KEEP OTHERS IN MIND: A WAY TO PROCEED WITH ETHICAL DECISIONS UNDER UNCERTAINTY
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Abstract

In the current global economy that is usually described as post-industrial, third wave and information-based, we should know how to explore on a sea of uncertainties. In such an environment, ethical decision-making due to ongoing dilemmas and difficulties is complex. So ethics should be understood as a learning process that constructs our identity. For this reason, this study is built on the idea of postmodern ethics. Postmodern ethics calls for rethinking and reexamination of our ethical assumptions with the hope that we can construct a new way of thinking. Among the different approaches in postmodern ethics, I choose Other-oriented ethics. This approach does not provide a set of codes and instructions, rather it offers a theoretical perspective for reconsidering the complexities of ethical decision-making by seeing the Other. Others are important in their otherness. It signifies radical uniqueness that cannot be conceptualized or thematized.

This research aims to show how recognizing and understanding Others (through non-rational response to the presence of Others and infinite responsibility toward them) can be a strategy in hand for ethical decision-making. To achieving this aim, I focus on both the individual and the corporate level. Since the individual is produced as a subject in the social process, the role of corporations is very important to creating the venues of virtue or of vice for all the employees.

By the Other-oriented ethical approach, researchers and practitioners may not receive a solution but they will be able to question everyday practices and accepted norms. It helps them to reconsider and reconceive the notion of ethics and responsibility in business ethical discourse on a continuous basis.

Theoretically, this study introduces an alternative tale for ethical decision-making. Hence, the main contribution of this study is applying Other-oriented ethical approaches in ethical decision-making. This happens through fostering moral impulse, bridging the moral laxity gap and extending a dynamic stakeholder model in which the Others play the pivotal role in ethical decision making.

Keywords: Levinas, Others, postmodern ethics, postmodernism, responsibility
Tiivistelmä


Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on osoittaa, kuinka Muiden tunnistaminen ja ymmärtämi-nen (epärationaalisen vastauksen kautta muiden läsnäoloon ja äärettön vastuu heitä kohtaan) voi olla eettisen päätöksenteon kädessä oleva strategia. Tämän tavoitteena saavuttamiseksi keskityn sekä yksilön että yrityksen osaamiseen. Koska yksilö on subjekti sosiaalisessa prosessissa, yritys-ten rooli on erittäin tärkeä aihetta hyveiden luomiseksi ja kyseenalyttämiseksi yhteiskunnassa.

Muihin suuntautuneen -eettisen lähestymistavan avulla tutkijat ja ammattilaiset eivät ehkä saa ratkaisua, mutta he pystyvät syöjä hengissä ja käyttämään normit. Se aut-taa heitä jatkuvasti polhoamaan ja käsittelemään etiikkaa ja vastuuta liiketoiminnan eettisessä kes-kustelussa.

Teoreettisesti tämä tutkimus esittelee vaihtoehtoisen tarinan eettiselle päätöksenteolle. Siksi tämän tutkimuksen päämakrokontekstina on Muihin suuntautuneen -eettisen lähestymistavan sovelta-minen eettiseen päätöksentekoon. Tämä tapahtuu edistämällä niin sanottu moraalista impulsia, kurottamalla yli moraalisen kuilan ja laajentamalla dynaamista sidosryhmämallia, jossa Muilla on keskeinen rooli eettisessä päätöksenteossa.

Asiasanat: Levinas, Muut, postmoderni etiikka, postmodernismi, vastuu
To my reason for being, Satia
And to all the passengers and crew who were killed in
Ukraine International Airlines flight that crashed in
Iran in 8 January 2020
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The sons of Adam are limbs of each other,
Having been created of one essence.
When the calamity of time afflicts one limb,
The other limbs cannot remain at rest.
If thou hast no sympathy for the troubles of others
Thou art unworthy to be called by the name of a man.

This book is a chapter of my life story in Northern part of the world far from the land that I was born and grown up. A chapter full of the moments of happiness and sorrow, hope and hopeless, laugh and crying but with a brilliant ending and starting the next season. Now and at the end of this chapter, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the heroes that have been with me in this journey of my life story. This thesis is the output of the support and encourage of several people to whom I am eternally grateful.

