant languages. As such CSR could easily evolve into a narrow-minded, self-fulfilling and narcissistic truth and justice claim.

In other words business ethics – including CSR – has a lot more in common with story than narrative. Put simply it is a living story that is continuously renegotiated, modified and changed in interaction with actors, technologies and circumstances and by which this ethics is continuously (re)interpreted and (re)configured into dominant narratives but also stories and counternarratives to dominant narratives (Tally 2001; Bauer 1999).

Any particular ordering - whether fragmented and full of gaps, discontinuous or continuous, linear, cyclical or momentarily incidental – is one of many possibilities. Further, this ordering is always challenged, contradicted and distorted by contextual forces.

The story of CSR is a living story. What kind of story should business ethics then become? The answer that we deduce from Derrida's writings is a particular reflexive ethics that we call storytelling ethics. The principles of a storytelling ethics is described in the next section.

STORYTELLING ETHICS

We consider storytelling ethics to be a more positive outline of Derrida's ethics than how it is usually described in the business ethics literature. It doesn't however meet De George's challenge when he asks what contribution Derrida and followers can make when they are not interested in constructing systems or replacing systems and structures with new ones (De George 2008, p. 80). Nor does it meet the challenge from Phillips when he calls for reasoned and reasonable alternatives to business ethics, not just critique (Phillips 2008, p. 71).

To meet these challenges would however misunderstand the political task of philosophy and organization theory; at least when it is framed in line with Böhm, who argues that this task is to think against itself in order to put into question all positive or pragmatic systems (Böhm 2007, p. 112). Storytelling ethics is therefore also guided by a desire for transformation and innovation. It is not transformation in terms of establishing new universal grounds for ethics, because deconstruction cannot propose such ethics in either business life or in social life in general (Bennington 2003, p. 275).

Instead deconstruction interrogates and inquires into our narratives of ethics, justice and responsibility etc. (e.g. Jones 2003, p. 225) thereby creating the conditions for a more profound reflexivity of ethics. The basis for such profound reflexivity is to delve deeper into the living stories and their relationship to narrative. Narrative voices are the voices most commonly associated with business ethics and CSR. They represent a retrospective linearization of organizational life in terms of establishing foundations of legal and moral conduct embedded in the law, corporate codes of conduct, norms and standards of behavior etc.

The sensemaking perspective on CSR is one example of a narrative voice in business ethics. Nijhof and Jeurissen argue for example that sensemaking is retrospective in the sense that after a while the process is reflected upon. This is always done afterwards, it is argued. And this kind of sensemaking is influenced by "...what people notice in elapsed events, how far back they look and how they remember what they were doing" (Nijhof & Jeurissen 2006, p. 317).

Further it is argued that applying a sensemaking perspective on CSR means to look at the latter as an interactive social process in which CSR is "...systematically organized by creating and recreating an internally and externally shared frame of reference in relation to CSR objectives, activities and results" (Nijhof & Jeurissen 2006, p. 319). These shared frames of references have a narrative structure, plotted from selective interpretations of the past through a process of alignment in which other voices are suppressed, forgotten or modified to fit with the overall framework.

Storytelling ethics creates a reflexive relationship to these narrative voices in several ways. Firstly, it creates a reflexive relationship by looking at the transitioning from story to narrative. To look at this transitioning is to explore the plurality of living stories embedded in the emergence of CSR texts. This allows us to gain a more nuanced and varied understanding of these phenomena; an understanding, which goes beyond immediate and spontaneous moral and ethical judgments embedded in present day language.

To explore CSR texts, for example, implies exploring the margins and peripheral areas of these texts and the ghosts and parasitical presences of other texts in order to destroy the unitary character of these texts. Here, storytelling ethics follows deconstruction in leading towards what Miller calls the echoes, allusions, guests and ghosts of previous texts (2004, p. 184) in the search for hidden meanings. In this way, the text becomes the result of dialogical relationships between many

different languages; and this in a way in which it is particularly sensitive to the suppressed and marginalized voices (e.g. Boje 2001, p. 79).

Intentions are here to subject dominant truths and morality claims such as those embedded in CSR to historical scrutiny in order to create an alternative memory of this language (Jørgensen 2007, p. 15). Genealogy (Jørgensen & Boje 2009) is one way in which the transition from living stories to dominant narratives is explored in order to expose the politics embedded in this transition; politics that sought to hide alternative storytelling voices, which were also present but subjected and marginalized in the process.

Secondly, storytelling ethics looks at the transition from narrative to living storytelling or by confronting narrative with what takes place in the here and now. On this point, storytelling ethics works to create an awareness of how actors in organizations are complicit (e.g. Boje 2008, p. 97) in affecting others' stories for better or for worse. Storytelling ethics aims at making visible how stories interweave with other stories and still other stories thereby creating a sense of responsibility, answerability and complicity in the relations to the other and the other others (Boje 2008, p. 97).

