

Beyond the Stalemate of Economics versus Ethics: Corporate Social Responsibility and the Discourse of the Organizational Self

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ABSTRACT. The purpose of this paper is to advance research on CSR beyond the stalemate of economic versus ethical models by providing an alternative perspective integrating existing views and allowing for more shared dialog and research in the field. It is suggested that we move beyond making a normative case for ethical models and practices of CSR by moving beyond the question of how to manage organizational self-interest toward the question of how accurate current conceptions of the organizational self seem to be. Specifically, it is proposed that CSR is not a question of how self-interested the corporation should be, but how this self is defined. Economic and ethical models of CSR are not models of opposition but exist on a continuum between egoic and post-egoic, illusory and authentic conceptions of the organizational self. This means that moving from one to the other is not a question of adopting different paradigms but rather of moving from illusion and dysfunction to authenticity and functionality, from pathology to health.

KEY WORDS: corporate social responsibility, economic and ethical models, economic, egoic and post-egoic approaches, narratives, organizational self, psychoanalysis

Introduction

While the topic of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has gained increasing attention in organizational research, it seems that research in this area

continues to be hampered by a fundamental perhaps “ideological divide” (Matten et al., 2003: 111) between those who advocate an economic model of CSR and those who advocate an ethical model of CSR (Argandoña, 1998; Joyner and Payne, 2002; Kapelus, 2002; Smith, 2003; Stormer, 2003; Swanson, 1995). The economic model, largely following Friedman’s reasoning (1962; 1970), suggests that the social responsibility of a corporation goes no further than the obligation to maximize shareholder wealth and that indeed to spend corporate resources on philanthropic causes asks executives to engage in moral judgment for which they are not qualified and which, hence, is unethical (Hill et al., 2003; Schwartz, 1998; Smith, 2003), while the ethical model, based largely on Carroll’s model of CSR, goes beyond economic performance to include legal, ethical and discretionary responsibilities (1979; 1999) and assumes CSR should be undertaken for ethical or normative reasons alone (Windsor, 2001).

As such, the debate in research still seems to be whether or not corporations should be primarily self-interested, however enlightened such interest may be (Smith, 2003), focusing on profitability and what is good for business or whether they should adopt a less self-centered, more other-centered paradigm, in which the shareholder is not privileged relative to other stakeholders and in which the corporation sees itself connected to and responsible for the larger community in which it exists, from the local community, to national and even global society (Gioia, 2003; Stormer, 2003; Swanson, 1995). The stalemate that the division over these models seems to have resulted in

“In other words, there is nothing behind the curtain except the subject who has already gone beyond it.” (Slavoi Zizek)¹

(Matten et al., 2003), despite various efforts aimed at their integration (Swanson, 1995, 1999), has had several consequences for the research and practice of CSR. For one, as a result of the two models, there is no universal and clear definition of what CSR is (Hill et al., 2003; Smith, 2003; Van Marrewijk, 2003). Two, there is continuing debate over whether research should investigate CSR relative to financial performance with some arguing that the case has to be made that CSR is good for business (Joyner and Payne, 2002; Schmidt Albiniger and Freeman, 2000), while others argue that if it were good for business, we would not be talking about CSR in the first place (Kapelus, 2002) and still others arguing that efforts to link CSR with profitability denigrate or even render meaningless the idea of CSR, since an ethical choice that can be justified by instrumental gain is not an ethical choice to begin with (Stormer, 2003; Windsor, 2001). Third, and importantly, researchers seem to be unable to agree, given the two models, how CSR should be implemented or measured in practice, with economic models arguing for economic decision-making rules and outcome measures (see for example McWilliams and Siegel, 2001), while ethical models argue for moral and normative evaluations based, for example, on the moral development of the corporation, values-based decision-making models (Zwetsloot, 2003) and activities and outcome measures that demonstrate the organization's commitment to relationships with external stakeholders, long term benefits to society, large scale wealth redistribution and connectedness with larger communities (Kapelus, 2002; Smith, 2003).

The purpose of this paper is to advance research on CSR beyond the stalemate of economic versus ethical models by providing an alternative perspective, one that may serve to integrate existing views and allow for more shared dialog and research in the field. Such dialog would eventually resolve definitional problems, address questions on what to investigate and resolve issues surrounding how to implement and measure CSR. Specifically, the perspective proposed here is one that examines CSR not in terms of economic versus ethical considerations but instead focuses on the notion of self. That is, rather than suggesting that CSR hinges

on whether the corporation is self-interested or not, it is proposed that CSR hinges on how the self is defined. Specifically, it hinges on what or who we are referring to when we use the term the corporate self that is to be socially responsible in some way.

Drawing on postmodern, discursive and psychoanalytic conceptions of the self, the paper argues that both economic and ethical models of CSR are based on the flawed assumption of a uni-dimensional, stable and simplistic conception of the corporate self, which then leads to overly narrow conceptualizations of social responsibility or conceptualizations that erroneously pit corporate self against non-corporate others (e.g. business versus society) (Roberts, 2003; Solomon, 2004). The paper offers an alternative view of the corporate self as multi-dimensional, dynamic and complex, a self that, since it is continuously socially constructed, de-constructed and re-constructed, contains multiple identities and is fundamentally embedded in an evolving perception of another. The dualism of corporate self versus non-corporate self or business versus society and its resulting narrow conception of social responsibility (Kapelus, 2002) are mere illusion, literally deceit of the ego. Behind such illusion, may rest the realization that since the self is never uni-dimensional, stable and simplistic, the corporation cannot conceive of social responsibility in terms of self versus non-self, connected versus disconnected self. Rather the corporate self only exists in the embedded relationships among various stakeholders. Therefore, its responsibility is always to be self-interested within such a conception of the self as multitude, as constructed, changing and complex narrative of a self that exists only in relation to others.

As such CSR is not a question of whether or not organizations are or should be ethical, which they seem to be by definition (Roberts, 2003), or whether or not they are or should be connected to external stakeholders, which they also seem by definition (Solomon, 2004), but whether or not organizations understand themselves to be so and thus whether or not they have an egoic, delusional conception of the self or whether they have an accurate conception of the true self in relation to

others. Based on this view, CSR can then be defined along a continuum from egoic to post-egoic self-understanding. Further, CSR theories and practices can be evaluated as narratives that fall somewhere along this continuum, where narrow, economic conceptualizations likely fall toward the egoic, illusionary endpoint and wider; ethical conceptualizations fall toward the post-egoic endpoint of a more accurate self conception.

The paper proceeds as follows. First, literature on CSR will be reviewed with respect to the economic and ethical models of CSR. Second, the notion of the self on which these models are based will be explored, compared and contrasted with conceptualizations of the self based on critical, postmodern and psychoanalytic organizational theorizing. Third, an alternative model of CSR will be developed, one that locates CSR relative to organizational self-conceptions on a continuum from egoic illusion to post-egoic authenticity. The paper concludes by discussing the implications of this perspective for research on CSR.