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Saadi Shirazi

1 Saadi Shirazi was a Persian poet and prose writer of the medieval period. Bani Adam (meaning "Children of Adam") is a famous poem by him. This poem is inscribed on a large hand-made carpet installed in 2005 on the wall of a meeting room in the United Nations building in New York.
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Oulu, January 2020

Akram Hatami
## Abbreviations

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<td>CSR</td>
<td>Corporate Social Responsibility</td>
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List of original publications

This thesis is based on the following publications, which are referred throughout the text by their Roman numerals:


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Original publications
1 Introduction

“Ultimately, man should not ask what the meaning of his life is, but rather must recognize that it is he who is asked. In a word, each man is questioned by life; and he can only answer to life by answering for his own life; to life he can only respond by being responsible.”

Viktor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (1985)

In spite of the fact that ethics was only discussed in philosophy all through the twentieth century and has been one of the major sources of philosophical reflection for nearly one thousand years, the discipline of business ethics has protected itself from these improvements (Jones et al., 2005). In addition, on some occasions these improvements are ignored and distorted so that it seems as if twentieth century philosophy curiously has nothing to say about ethics (Jones et al., 2005). For this reason, Jones et al. (2005) and some other scholars (ten Bos, 2003; Parker, 2003; Roberts, 2001, Rossouw, 1994) have been contending that recent philosophers really have a lot to say about business ethics. In this regard, in this thesis I focus on the philosophical side of business ethics and in particular postmodern philosophers.

In this chapter, I will discuss the background of the study as well as research questions and the significance of the study. Key concepts as the first step in the research process are the next section of this chapter. These key concepts help me to build my search strategy and set the related parameters. Then I will discuss positioning the study on both practical and theoretical positioning.

1.1 Background and justification for the research

The advent of globalization is presumed to spread wealth and equity around the world but the current situation of global business operations are surrounded by some malpractices which affect the lives of thousands people all around the world. The practices of hypocrisy because of self-interest, a vast amount of green washing, deterioration and downturn of values, the degradation of environment, social problems such as child labor, gender inequality in workplaces, worker exploration, corruption, etc. are only minor evidence of the current situation of some business practices all around the world. But the fact is, businesses operate in the social and natural environment, not in a vacuum hence, by virtue of existing, their duty is to be ethical and responsible to the society in which they operate as well as global society. For this purpose, organizations should have a balance between two sides
of the business coin, their operations and the appearance of their behavior. In this sense, ethics as an inseparable part of business comes to the surface.

Business ethics as a sub-discipline of philosophy (Wilcke, 2004) has been the focus of philosophical thinking and debate from time immemorial (Kulshreshtha, 2005). In the world of commerce, the history of organizations demonstrates that the basic problems in business ethics are not new and there are a constant change only in the cultural and technological context of these problems (ibid). As important historical evidence, the Code of Hammurabi (the 1700s B.C.) shows some rules for pricing, tariffs and laying down of trade and tough penalties for noncompliance (Velentzas & Broni, 2010). Path-hotep in his book, The Precepts of Path-Hotep (one of the oldest surviving paper books) described the responsibilities at work such as adherence to duty, self-control and transparency (Giulla, 2011). Aristotle’s book “Nicomachean Ethics”, which is a philosophical inquiry into the nature of the good life for human being, is a valuable written in support of business and profits (Collins, 1987). He argues that, for corporations, it is more beneficial that they see themselves as a community with the purpose of making a good life rather only providing a living (ibid). The idea of ethics in business continues to the present day.

Business ethics as a system of moral principles which applied in the commercial world (Velentzas & Broni, 2010) was not considered seriously before the 1960s since business simply entailed service of the capitalist countries (Keller-Krawzyk, 2010) only for the sake of profit. However, as time went on, there was more attention paid to business ethics in articles and speeches (Wilcke, 2004). One of the reasons for growing attention to business ethics was the Silent Spring book by Rachel Carson in 1962 in which it warned that the life of birds and wildlife is in serious danger because of the use of pesticides (ibid). The discipline of business ethics was rolling and entering academic society from the 1970s (DeGeorge, 2005; Ferrell et al., 2012; Wilcke, 2004) due to the growth of unbridled greed, lack of sufficient attention to moral leadership and common business failure (Michalos, 2008). Put another way, business ethics cannot be considered a concept that suddenly falls from the sky because of some naïve idealism rather, the growing of business ethics is due to rising awareness of the development trend of socioeconomic problems (Ulrich, 2013) in the existing state of business affairs in every corner of the world. According to Trevino (1986), business ethics has grown in response to the apparent decline in ethical standards in business, and due to the recognition that economic relations have their morality, which needs to be protected (Durkheim, 1964).
With regard to the legitimate business goal of maximizing economic profits (Kulshreshtha, 2005) for some people ethics is not compatible with business and seems to be an oxymoron (Keller-Krawzyk, 2010; Duska, 2000) because it is embedded in a capitalist system, according to Crane and Matten (2016).