This responsibility and answerability is without limits (Derrida 1992, p. 19). This follows from Derrida's point that ethics and politics always involve un-decidability. Any situation since it is polyphonic, paradoxical and full of tensions always involves a degree of indecision – of not knowing what to do (Derrida 1992, p. 24). The un-decidable is the experience that we must speak, while taking account of law and rules.

There is never a situation and an action that we can account for as being just because situations are always new. Furthermore either they have not been made according to a rule or it has already followed a rule, which is as noted basically groundless beyond itself. But none-the-less we must act (e.g. Jones 2003, p. 233 and p. 239) even if we do violence to others because speech and action without violence would mean that we would give nothing to the other.

Speech, action and violence always go hand in hand. In any kind of action we do choose something instead of another. We choose to listen and spend time with someone instead of others. We write particular pieces instead of others. We choose particular strategies etc. In short, we cannot respond to other people, without sacrificing the other others as noted by Derrida (1995, p. 68).

Ethics are in other words always sacrificed when we talk and act in organizations and in business life. Storytelling ethics thus always involves gaining a bad conscience of our complicity in chains of events that continuously produce injustice (e.g. Derrida 1992, p. 20). The sense of responsibility and the reflexivity that follows from deconstruction is what we can hope for in terms of evaluating business actions as ethical or non-ethical – or rather how they are ethical and non-ethical at one and the same time.

In sum, organizations consist of simultaneous narrative and living story voices that co-exist and interact in many different ways in organizations. The issue in storytelling ethics is as noted not to give preference to particular narrative or living story voices. Rather the intention is to create a more democratic, dialogical and dynamic relationship between the different voices. Narrative without living storytelling would soon evolve into a petrified, fundamentalist ethics that embraces only the privileged voices. Living storytelling would mean that organizations would move spontaneously without direction and control.

We hear the voices of both Levinas and of democracy in Derrida's texts. Storytelling ethics is one of continually questioning ethics by continually questioning the limits of our discourse on ethics. In this way, storytelling ethics is different from but also contributes to for example Habermas' discourse ethics (Habermas 1996). Discourse ethics is a theory of morality and is therefore distinct from Derrida's work. What is important in this context is Habermas' emphasis on ethics as discourse.

Habermas thus emphasizes that ethics relies on conversations of what constitutes right and wrong in a community, and conversation in turn rests on some notion of equality (Jones et al. 2005, p. 126). Storytelling ethics is important in this respect in continuously questioning our notions of right and wrong. It is as such inevitable in continually developing conversations on ethics.

Storytelling ethics does not, however, rest on some notion of equality here. Rather it moves in another direction and presumes that inequality and violence always exist, also in conversations about ethics. As such one of the purposes of deconstruction and storytelling ethics is to reveal the violence of, and within discourse generally and specifically within a discourse of ethics.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, deconstruction is characterized by a distinctive line of questioning, which is directed at the foundations of legal, moral and political authority (Patrick 1997, p. x) embedded in the law, in procedures, in moral codes of conduct and informal norms, standards and traditions. These foundations are often the results of narrative ethics because these guidelines seek to impose a standard or norm for ethics in business life. Storytelling ethics, in turn, seeks to call these norms and standards into question.

Living story calls attention to the limits of narratives with their simplistic, monological and relatively unequivocal and usually narcissistic construction of truth and morality. Theoretic narratives efface the very idea of responsibility (Jones 2003, p. 234) because they would falsely assume that ethical questions could be resolved once and for all.

Derrida notes that the most rigorous deconstructions have never claimed to be possible but he doesn't think that deconstruction loses anything from admitting that it is impossible (1992, p. 30). It is the attempt to open up for other voices, which is important because it is here that we can learn something new about reality. But this procedure can never escape what Miller refers to as "the prisonhouse of language" because we have no other language (2004, p. 188).

In establishing more concrete ethical guidelines for the relations to the other and the other others, we run into the problems that such truth and morality claims have no foundation or ground beyond itself (Derrida 1992, p. 14) and we can never establish any criteria for establishing what is just and what is unjust. The law can be deconstructed; our notions of justice can be deconstructed as well as all of our networks of words and concepts (Derrida 1992, pp. 14-15).

This is however by no means a neutralization of interest in justice or insensitivity towards injustice; neither is it nihilism. On the contrary, deconstruction means raising the stakes of *exacting justice* (Derrida 1992, p. 20). Derrida notes that "One must be just with justice" (1992, p. 20). This means

hearing, reading, interpreting it by trying to understand where it comes from, and further by interrogating and questioning the grounds of justice and its limits.

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