Economic and ethical models of CSR

There have been various efforts to reconcile the division that seems to dominate research on CSR seemingly co-existing in two distinct camps, one adopting an economic view, the other an ethical or normative one (Roberts, 2003; Smith, 2003; Swanson, 1995). In a recent attempt, Solomon (2004) argues that the economic model of CSR in which business' only responsibility is to maximize its profits is based on a flawed assumption of "antagonism between individual self-interest and the greater public good" (Solomon, 2004: 1021). Specifically, based on an Aristotelian approach to business, it becomes clear that "[c]orporations are neither legal fictions nor financial juggernauts but communities, people working together for common goals" (Solomon, 2004: 1026). As such cooperation and interdependence are not only a fundamental organizing principle but also that which make corporations ethical by definition (Roberts, 2003).

Consequently, to define CSR strictly in economic terms is to ignore the communal nature of

organizations that are embedded in communities to whom they are responsible by virtue of why and how organizations exist in practice (Solomon, 2004: 1023). That is not to say that CSR and financial gain are mutually exclusive, but rather that profit maximization based on self-interest wrongly defined as interest in an independent, autonomous and disconnected self, is not unethical but inaccurate as it ignores the interdependent, connected and communal nature of the corporate self (Solomon, 2004). We will return to the notion of corporate self at a later point, but for now what is pertinent for purposes of this paper is the idea that economic models of CSR, while often criticized, seem to persist (Snider et al., 2003) and hence that the division in CSR of two camps, one economic and one ethical, continues to hamper the evolution of conceptualizations, theoretical advances and practical applications (Matten et al., 2003; Swanson, 1995, 1999). Specifically, while researchers are arguing over the validity of economic versus ethical models of CSR, they are unable to agree upon and develop universally accepted definitions of CSR (Hill et al., 2003; Smith, 2003; Van Marrewijk, 2003). The absence of such definitions, in turn, hampers the operationalization of concepts and its measurement and implementation in practice. For example, proponents of economic models typically focus on rules for making CSR related decisions and evaluations of outcomes based on economic or financial cost-benefit analyses (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001). By contrast, proponents of ethical models investigate the moral development of corporations and the values that underlie CSR related decisions (Zwetsloot, 2003) or the quality of relationships to and degree of connectedness with various external stakeholders and CSR related behaviors relative to long-term benefits to a larger social good, such as a more equal distribution of wealth in society (Kapelus, 2002; Smith, 2003). In short, the two models drive two different research agendas and parallel developments in the theory and practice of CSR. This of course hampers the exchange of ideas and the pooling of resources toward concerted efforts (across the two camps) to have a more comprehensive theory of CSR that can be more easily implemented in organizational practice

and have more impact at that. But before we follow this line of argumentation further, let us define and compare the two models in more detail.

How the two models differ

While McWilliams and Siegel define CSR “as actions that appear to further some social good, beyond the interests of the firm and that which is required by law” (2001: 117), i.e. adopt a definition that goes beyond strict profit maximization and includes some if not all of Carroll’s (1979, 1999) four dimensions (economic, legal, ethical and discretionary), they develop a model of CSR that suggests that corporations use cost-benefit analyses and economic models of supply and demand to determine optimal levels of CSR so that engagement in CSR is not a question of ethics but rather of economics. So while firms may be profitable with or without CSR, the question whether they should engage in CSR is not a question of whether they ought to do so based on moral reasoning but of whether they can find optimal levels of CSR investments given economic constraints and the costs versus the benefits of such investments (McWilliams and Siegel, 2001).

In a recent review of the literature on CSR, Windsor (2001) suggests that economic models of CSR still dominate the research and especially the practice of CSR. The author laments the fact that definitions of CSR are vague and contain no minimum standards to hold corporations accountable to. Moreover, it is suggested that CSR in practice seems to be mostly empty rhetoric and that what goes for responsibility may be responsiveness at best and, if strictly undertaken for profitability, amoral at worst. The author concludes that economic models do not only demonstrate a disregard for morality but are also based on the flawed assumption that what is good for business is good for society while in reality not accounting for the true cost of doing business and leaving it up to public policy to manage the public good.

According to Windsor (2001), economic models fail to differentiate between short-run business impacts and the long-run alignment or misalignment

between business and social interests and as such can be easily manipulated. Therefore, economic models of CSR may provide “an ‘economic theology’” (Windsor, 2001: 240) but not a basis for moral choice particularly when it comes to unprofitable demands. Stormer (2003) echoes this idea suggesting that CSR has to move beyond short-sighted and overly simplistic economic models which assume that firms only have to take care of their profits while society takes care of itself. In truth, Stormer says, corporations only get more powerful while the rest is falling apart (2003). As such, the notion that economic behavior in itself is ethical behavior has to be debunked and economic models of CSR have to be discarded (Etang, 1995) in favor of ethical models stressing that self-interested behavior for economic gain is not ethical or moral (Etang, 1994).

In a similar vein, it has been argued that conceptions which seem to underlie economic models and what is defined as moral in corporations are based on a conventional rather than a post-conventional level of moral development (Gonzalez, 2002; Logsdon and Yuthas, 1997). CSR based on economic models and wealth maximization focus not on a universal moral imperative but on a narrow conception of what the corporation must do to be responsible to the shareholder (Gioia, 2003). It has been suggested that only the adoption of models that stress a post-conventional moral ethos beyond conformity and self-interest (Etang, 1994; Stormer, 2003) will eventually lead to the reduction of ethical dysfunction in organizations (Snell, 2000). Only such a model will encourage truly ethical behavior, that is, behavior that is ethical not only in its outcome but ethical because of its motivation (Etang, 1994).

Even researchers who seem to agree that CSR consists of more than economic responsibility still suggest that economic and legal considerations seem to dominate the practice of CSR, especially in the US (Pinkston and Carroll, 1996) and that making the business case that CSR is good for the bottom line is an important argument for convincing business organizations to engage in CSR (Joyner and Payne, 2002). Even when a non-economic model of CSR is adopted, the assumptions and mental models (Windsor, 2001) of the economic model seem to prevail in theory (Pava and Krausz, 1997) and in practice (Introcaso, 1997). Even authors suggesting

that the economic model of CSR falls short, which is clearly not true in all cases (Sethi, 2003), remain within the economic paradigm by suggesting that to get firms to engage in CSR economic constraints have to be changed. Specifically, economic constraints have to be changed so that it would be either profitable to engage in CSR or unprofitable not to engage in it (Sethi, 2003). Such reasoning seems to be supported by studies focusing on the economic payoffs of CSR demonstrating that in some cases CSR enhances the attractiveness of corporations as employers (Schmidt Albinger and Freeman, 2000), leads to more satisfied employees who are less likely to leave (Riordan et al., 1997) and shows a positive link with firm financial performance (Joyner and Payne, 2002).