It sounds like an oxymoron that business is on some occasions unethical or at the best, amoral. The most notable problem of business ethics according to Zsolnai (2007) is that ethics in business is usually considered a means to earn more money and more profitability rather than as an end itself. It makes a paradox in which business ethics is understood only as an optional supplementary to the knowledge of business management (Aasland, 2004).

Carr (1968) argued that business ethics is like a game of poker that is justified in lying, cheating, and bribing because of its objectives. One of the dominant metaphors that demonstrates the oxymoron side of business ethics belongs to Milton Friedman (1970). In an oft-cited quotation, he believes "there is one and only one social responsibility of business–to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud". In another article, titled “The Business Community’s Suicidal Impulse” (1999), Friedman as a believer in the pursuit of self-interest in a competitive capitalist system seriously called into question why corporations should decide the charitable purposes that should be supported by the income of their stockholders? Baumol and Blackman (1991) argue that it is very difficult for competitive businesses to behave in socially desirable ways on a voluntary basis such as being responsible to the environment and contributing to worthy social programs. Hence, they recommend an incentive or reward structure of businesses as a more beneficial approach, businesses become more willing to behave ethically (Kulshreshtha, 2005). Nevertheless, this claim is ambiguous and paradoxical (ibid). However, despite increasing interest and research on business ethics, this concept is still not considered a part of mainstream of economic analysis because the critics of the negative relationship between profit and morality are continuing to be argued (Kulshreshtha, 2005; Chan, 2008).

Ethics and strategy are mutually reinforcing, and it is not possible to create an operational organizational theory without an at least implicit ethical or normative basis (Nielsen, 2003:476). Accordingly, the impossibility of independence of an economic entity from ethical issues has been discussed among scholars for several years (Albert, 1972; Vogal, 1991; Wilson, 1997; Pearson and Parker, 2001; Warren & Tweedale, 2002; Aasland, 2004; Ehrlich, 2005; Warren, 2011; Crane & Matten,
Ehrlich (2005) discusses a series of responsibilities for a business. First, profit making as an essential element for an economic entity; second, responsibility to follow and obey the law and legislation; and third, ethical responsibility. Brenkert (2010) claims that many corporations set out ethical initiatives and many others report their responsibility or citizenship efforts at their annual reports. Aasland (2004) argues that ethics is not the antithesis of the thesis of pursuing self-interest and profitability of an economic entity. By the way, business ethics cannot bracket off from organizational studies and it has become an accepted part of management both inside and outside universities for over the last 25 years or so (Jones et al., 2005).

Business ethics concerns are a form of applied ethics (Velentzas & Broni, 2010) that examines ethical and moral principles or ethical difficulties that arise in a business environment (Solomon, 1991). According to Chan (2008), business ethics that is more western-oriented today has first been influenced and considered with respect to the capitalist framework. For Ehrlich (2005), business ethics limit the pursuit of self-interest because it creates an environment in which the Others are respected. There are no fundamental principles for business ethics for being acceptable generally, hence different approaches have been applied to ethical problems in business. Some studies appreciate the contribution of normative theories that have roots in modernity ethics (Solomon, 1999; Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999; Whetstone, 2001; Laczniak & Murphy, 2006; Moore, 2008; Bowie, 2009; Smith, 2009). Bowie (2009) applauds using traditional normative theories and deontological reasoning in business ethics because he believes that the normative discipline has a complete understanding of our complex world. The normative ethics in the form of deontology, teleology and virtue ethics have been considered in business ethics in order to pave the way for managing ethical dilemmas in business operations.