However, economic constraints alone do not seem to increase CSR. Simply making the business case that it can be profitable to engage in CSR or even demonstrating that certain CSR behaviors have greater financial returns for firms does not ensure that more CSR practices are put in place or that such practices actually benefit a larger good. Carson (2003) claims that the economic model of CSR is based on the erroneous assumption that corporate self-interest automatically leads to the common good. Carson suggests that CSR and stakeholder theories need to include specific prohibitions against fraud and deceit because it can no longer be assumed that managers are moral agents who can be expected to act ethically based on economic constraints or pay offs alone (2003). The latter idea seems to be validated in a recent study showing that CEO incentives do not lead to better corporate social performance (McGuire et al., 2003). In a similar vein, one author suggests that economic models of CSR have shown their dark side in the recent era of downsizing during which employees are routinely and unethically discarded like outdated equipment (Miller, 1998). There are no normative criteria in economic models to weigh socially responsible behaviors toward a firm's shareholders whose wealth may be maximized through the cutting of labor costs against socially responsible behaviors towards employees potentially losing their jobs. Or rather, as long as it is just a question of economic wealth maximization for the firm, stakeholders like employees may be considered irrelevant to CSR.

Moreover, it seems that CSR motivated primarily by profit and a negative duty to avoid penalties seems to lead more to impression management than to concrete, sustained and responsible actions (Maignan and Ralston, 2002). While most corporations have adopted the language of CSR, this language reflects primarily economic concerns or does not reflect actual behaviors (Robertson and Nicholson, 1996; Snider, Hill and Martin, 2003), and is sometimes outright deceptive (Laufer, 2003). In a similar vein, Roberts (2003) argues that economic models of CSR lead corporations to conceive of responsibility in narrow terms with financial concerns often leading to empty rhetoric and impression management rather than the responsible concern for other stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995).

Similarly, Korhonen (2003) has argued that in order to create ethical and sustainable CSR, a paradigm shift has to occur that leaves behind strict economic models of CSR. Such a paradigm shift seems to be necessary because economic concerns do not seem to lead to increased CSR unless a rarely seen concern for CSR and economic performance coincide (Poitras, 1994). Moreover, Kapelus (2002) has found that economic models of CSR encourage managers to limit who is included in their definitions of community and their delimitation as to whom they must be responsible for, leading to economically justified solutions in practice (Introcaso, 1997). It seems that economic models of CSR not only lead to narrow conceptions of responsibility but are enacted in practice in such a way as to undermine the common good through opportunistic behavior (Abbarno, 2001). Even if they are not enacted in opportunistic fashion, they appear to be based on limited and short-sighted information that simplifies the complex relationships, impacts and connections of global organizations today (Zadek, 1998).

The two models and conceptions of corporate self

In summary, it seems that the economic models of CSR have been widely criticized as being too simplistic and leading to overly narrow conceptions of responsibility based on the fundamental assumption that there is a corporate self whose interest in

profit or wealth maximization must precede all other concerns. But even as these models are criticized and more ethical or normative alternatives are proposed, the fundamental assumption that the corporation is a self with narrowly defined interests persists. The difference seems to be that economic models of CSR condone this interest as ethical while ethical models criticize it as unethical, amoral or overly simplified. As such the debate seems to hinge on whether or how to manage the self-interest of corporations, not on whether the current assumption of the self is correct.

Specifically, while some authors suggest that the corporate self has been too narrowly conceived (Matten et al., 2003), and others have proposed more communal, more inclusive models of corporations (Stormer, 2003), the issue seems to continue to be that economic models better describe what corporations are: a unidimensional self that best serves its own interests. Conversely, ethical models use normative ideals and the idea that the corporation should view this self as connected, interdependent and communal relative to the system in which it co-exists (Stormer, 2003).

As such the descriptive, economic models generating testable hypotheses of what is (McWilliams, 2001) continue to clash with prescriptive models of what ought to be and CSR seems to vacillate between two end points on a continuum between facts and values (Swanson, 1999). Put simply, the debate around economic versus ethical models seems to be a debate between two conceptions. One is a corporation that is a disconnected, simple self with uni-dimensional, stable interests, and the other that is an interconnected, complex self with multi-dimensional, dynamic interests taking responsibility for a greater common good.

But it is not a question of facts versus values or of what is versus what should be (Swanson, 1999) or indeed of ethics versus economics. I would like to argue that it is a question of the accuracy of the concept of self on which both models of CSR are based. Based on critical, postmodern and psychoanalytic conceptions of the organizational self, there is no such thing as a disconnected, simple self with unidimensional, stable interests; illusions that such a self may exist lead to dysfunction and pathology,

which, as we will see, are exactly the issues surrounding economic models of CSR.

Critical, postmodern and psychoanalytic conceptions of the organizational self

Whether it is due to the rise of post-bureaucratic forms of organizing or has always been the case, critical and postmodern organization scholars agree that the idea of the organization as unified, stable, predictable and autonomous self does not reflect reality (Lippens, 2001). Rather, the organization is constituted of multiple subjectivities and contested territories (Parker, 2000) in which boundaries of what is self and non-self seem to shift continuously. The notion of self, what is in the interest or what is moral for this self, is continuously constructed, de-constructed and re-constructed in various narratives (Hassard and Parker, 1993; Hardy, 2001; Lippens, 2001; McKinlay and Starkey, 1998). From this perspective, the question is not whether we can adopt models of CSR based on the assumption of a disconnected, simple and unidimensional self with clearly defined interests and then argue over whether such models are more or less ethical. Rather the question is whether such models are even accurate given what we know about the contested and socially constructed nature of what we refer to as the organizational self.

This, in turn, means that it is not a question of whether corporations should view themselves as members of society, or an amalgam of multiple selves embedded in society that leads them to assess the cost of doing business by also considering the public goods they consume (Phillips and Eyres, 2001). Instead, it is whether corporations are aware that they are such a member and that anything else is dysfunctional illusion. If we seek to apply consciousness (Pruzan, 2001), moral ethos and development to corporations (Gonzalez, 2002; Logsdon and Yuthas, 1997; Snell, 2000; Sridhar and Camburn, 1993), it is important to recognize that corporations may also suffer from psychodynamic dysfunction (Gabriel et al., 1999) that affects moral ethos and development not based on ethical failure but based on more or less conscious processes of self-development and self-awareness.

Though it is not my purpose to go into depth psychology and particularly the teachings of Jacques

Lacan – which elsewhere have been described as critically important to organizational studies (Arnaud, 2002; Jones and Spicer, 2004; Vanheule et al., 2003) – how self-development and conceptions of the self may become dysfunctional has long been studied by psychoanalysts. Lacan's focus on a linguistic approach to psychoanalysis stressing the importance of language for our understanding of the conscious and especially unconscious dimensions of the human psyche is pivotal. Central to Lacan's teachings is the idea that the conscious, rational speech of an individual is often misidentified as being the true subject or self (1977b). Actually, the rational speaking self engages mostly in empty speech, speech expressing an "alienated reflection" (Muller and Richardson, 1982: 70) in the ego.

This speech is first acquired in early childhood when we learn to replace our experience of separation from the mother and of a self that is fragmented and helpless with a reflection of the self in the mirror where we see a stable, unified and permanent image of ourselves. We accept this mirror image as our permanent "I" (Lacan, 1977a). What we are unaware of is that this image is inauthentic. Like any reflection it is an inverted image of the original marked by various distortions. However, we proceed to build our ego around this distorted image, this "miscognition" (Muller and Richardson, 1982: 31). From that moment on the image we take to be our authentic self is really a distorted and external image. We become so used to this distortion that we see our self always in relation to external images and finally do not just look in the mirror for our reflection but to others. As we become social selves, we look to others for the reflection of our self that represents what we have come to expect, namely the image of a stable, uni-dimensional self (Lacan, 1977a).

As we construct this self in speech with others, we defend against anything that might make us aware that we are not this stable, uni-dimensional self. We continue to assert in the empty speech of our rational self that this image we have is indeed our authentic self or subjectivity. Usually with the help of psychoanalysis, we can work through empty speech, which is not only inauthentic but leads to a variety of pathological behaviors, and arrive at full speech and a more authentic conception of the self (Lacan, 1977b). In full speech we are able to express our self

not as the alienated image of the ego but as subjects embedded in a larger, universal order, what Lacan refers to as the symbolic order (1977b, c). This universal order is the structure and language of our unconscious. As such, it is transindividual, that is, it is the same universal order in which all persons are embedded. Authentic subjectivity or selfhood is the discourse of this universal order in which we are all embedded as fragmented, momentary, ambiguous and multi-dimensional penetrations.

When we realize this, we can become less frustrated with the fruitless chase for reflections of our self that are stable, consistent, integrated and permanent (Lacan, 1977d). Specifically, we can recognize that the empty speech of the ego does not represent our authentic self but only a distorted image. From there we can try to create full speech by constructing the self in a discourse that acknowledges the authentic self as fragmented, momentary, ambiguous and multi-dimensional. Most importantly, we can construct our selves in discourse with others who, we realize, are embedded in the same universal order (Lacan, 1988a, b). So it is not a matter of leaving behind or shedding the alienated ego speech, which makes most of us "commonly" pathological (Lacan, 1977b), but a matter of working through this speech toward the discourse of a self not rigidly but dynamically defined, not disconnected and permanent but interconnected and changing. Through such discourse, we can free our self of the rigid, frustrating and alienating structures of the ego, and instead experience our self as an ambiguous but highly creative process of narrative construction (Lacan, 1988b).

What does all this mean for organizations? Organizations, like persons, are linguistic phenomena (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000; Hassard and Parker, 1993; Hardy, 2001; Putnam and Cooren, 2004). As such we can explore organizational action (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004) and the construction and enactment of organizational selves via discourse at various levels of analysis (Hardy, 2004) and as co-construction of multiple meanings that emerge in dialog among many voices (Cunliffe, 2002). Specifically, the organizational self is constructed and enacted through various narratives that reflect not only dynamics of

power and control (Alvesson and Willmott, 1992; McKinlay and Starkey, 1998) but also conscious and unconscious, functional and dysfunctional psychodynamics (Gabriel et al., 1999; Kets de Vries, 1991; Kets de Vries and Miller, 1984; Marshak et al., 2000).

Consequently, as we explore these narratives, we can examine them for discourse that reflects the imaginary and the symbolic order, empty and full speech and the self as it emerges from or is trapped by the ego and the various dynamics or dysfunctions that result (Arnaud, 2002; Jones and Spicer, 2004; Vanheule et al., 2003). That is, we can examine organizational discourse based on a Lacanian understanding of conceptions of the self and discern between that which is the imaginary order of the ego, which I will refer to here as the egoic, and that which is the symbolic order of the authentic self, which I will refer to here as the post-egoic. Importantly, we can then also explore CSR in relation to these conceptions of the organizational self.

The egoic and post-egoic corporate self and CSR

It seems that organizations like individuals can narratively construct and enact both an egoic and a post-egoic self. The egoic self traps the authentic subject, that is, the authentic self of the corporation. The authentic self of the corporation is the self that is enacted discursively as multi-dimensional, fragmented, fleeting or changing and connected within a larger, universal order. This authentic self is not trapped in a rigid, alienated and dysfunctional egoic structure, but emerges in post-egoic, full speech, which is not only more authentic but less pathological. However, for the organizational or corporate authentic self to emerge, its narratives and discourse have to move from egoic to post-egoic speech not as a matter of leaving the ego behind, which Lacan believes is impossible, but as a matter of penetrating the discourse of the ego and recognizing the imaginary order so that the authentic subject can emerge, however fragmented or fleeting its appearance may be (Lacan, 1988b). With this dynamic in mind, we may now see how the construction and enactment

of CSR is related to the construction and enactment of narratives of the organizational self.

Particularly, we may define CSR as the construction and enactment of a narrative of the corporate self vis-à-vis multiple others, such as for example stakeholders. The construction and enactment of such narratives based on egoic illusion seeks to present the corporate self vis-à-vis multiple others as autonomous, unified and stable self whose interests are uni-dimensional and can be clearly specified relative to this autonomous, unified and stable self and in opposition, or by delimitation, to those multiple others. From a psychoanalytic perspective, the payoff in doing this is of course that the alienated ego does not have to be confronted with its own illusions and pathologies and that no work has to be undertaken to address these. From the perspective of CSR, such narratives of the corporate self allow for simplistic perspectives of the world in which the corporate self is clearly defined, has stable, unified and simple interests, which, in turn, may be defined in contrast to the clearly defined, stable, unified and simple interests of others from which this self is completely disconnected. In short, it permits a view of CSR in which the firm can clearly distinguish us versus them and in which it can examine payoffs in terms of what may or may not be good for it as a disconnected, isolated self.

By contrast, the construction and enactment of narratives of the corporate self based on post-egoic discernment does not seek to present the corporate self vis-à-vis multiple others as autonomous, unified and stable self but rather deconstructs such narratives as imaginary in search of narratives that are more congruent with an interdependent, fragmented and dynamic self whose interests are multi-dimensional, hard to specify and change depending on the discursive situation, its creative construction in dialog and relative to the multiple others who participate in discourse, dialog and hence the narrative of the organizational self (Lippens, 2001; Solomon, 2004). From a psychoanalytic perspective, the payoff of engaging in post-egoic discourse is that it is much more functional and less pathological because it is more authentic and less alienating. Most importantly, from the perspective of CSR, the payoff of post-egoic conceptions of the corporate self is that it no longer allows for simplistic us versus them

conceptions of the world. As such, CSR can no longer be reduced to uni-dimensional concerns over financial returns or rigid preferences of interests of one stakeholder group over another, such as shareholders over employees. Instead, post-egoic conceptions of the corporate self facilitate a discourse in which ambiguity, fragmentation, complexity and interconnectedness are the foundation on which CSR has to be constructed.