Donaldson and Dunfee (1999) theorized business ethics with deontological norms, which involve hypernorms and local norms, as an integrative social contract. They elaborate a model as an Integrative Social Contract Theory (ISCT) in which ethics considers a pluralism not relativism. By this theory, businesses cannot claim that their rules and norms are necessarily universal; rather they should exercise the tolerance of some different approaches. Deontological ethics or ethics of duty that is coined by Kant, is non-consequentialist, in that it evaluates the inherent rightness or wrongness of the behavior (Hunt & Vitell, 2006). Deontology assumes there is an absolute fixed norm, or expected behavior, to resolve an ethical issue (ibid). The teleological ethical theory as another normative theory emphasizes the ultimate
goal of ethics (Sullivan & Pecorino, 2002). Rawls’s theory of justice is designed based on the deontology of ethics to create a fair and unbiased path to ethical principles by universal claims about morality and justification (Evans & Evans, 2014). According to Doom (2009), Rawl’s approach to business ethics enables decision-makers to have a pluralist view with corporation ‘stakeholders without giving priority to any of them. Hence, this theory can be effectively applied to business ethics (Hsieh & Smith, 2009). Solomon (1999) applied Aristotelian perspective and developed a list of virtuous ethics that should be seriously considered by business practitioners. Solomon makes a comparison between profits and air, which are both necessary for flourishing but value is more significant than profits in contemporary corporate life (Salvador, 2013). The Aristotelian position has been defended by Moore (2008). He contended MacIntyrean virtue ethics that provides the possibility of resolving the issue of morality within organizations (Moore, 2008) so it is generalizable (Fernando & Moore, 2014).

The normative side of ethical decisions which prescribe a list of “do’s” and “don’ts” in business has been criticized for a long time. Ethical dilemmas develop faster than corporations can regulate themselves for getting entangled in those dilemmas. According to Levinas (1969), the code-oriented principles of business ethics now tend to be more ideological and totalizing. Dunfee (1987) purports that business practices are too heterogeneous and diverse to be bounded in a comprehensive and universal code of ethics. Brenkert (2010) argues that a part of ethical dilemmas such as scandals and recent financial crises are due to heavily rely on rational argument and conceptual clarification. Some code-oriented approaches to business ethics tend to share a utilitarian focus (Bauman, 2007) and they are not flexible in emerging a new situation (Cassell et al., 1997). This inflexibility is the main reason why ethical codes cannot reflect the dynamics of globalization (Stohli et al., 2009). Popke (2004) discusses that if it is possible to rely upon a universal principle in business ethics, then we are absolved of any responsibility to engage actively in intervening in ethical issues.

In a rapidly globalizing world, corporations are likely to confront complex ethical issues and dilemmas in their domestic as well as international business contexts. Peter Singer (2002:13) opines that “how well we come through the era of globalization (perhaps whether we come through it at all) will depend on how we respond ethically to the idea that we live in one world.” In this regard, the cost of misbehaving on business operations in the current era is too much and spread all around the world, so a critical perspective is demanding for business ethics. Since in this period of history we are experiencing a transition from modernism to some
other yet-to-be-determined paradigm (Mcquilkin & Mullen, 1997:70), my study is based on a postmodern perspective on business ethics. Postmodernism as a critical standpoint creates elasticity in a moral system, which enhances the degree of flexibility and adaptability in response to social change (Thompson, 2004). Due to the fact that ‘rationality’ is invariably a regulative idea involving how one should act and organize institutions rationally (Ulrich, 2013), the advocate of postmodern business ethics rejects the rationality of ethics (cf. Foucault, 1984; Levinas, 1985; Bauman, 1993; Green, 1993; Gustafson, 2000; Rorty, 2006; Woermann, 2012).

Foucault (1984) discusses the practice of the self, the subject of which relates codes and norms to themselves and tries to constitute themselves as agents of moral conduct. Morality for Bauman (1993) is rooted in moral impulse as an infinite responsibility toward Others. Rorty (2006) discusses how the rational argumentation about moral issues is not wrong for business but always lags behind; it is a limited view of the whole story. Some new modes of story are needed to be developed for this field (ibid). Green (1993) points out that, businesses should move beyond the metaphor of managers as fiduciary because it gives limited liability and responsibility, and if we do not rethink this metaphor, the unethical business operation will happen repeatedly. This fiduciary responsibility to the owners subordinates any moral issues affecting other stakeholders (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999). Ulrich (2013) believes that business ethics now is more than applied ethics, and it demands an encouraging climate for managers and employees to become ‘leaders’ in exemplifying ethical behavior (Kulshreshtha, 2005).

The postmodern standpoint on business ethics in my thesis is understood as a means to constitute both our knowledge and us, instead of following a normative system that guides wise action and decision (Woerman & Cilliers, 2012). Ethics in the postmodern approach is responsibility toward Others, which does not have any line or limit (Roberts, 2001) and is always out there. This responsibility is not something that is forced by rules and corporation’s procedures; instead it is a sense that should be created among the employees in their interactions and dialogue. According to Crone (2008), in the 1980s and 1990s, new discourses and thoughts on ethics emerged that deliberately placed themselves at a distance from the modern is–ought distinction, concentrating instead on ethical questions in new ways. A common critique of both positivism and universalistic moral philosophy can be heard from these new voices (ibid). Among the different philosophers in this stream, in this study I follow the Franco-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, who has gradually become known as one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century (Simmons, 1999). Levinas is distinguishable for creating
heteronomous ethics, that is, ethics based on another person, the Other, and not the Self (ibid: 83). For Levinas (1991) being ethical is being responsible for the Other, and moral impulses and intuition are pre-rational, elicited by encounters with the Other. Levinas (1985: 90) argued that “my task does not consist in constructing ethics; I only try to find its meaning”. I will show later in this study that Levinas’s ideas of ethics and responsibility can help us in uncertain situations. I also align myself with Zygmunt Bauman because, according to Alford (2013), the most ambitious attempt to use Emmanuel Levinas to justify a new moral philosophy in the postmodern world is that of Bauman in his book *Postmodern Ethics* (1993). In line with the Levinasian view of ethics, Bauman discusses the face and proximity when he opens up a discussion of moral impulses.

In this study, both individual and corporations are considered. The role of individuals within a corporation is critical because it is related to ethical decision-making. In the current business environment, which is characterized by the intensification of competition, deregulation and globalization, the subjectivity of the employee is most decisively produced and reproduced (Roberts, 2001). Since the individual is produced as a subject in social process (Foucault, 1977), this study by a postmodern approach shows how employees and managers can be constructed as a moral identity in a corporation’s climate and how fostering moral impulse within corporations can highlight the role of the Others in ethical decision-making. Corporations as an assemblage of practices (Collier, 1998) can create the venues of virtue or of vice for all of their employees (Sadler-Smith, 2012). Employees assimilate their morally relevant values from the society in which they are embedded (Bandura, 1996; Tetlock et al., 1996). In this regard, I will discuss ethical discourse, ethical sensemaking and subjectification as three interconnected processes in the way of institutionalized ethics in corporations.

All in all, the postmodern approach to business ethics in this study, which is far beyond normative ethics, can assist organizations in meeting the uncertainty. David McCarthy in *Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Probability* (2017:705) argues that the conventional moral philosophy has not been heavily concerned with probability as the best-known tool for thinking about uncertainty. Hence, the uncertainty is an initiative for researchers, myself included, to rethink the conventional paradigm in business ethics. In this stream, we will understand the limitation of our knowledge in redirecting discussion about ethical questions in business. Understanding this issue is the first step toward questioning the status quo and seeking any alternative solution. This study aims to open a new vista for this rethinking.
1.2 Research aim and questions

Ethics is going to be obligatory for business sustainability as well as finance, marketing and operations. According to Aasland (2004), since there is a difference between ethics and profitability, the only practical path for ethics and responsibility is to make them a goal in themselves. There is not any doubt that the principles of business ethics cannot exist very independent of individuals or corporation’s value (Dunfee, 1987). Like children that follow their parent’s behavioral patterns, employees in an organization observe how owners and managers deal with ethical issues. Hence, ethical behavior should be demonstrated by all employees, regardless of their position in organization’s hierarchy. In this stream, the role of managers and decision-makers as the important pieces in an inescapable game of profit making (Duska, 2000) are more determinant. Value-based managers earn high levels of trust amongst their followers. While we cannot characterize managers by the terms moral managers or ethical managers, but a sense of moral solidarity is a key factor of business success (Thompson, 2004). This solidarity is not achieved by a rational consensus, rather it is flourished by a set of dialogues and interactions of agreements and disagreements (ibid). Ethics and responsibility “demand that individuals and corporations “give an account” of their decisions and actions” (Painter-Morland, 2006:89).