Egoic and post-egoic approaches to specific dimensions of CSR

As such, various dimensions of CSR can be examined based on egoic and post-egoic conceptions of the organizational self. For an overview of this, please see also Table 1.

Specifically, CSR can still be defined relative to a responsibility to enact corporate self-interest. However, this self is no longer defined based on the illusion of a single, stable entity with uni-dimensional, stable interests. Rather this self is now defined as consisting of multiple subjectivities that negotiate the contested territory we refer to as the organization (Lippens, 2001; Parker, 2000), that is, as a self that is fundamentally fragmented, connected to others in a universal order with interests that are always complex, and forever changing. So what is good, in terms of CSR, cannot be a matter of simple financial returns or even absolute, rigidly defined moral standards, but is what is negotiated based on complex, shifting relationships and the post-egoic narratives in which complex corporate selves are enacted.

Models of CSR

From this perspective, we can explore economic models of CSR as more congruent with egoic conceptions of the organizational self and ethical models of CSR as more congruent with post-egoic conceptions of the organizational self. Specifically, it seems that models based on concepts of the corporation as profit maximizing entity with one, wealth creating self-interest reflect an egoic and hence illusory conception of the self. This illusory conception of the self leads to various

dysfunctions, which seem to have been identified already in the literature as the various issues with or shortcomings of economic models of CSR. Egoic conceptions of the organizational self, for example, trap the authentic organizational self and prevent it from emerging, a dysfunction that has been noted as a shortcoming of economic models of CSR leading to, for example, the encrusting of the organizational self's identity (Roberts, 2003) and the failure to evolve toward CSR practices that balance agency and communion (Van Marrewijk, 2003), in short, the failure to reflect post-egoic self conceptions in its relation to others.

Practices of CSR

Such dysfunctional and alienated egoic conceptions threaten to dissolve the corporation's true subjectivity. Specifically, the more the corporation becomes trapped in egoic conceptions of its self, the less it is able to connect to its authentic self, which recedes further and further disappearing in empty speech (Lacan, 1988b). In terms of CSR, this dynamic is perhaps reflected in models and practices of CSR that ignore the long-term consequence of corporate behaviors and the interests of multiple stakeholders (Gonzalez, 2002). Such models and practices of CSR seem to serve the organization at the egoic level as they allow it to ignore anything but a simplified, short-sighted and uni-dimensional perspective and hence are compatible with a desire to confirm its imaginary ego. Or put differently, CSR models and practices that take into account long-term consequences and multiple stakeholders' interests make corporate narratives more complex, multi-dimensional, dynamic and fragmented and hence threaten the imaginary ego that searches for narrative reflections and expressions as uni-dimensional, integrated, stable and unified.

By contrast, the true subject or authentic self of the corporation seems more likely to construct itself and narratives of CSR (Fisscher et al., 2003) beyond the egoic conception of a single, autonomous and uni-dimensional self as a continuous and concrete dialog of multiple subjectivities or stakeholders (Roberts, 2003). CSR beyond economic definitions then is not a question of particular organizational

TABLE I
Overview of egoic and post-egoic approaches to CSR

Dimension of CSR	Egoic approach	Post-egoic approach
Acting in the interest of the corporate self	Self is defined as disconnected, uni-dimensional and stable with uni-dimensional and stable interests that can be clearly delineated Illusory and dysfunctional	Self is defined as interconnected, complex and changing with interests being socially contested and constructed and shifting Authentic and functional
Corporate self conception from psychoanalytic perspective (Lacan, 1977b)	Collection of individuals, internal versus external concerns, business versus society (self concept cannot accommodate anything but clearly defined entities pitted against each other)	Collective self, blurred boundaries of what is internal versus external, business and society may be one and the same, contrast blurred or irrelevant (self concept can accommodate the ambiguity of blurred boundaries and a fragmented, de-centered conception of interests)
Corporate self conception from CSR perspective (Soares, 2003; Windsor, 2001)	Encrusted, may include CSR as an added part (egoic illusion requires stability of self, can accommodate only minor changes)	Adaptive, includes CSR as reflection of fundamental identity (post-egoic self can accommodate shifting, contested and fragmented narratives of the self)
Organizational identity (Maignan and Ralston, 2002; Roberts, 2003)	Economic, based on economic, cost-benefit analyses (discourse of self can only accommodate simple calculations and static, objective measures in its perspective on self and its interests)	Ethical, based on ethical or moral reasoning (discourse of self can accommodate complex calculations and subjective measures, which may not lead to simple judgments or clear-cut assessments of the self and its interests)
Congruence with Models of CSR (Argandona, 1998; Joyner and Payne, 2002; Kapelus, 2002; McWilliams, 2001; Smith, 2003; Stormer, 2003; Swanson, 1995; 1999)	Easy if based on economic models, which are said to be more congruent with current organizational realities (fits with illusory conceptions of corporate self and resulting, simplistic perspectives)	Difficult if based on ethical models, less congruent with current organizational realities/less descriptive power (runs against ego defenses with which illusory conceptions of corporate self are clung to)
Making the case for CSR (McWilliams, 2001; Roberts, 2003; Smith, 2003; Solomon, 2004; Swanson, 1995; 1999)	Focus on agency (self can only accommodate narratives of a disconnected self)	Balance agency and communion (self can accommodate interdependence and connection)
CSR practices (Van Marrewijk, 2003)	Short-term consequences, focus on single stakeholder (self can accommodate only stable and simplistic reflections, seen at one point in time from one vantage point)	Long-term consequences, focus on multiple stakeholders (self can accommodate dynamic and complex reflections, seen over multiple points in time from multiple vantage points)
Assessment of CSR practices (Gonzalez, 2002)		