According to Thompson (2004), morality is regularly revised as a mixture of reason, emotion, practice and social context rather than a received set of concrete applied principles. Accordingly, the main aim of my thesis is to show how recognizing and understanding the Others (through a non-rational response to the presence of Others and infinite responsibility toward them) can be a strategy in hand from one side for managers and employees in their ethical considerations, and from the other side for corporations in order to recognize the Other more than before and accordingly extend the sphere of their responsibility and base their future horizon on. In order to address this aim, I will propose Other-oriented ethics, which highlights the role of the Other in our existence, as a way toward creation and effective moral identity in employees within a corporation. Buchanan (1996) discusses two types of ethical problem. One is genuine ethical dilemmas, in which the ethical obligations cannot cover what one ought to do, while the other type of compliance problem is that the ethical obligations are clear, but due to some pressure such as self-interest or loyalty to the group or organization, the obligations cannot be fulfilled (ibid). In today’s business world, the compliance problem is very serious due to wide, separated, irresponsible and unethical business operations.
The compliance problem is not something that is covered by some other instructions or obligations; rather it needs an effort by decision-makers toward contextual ethics and responsibility among themselves and the employees as well. Buchanan (1996) express by the virtue of moral imagination, the managers can tackle compliance problems effectively. Hence, the main research questions for this study are depicted in Table 1. These questions focused on highlighting the role of the Other in ethical decision making, which can create a moral identity for both employee and corporation and to some degree curb the non-compliance problem. Each question is addressed through one scientific paper.

Table 1. Research questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Title of the paper</th>
<th>Type of paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Who is excluded in stakeholder theory and to what extent corporations can contribute the Other in their ethical decision-making?</td>
<td>A dynamic stakeholder model: An Other-oriented ethical approach</td>
<td>Theoretical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) How are managers in shadow factories encouraged not to care about the Other?</td>
<td>In Search of Bauman's Moral Impulse in Shadow Factories of China</td>
<td>Empirical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) How can the gap between pseudo-CSR and true CSR be conceptualized and bridged on an individual cognitive level?</td>
<td>Moral laxity—the cognitive gap between true and pseudo corporate social responsibility</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to postmodernism, there are no right views, just a number of perspectives (Duska, 2014). So in my thesis as a critical approach to business ethics, I am not going to end up with a solution because the logic of postmodern thought is a different understanding of reason and the rationality in postmodern discourse is not based on finding answers for problems but on problematizing answers (Cooper & Burrell, 1988). According to Foucault, "answers are the only ways of short-circuiting problems, as expressions of the ‘haste of wanting to know’ “ (ibid:101). Accordingly, by taking a postmodern approach, I want to show that corporations can create a climate in which the individual is encouraged and hence foster ethical behavior on their part. In short, to change people, we need to engage their emotions and motives as well as their intellects and human beings depend on the societies for their sense of moral meaning (Thompson, 2004).
In this study, I focus on both the individual and the organizational level. The first research question is on the organizational level and the second and third research question are addressed at the individual level of morality. The role of individuals in ethical decision-making is highlighted because they can create moral imagination in which employees put themselves in the suffering situation. Moral imagination is a helpful effort to redirect the thinking of future managers (Rorty, 2006). According to Rorty (2006:378) the changes in business ethics perspective "will come from the creative imagination, rather than from rational reflection or from empirical discoveries". Robert (2002) argues that the new regime of ethical business in corporate strategy is more corporate image than ethics; hence, the corporations should more use their imaginations to the services of learning and forecasting the consequences of their operations to the other. Moral issues have meaning in compelling imagery and models of subjectivity, which can shape both conscious and unconscious understanding and interpretation of events, experiences, and nature in the formation of a subjective identity (Thompson, 2004). From the other side, according to Foucault, the dynamics of power and knowledge inform the self (Painter-Morland, 2006). Since the individual is not an isolated and independent rational agent, these dynamics have a central role in how an individual understands him/herself as well as the individual relationship and responsibilities toward Others (ibid). I focus on the individual level because the organizational morality will coincide with a manager’s morality (Jones, 1995) and there is a strong relationship between the values of an organization and individual (Brass et al., 1995).

In the realm of moral identity, individual morality is socially constructed (Thompson, 2004) and individuals need critical self-awareness, but the pressure and expectation of an organizational system is a primary obstacle to losing the individual capacity for critical self-reflection (Painter-Morland, 2006). Because of this pressure, the moral responsiveness of the individual within an organization is spoiled (ibid). This kind of pressure is a primary hindrance to fostering moral consciousness. Moral consciousness and acts can acquire by moral identity as a means for both individual and collective decision-making (Thompson, 2004).