<p>Dialog with stakeholders (Argandona, 1998; Roberts, 2003; Spence and Lozano, 2000; Zyglidopoulos, 2002)</p>	<p>Limited, local, formal stakeholders or societies only (self can accommodate only limited feedback, searches for preconceived reflections in a limited set of others) Single, absolute standard, objective (self can accommodate only clear-cut decisions of what is or is not congruent with its image)</p>	<p>Extensive, may include global stakeholders and informal societies, even friends and families (self thrives on extensive feedback, searches for creative dialog with many others) Multiple, subjective moralities, moral imagination (self can accommodate ambiguous decisions given that in the absence of a uni-dimensionally defined self, there can be no simplistic answers to what is right or wrong)</p>
<p>Corporate moral development (Logsdon and Yuthas, 1997; Snell, 2000) Societal consequences considered (Cragg, 2000; Kapelus, 2002; Kohls and Christensen, 2002; Panapanaan et al., 2003; Smith, 2003; Swanson, 1999)</p>	<p>Conventional (self remains trapped in rigidly defined concept of self-image and interest) Decisions suffer from “normative myopia,” non-complex, local impacts only (self permits only concerns for stable, unified and uni-dimensional self as seen in contrast to other such selves)</p>	<p>Post-conventional (self can accommodate concerns beyond narrowly defined rules) Wide range of impacts considered/wide moral space, global and complex impacts such as wealth distribution, human rights and environmental concerns (self permits concerns for dynamic, fragmented and multi-dimensional self interconnected with others)</p>
<p>CSR decision making (Zwetsloot, 2003) Boundaries of Responsibility (Broberg, 1996; Lantry, 2002)</p>	<p>Individual and uncontested (self can accommodate only one voice) Clearly defined by corporate boundaries, externalities not accounted for, regulation considered external concern (self relies on stable and clearly defined boundaries to maintain its illusory image)</p>	<p>Collective and cooperative (self can accommodate many voices) Not clearly defined by corporate boundaries may extend even to shareholders, externalities are accounted for and regulation may be actively supported (self does not rely on stable and clearly defined boundaries)</p>
<p>Social orientation of decision makers (McGuire, et al., 2003; Smith, 2003)</p>	<p>Not necessary, perhaps not desirable, imposition of managerial values (self accommodates only one voice and so if there are others it is a competition for whose voice can be heard over the others)</p>	<p>Preferred and necessary, managers are one of many voices in dialog (self accommodates many voices/concert of voices)</p>
<p>Social and psychological contracts considered in CSR decisions (Van Buren, 2000)</p>	<p>Limited consideration, non-bindingness (self can only accommodate narratives of disconnection and alienation)</p>	<p>Extensive consideration, bindingness of agreements (self can accommodate narratives of connection and mutual accountability)</p>

TABLE I
Continued

Dimension of CSR	Egoic approach	Post-egoic approach
Organizational culture as “matrix of corporate ethics” (Dion, 1996) (Cragg, 2000; Gottlieb and Sanzgiri, 1996; Marz et al., 2003; Pracker and Sharrar, 2003; Schwartz and Post, 2002; Trevino and Brown, 2004; Van Sandt and Neck, 2003)	Discourages ethical behavior and individual social orientation, lacks support for life-long learning, dialog, reflection, dissent and employee self-leadership and in general is marked by an absence of hope and human development (narratives of self accommodate only behaviors that reflect stable, simplistic concerns such as concerns for economic returns, clear answers with clear outcomes and certainty afforded by taking out human or developmental factors)	Encourages ethical behavior and individual social orientation, supports life-long learning, dialog, reflection, dissent and employee self-leadership and is marked by hope and higher levels of human development (narratives of self accommodate behaviors reflecting dynamic, complex concerns such as concerns for ethical reasoning, subjective answers with ambiguous outcomes and uncertainty introduced by human creativity and developmental factors)

identities, as one of many factors affecting CSR practices (Randel, 2002), but hinges critically on a post-egoic conception of the organizational self as fragmented and de-centered (Lacan, 1988b), not a collection of individuals but a collective self (Soares, 2003) with global stakeholders (Zyglidopoulos, 2002), multiple subjectivities and moralities (Lippen, 2001). In turn, the recognition of the collective, de-centered, socially embedded organizational self makes possible the adoption of post-conventional, post-egoic CSR practices not as a matter of organizational moral development (Logsdon and Yuthas, 1997) but as a matter of a more functional, more authentic, post-egoic self-concept.

Through this post-egoic conception, the self is understood to be socially constructed and embedded in a larger social context, which, rather than limiting the moral space in which CSR decisions are made, expand this space for organizational decision makers who can engage in dialog and cooperative decision making (Zwetsloot, 2003) and contemplate societal consequences of decisions without “normative myopia” (Swanson, 1999) and the blinders imposed by a limited conception of organizational position (Jacobs, 2004). Consequently, systemic and more complex CSR practices can evolve, which take account not only of the local but also of the global impacts of business decisions (Panapanaan et al., 2003) and can encompass such complex issues as global wealth distribution, fair trade and human rights (Cragg, 2000; Kohls and Christensen, 2002). Moreover, in a de-centered conception of the organizational self, ethical responsibilities are negotiated among shifting boundaries that not only include multiple stakeholders but turn notions of what is inside versus outside on their head including the responsibilities of shareholding (Langtry, 2002) and accounting for externalities or supporting regulation (Broberg, 1996).

This in turn makes managerial social orientation not a question of ethical preference (McGuire et al., 2003) but a key dimension of functional organizational self-conceptions in that employees may not only not work for organizations dominated by economic models because they do not accommodate their social orientation (McGuire et al., 2003) but rather because they seem to be dysfunctional in fundamental ways. Dysfunction associated with a lack

of authentic selfhood as expressed in narrowly economic CSR may not only lead to the creation of organizational cultures that discourage ethical behavior (Trevino and Brown, 2004) and individual social orientation (Marz et al., 2003) but also to a lack of support for the lifelong learning of employees (Pracker and Sharrar, 2003), a lack of support for employee self-leadership (Van Sandt and Neck, 2003) and a general absence of hope (Schwartz and Post, 2002) and human development (Cragg, 2000).

With a post-egoic conception of the organizational self it becomes not only possible but necessary to examine CSR as a narratively and socially constructed relationship among stakeholders (Sirgy, 2002) who negotiate, construct and re-construct the organizational self as a multitude of subjectivities (Lippens, 2001). That is, CSR in this sense is less a question of the creation of ethical organizational climates (Sims, 1992) but a question of supporting narratives that acknowledge the organizational self as de-centered, fragmented, relational, dynamic and multi-dimensional expressed, for example in organizational cultures – “as matrix of corporate ethics” (Dion, 1996: 329) – that foster dialog, dissent, reflection and learning (Gottlieb and Sanzgiri, 1996). Particularly, with a view toward the relational nature of such post-egoic conceptions of the organizational self, these also foster organizational narratives that can build on rather than exclude considerations of the social and psychological contracts that “bind” CSR (Van Buren, 2000).

As such, the argument that ethical models of CSR risk imposing managerial values on society (Smith, 2003), only applies to organizations that enact an egoic self concept. In organizations with narratives of post-egoic conceptions of the self, multiple relations and networks of social and psychological contracts would make such conceptions of CSR irrelevant, subsuming them in a larger dialogue of multiple subjectivities (of which managers are only one) or formal and informal societies (Argandona, 1998), friends and families (Spence and Lozano, 2000). Consequently, ethical CSR would not be realized when it becomes part of organizational identity (Maignan and Ralston, 2002), but rather more ethical CSR is realized when organizational identity reflects an authentic corporate subject beyond egoic illusion (Lacan, 1988b).

That is, post-egoic, more authentic conceptions of the organizational self not only foster the socially responsible imagination of the corporation (Hill et al., 2003) but rather they necessitate it. In this sense, being good or ethical does not mean being connected (Zadek, 1998), but being connected, as part of an authentic, relational organizational self-definition, means or leads to being good. This is true because the good is defined here not egoically as an absolute standard that can be defined simplistically or rigidly as a permanent, once-and-for-all answer. Rather the good defined post-egoically refers to a good that is negotiated among multiple others or stakeholders and reflects a complex web of relationships and connections and interests which are fleeting, forever changing and discursively and socially constructed and re-constructed.

In short, moving from economic to more ethical models and practices of CSR is not a question of what organizations should do as a matter of becoming more ethical, but is a question of what organizations can do as a matter of becoming more authentic and less plagued by various dysfunctions. As Lacan suggests, being trapped in the imaginary order of the ego makes for a frustrating and in many ways never fulfilled life experience (1988b). Analogously, being so trapped as an organization makes for a frustrating and unfulfilling organizational experience, collectively and individually. That is, insofar as more ethical models and practices of CSR reflect the construction and enactment of post-egoic narratives of the organizational self, they are more authentic, less dysfunctional, less frustrating and more fulfilling. Further, to the extent that such narratives are constructed at the individual and collective level, i.e. as a dialog constructed by individuals and groups (from work groups, to organizations and various groups of stakeholders for example), such models and practices of CSR are more authentic, less dysfunctional, less frustrating and more fulfilling across levels of analysis, that is for individuals and collectives.

Moralities of CSR

Based on what we have seen in the literature as more ethical CSR, as described above, we can highlight some of the functionalities of post-egoic

organizational self-conceptions. Such conceptions are more evolved, in terms of human development and consciousness (Cragg, 2000; Van Marrewijk, 2003) and moral development (Logsdon and Yuthas, 1997; Snell, 2000) and they are more balanced and holistic relative to the short and long-run and relative to the interests of multiple stakeholders and systemic approaches to local and global concerns (Gioia, 2003; Gonzalez, 2002; Roberts, 2003; Soares, 2003; Stormer, 2003; Zyglidopoulos, 2002). Moreover, post-egoic conceptions, rather than proposing unidimensional, simplistic and standardized answers to complex problems arising from CSR, they facilitate the moral imagination of corporations (Hill et al., 2003; Johnson, 1993) that can grapple with such problems more effectively and while not deriving the one best answer, which hardly exists, can help in finding functional, systemic and balanced solutions. These solutions are likely more functional not only because they are grounded in dialog, reflection and learning (Gottlieb and Sanzgiri, 1996) but also because they can more effectively deal with complex networks of social and psychological contracts (Van Buren, 2000).

In turn, such moral imagination can foster decision-making processes in organizations that continue to question, evaluate and dialog about existing solutions engaging continuously in cooperative processes (Zwetsloot, 2003) to define and re-define how CSR should be enacted. Within such processes, organizational boundaries and spheres of responsibility can continue to be evaluated cooperatively and flexibly so that the widest possible definition of community and responsibilities can be adopted including global issues of wealth distribution, environmental concerns and human rights (Cragg, 2000; Kapelus, 2002; Kohls and Christensen, 2002; Panapanaan et al., 2003; Smith, 2003). As such, what is external and what is internal, in for example, cost assessments, becomes then a dynamic dialog among multiple subjectivities and moralities (Lippens, 2001), so that boundaries such as business versus society, the public or the government become blurred and negotiated moving the organization ever closer to account for what in economic models may seem to fall under external costs of doing business or that which is left up to public policy (Windsor, 2001).

As shown in the overview provided in Table I, we can see how egoic and post-egoic approaches to CSR result in entirely different approaches to various dimensions of CSR starting with definitions of corporate self and its identity and what it means to serve the self's interests. This in turn then manifests itself in all dimensions from congruence with either economic or ethical models of CSR, to how the case is made for CSR in organizations, to specific CSR practices and how they are evaluated. It also manifests itself relative to stakeholder interactions, the underlying morality of CSR, and CSR decision making in general from the consequences and constraints considered by decision makers, their social orientation and various styles of decision making all the way to which CSR behaviors and CSR relevant organizational characteristics are supported or not by the organization's culture.

While in the table it may look like we are only adding a psychoanalytic layer to the former stalemate of economic versus ethical models, merely comparing and contrasting them and then making the case for one or the other, it is important to note that the two columns are not opposing and incompatible categories. Rather, as I have tried to argue all along, egoic and post-egoic approaches to CSR are endpoints on a continuum from illusion to authenticity, and dysfunction to function. Most importantly, to get from one endpoint to the other, one cannot simply choose sides. Rather, to get from dysfunction to function, from pathology to health, one has to start with the egoic and work through the egoic toward the post-egoic.

What I am pointing out is no mere technicality, but rather the crucial foundation based on which we may be able to move beyond the stalemate of economic versus ethical models of CSR. Crucial to Lacan's approach in which individuals may, usually through therapy (1988b), move from empty to full speech, or from alienated ego discourse to more authentic discourse of the subject, is the idea that the ego cannot be left behind. That is, it is not a matter of shedding the discourse of the ego to arrive at authentic discourse of the subject. Rather it is a matter of integrating the two or of allowing the authentic discourse of the subject to penetrate ego discourse. Lacan was very clear that there is no subject without an ego (1988b). So when we apply

Lacanian concepts to CSR as we have done here, it is important to realize that there is no post-egoic approach without an egoic approach. The egoic approach is what has to be worked through and integrated to arrive at the post-egoic approach. This is why, it is so important to integrate research into economic and ethical models because, from the psychoanalytic perspective developed here, you need one to get to the other. That is, economic models of CSR more congruent with the egoic endpoint are the foundation discourse around which we have to integrate ethical models congruent with post-egoic discourse.

So when proponents of the economic models claim that their models have more descriptive power (McWilliams, 2001), they are not only correct because egoic approaches are more common than post-egoic approaches. They are also in a sense correct because economic models as representing egoic discourse will always be present in organizations and will continue to have to be integrated to allow post-egoic discourse to emerge. Again, what I am suggesting is not to leave behind egoic approaches to CSR but rather to enable organizations to integrate post-egoic self-concepts into their discourse so that post-egoic approaches to CSR become possible. What is highlighted in the parentheses explanations in Table I for each dimension of CSR is how each approach to CSR is a result of different self-conceptions.

For each endpoint from egoic to post-egoic the self-concept of the organization imposes certain constraints and these constraints have to be worked with to move along the continuum. That is why it is not a question of ethical versus unethical CSR but rather of egoic versus post-egoic narratives of the corporate self and what these narratives enable the organization to do with respect to CSR. Moving from egoic to post-egoic narratives is a process of integration and working through in order to facilitate different approaches to CSR. Knowing that self-conceptions, the authentic self, are dynamic, this is not a matter of once and for all adopting post-egoic approaches but rather moving back and forth between the endpoints and allowing as much as possible post-egoic discourse and approaches to emerge from egoic discourse and approaches.

A critical starting point for enabling such movement is the exploration of narratives of the organizational self based on discursive and psychodynamic analyses (Cunliffe, 2002; Gabriel et al., 1999; Hardy, 2001; 2004; Kets de Vries, 1991; Kets de Vries and Miller, 1984; Marshak et al., 2000; Taylor and Robichaud, 2004). Through such analyses, it seems possible to assess whether organizational narratives, at the individual, group or organizational level for example (Hardy, 2004), reflect more egoic or post-egoic conceptions of the self and then to design interventions that aim at moving these narratives more toward post-egoic conceptions, again, not as a matter of leaving behind the egoic endpoint but of allowing the post-egoic to emerge. Drawing specifically on discourse analytic and psychodynamic organizational research (Gabriel et al., 1999; Hardy, 2001), it becomes possible to conduct integrative research on how various organizational discourses lead to and embody various enactments of CSR and how these discourses may be changed along the continuum of egoic versus post-egoic narratives.

An obvious starting point for this research would be to begin with empirical investigations of organizational discourse exploring whether and how economic models of CSR seem to correlate more strongly with egoic organizational narratives and whether and how ethical models of CSR seem to correlate more strongly with post-egoic organizational narratives. That is, to examine empirically the relationships that have been theorized in this paper, such as for example the relationship between post-egoic organizational narratives and existing organizational discourses communicating CSR activities (Robertson and Nicholson, 1996; Snider et al., 2003), and various other organizational behaviors described by ethical models of CSR (Joyner and Payne, 2002; Kapelus, 2002; Smith, 2003; Stormer, 2003; Swanson, 1995) and constructed in the previous section of this paper as enactments of post-egoic narratives.

In short, the tools of psychodynamic and discourse analytic research could be used to examine how narratives of the organizational self relate specifically to each dimension of CSR summarized in Table I. Diagnoses based on such research could then become the basis for organizational interventions in which we attempt to move the organization along the

continuum from egoic to post-egoic discourse and approaches to CSR. For example, as we find that at various levels of analysis egoic discourse seems to be dominant in an organization, we can design interventions in which we work through such discourse toward more post-egoic self conceptions and then examine how different discourses manifest themselves in different approaches to and practices of CSR.

In short, using the tools of discourse analytic research (Hardy, 2001; Putnam and Cooren, 2004), organizational discourse can be examined across individual, group and organizational levels of analysis (Hardy, 2001) with a view toward dialogic construction among multiple subjects including the investigator (Cunliffe, 2002), multiple meanings and voices (Hardy, 2001) but also discursive pragmatism (Alvesson and Karreman, 2000), which allows us to draw conclusions while being reflective of the ambiguity of any interpretation. Through discourse and narrative analysis organizational action and sensemaking (Taylor and Robichaud, 2004) and subconscious psychodynamics (Marshak et al., 2000), interventions and empirical studies of CSR can be developed.

A central focus of such studies would be to examine CSR not as ethical versus unethical behaviors but as behaviors resulting from discourse constructed by few versus many. CSR research then focuses not on which behaviors are normatively better, which is likely to mire it in just the kind of stalemate we have found in the literature. Instead it can focus on the extent to which behaviors reflect multiple voices and complex dialog and investigations of responsibility that do not have to determine which behaviors are more right but which behaviors reflect a more multidimensional dialog. In a sense, replacing debates over what is right and wrong in practice with investigations into how a more de-centered organizational self-narrative encompasses a more systemic approach to responsibility in practice simply because it includes more voices, more dialog and more complex reasoning.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper has been to advance research on CSR beyond the stalemate of economic

versus ethical models by providing an alternative perspective integrating the existing views and allowing for more shared dialog and research in the field. Specifically, it has been suggested that we may be able to move beyond the question of whether economic models are more or less moral than ethical models of CSR and whether the case to be made for ethical models is mostly a normative one. That is, we may be able to move beyond the question of whether and how to manage organizational self-interest toward the question of how accurate current conceptions of the organizational self seem to be. Put simply, CSR is not a question of how self-interested the corporation should be, but how this self is defined. Based on the idea that CSR is defined by and a function of the narrative construction and enactment of an organizational self, we can then gain insights as to why economic models of CSR seem to dominate the research and practice of CSR. They simply reflect a more common but illusory concept of the organizational self as autonomous and uni-dimensional. In turn, more ethical models of CSR seem to be more congruent with a more accurate, if less common, concept of the organizational self as interdependent and multi-dimensional.

Consequently, economic and ethical models of CSR are not models of opposition. Rather, they exist on a continuum between illusion and authenticity, which means that moving from one to the other is not a question of adopting different paradigms, moving from facts to values for example (Swanson, 1995), but rather of moving from illusion and dysfunction to truth and functionality, that is, moving, in some sense, from pathology to health. Illusion is equated here with pathology again from a psychoanalytic perspective in that illusion leads to alienated self-concepts that prevent authentic subjectivity from emerging (Lacan, 1988b). Given a continuum between illusion and authenticity, CSR can be defined not ambiguously as vacillating between economic and ethical models (Argandona, 1998; Joyner and Payne, 2002; Kapelus, 2002; Smith, 2003; Stormer, 2003; Swanson, 1995). Rather, it can be defined as the construction and enactment of a narrative of the corporate self vis-à-vis multiple others. Within this definition, it becomes possible to integrate research based on economic and ethical models of CSR by operationalizing them as more or less

accurate narrative constructions of the organizational self, that is, as located somewhere along the continuum between egoic and post-egoic narratives where economic models represent the illusions and defenses that have to be addressed to arrive at authenticity.

In conclusion, this paper has provided a starting point for a variety of new directions in the field of CSR research and practice. These new directions should provide the foundation for better definitions of CSR, in relation to narratives of the organizational self for example, and what to investigate and advance as CSR in organizational practice. As such the paper provides starting points for a pooling of resources and shared dialog between the economic and ethical camps that hopefully translate into more impact in theory and practice. As proponents of both camps realize they are working on endpoints of the same continuum, they may be in a better position to explore and facilitate how organizations move along this continuum in practice and hopefully stimulate movement toward more authentic and functional conceptions of organizational selves.

Note

¹ Zizek, S. 1989. *The sublime object of ideology* (p. 196). London: Verso.

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