Forming the subject as an ethical subject could draw out a setting for understanding ethical response (Butler, 2005, cited in Loacker & Muhr, 2009). This is “the moral capacity of human beings that make them so conspicuously capable to form societies and against all odds to secure their –happy or less happy- survival” (Bauman, 1993:32). Survival is more critical when we are living in an uncertain world.
Uncertainty is an unavoidable part of life including business life. For this reason, I choose postmodern approach because the postmodern ethical decision criteria are the antithesis of traditional organizational rationality. In order to facilitate such radically different models of decision and action, new and different perspectives are needed. Involving diverse individuals and groups in organizational processes will foster alternative decision-making modes. The scope will be expanded beyond cost-benefit calculations. Ambiguity and uncertainty will be accepted and addressed, thus influencing decision-making and outcomes (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999:41).

In responding to uncertainty in business ethics, Barclay and Smith (2005) consider three levels of analysis. One is the macro level, which analyzes the nature of capitalism and the market economy; the second is the meso level, which is related to the business operations within the parameter of the market system; and the third is the micro level, which is concerned with individual behavior and belief. By taking the postmodern approach in business ethics, a part of this study (questions two and three) wants to address the micro level of business ethics in an organization which fosters moral impulses and morality in individuals and considers how the Other in ethical decision-making can enhance the level of responsibility in organizations which can prevent pseudo behavior in the name of ethics and responsibility. According to Woermann (2010), unethical behavior in the business world would be moderated by institutionalizing ethics. Institutionalizing ethics would temper unethical behavior and decisions in the business world. Through creating an ethical identity in employees, business ethics can consider sense-making tools that can help in ethical decision-making in the corporations (ibid).

The ongoing and increasing unethical and irresponsible behaviors all around the world call us to change the mission of business ethics from prescribing and proscribing behavior into sense-making tools and tools for analysis that can help in ethical decision-making in the world of business. In this sense, postmodern business ethics can enrich our understanding about business ethics because the conventional and normative ethical theories ignore the contextual grounding of human action (Ghoshal & Moran, 1996) and behavior.

1.3 Significance of the study

Ethics in business is not a new field. It is as old as business. Like in all other realms of life, people should behave ethically in business (De George, 1989). In the world
of business ethics, normative ethical theories have been criticized by Trevino (1986) as poor indicators of ethical behavior in business, inaccurate in their representation of business realities, and lacking face-validity with business practitioners. In this regard, this study is built on non-normative or critical approaches to business ethics, in particular, postmodern ethics.

For some scholars, the import of the postmodern approach in organizational studies is not very clear and this approach is assumed to be a nihilistic enterprise that offer nothing beyond a cynical skepticism (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997). However, for some others, postmodernity provides us a strategy for remaining open to complexity (Woermann & Cilliers, 2012). In business ethics, the postmodern approach helps us to move beyond rule-led ethics and feel for Other more than before. The postmodern approach to business ethics as a set of radical strategies helps us to have moral imagination toward the Other. Moral imagination as a process emerges through a dialectical process (Hargrave, 2009) followed by sensemaking and subjectification. Moral imagination allows us to enact the necessary steps to engage ourselves with the future that we don’t know about (Woermann & Cilliers, 2012).

In this study, I do not stick to a fixed ethical theory in business ethics. Fixed theories have the same effect as choosing a hammer to tackle every household task; the hammer can repair something quickly while others may remain unrepaired or even broken (Stinson & Bullock, 2012). As a single household task may need several tools for repairing (ibid). For me, postmodern approach to business ethics give us these several tools. A single question or social phenomenon may require multiple perspectives and concepts from different theories that demand a break from theoretical fundamentalism (Lather, 2006, cited in Stinson & Bullock, 2012).

In a world that is characterized by uncertainty and unpredictability, the certainty of the modernist approach in organizational studies needs to be questioned continually. It requires complex redefinitions of the fixed theory. Postmodernism as a critical approach highlights the role of experiences in the construction of new theories (Addis & Podestá, 2005) and it leads to rethinking the status quo and redefining our responsibility in our current world. So as Addis and Podestá (2005) assert for both researcher and the discipline, this approach is very risky and at the same time, is a challenging task.

Although adherence to a specific method or standard constitutes a safety net for the researchers (ibid) because they can justify their findings easily, but at the same time, such a safety net would also become the cage of the researchers (Addis & Podestá, 2005). Within this cage, the scholars were not allowed to leave without
being strongly criticized about the dishonesty of the academic status (ibid). In this
sense, working based on a postmodern approach in such a sensitive phenomenon
like ethics allows researchers, including me, to seek the solution without adhering
to a certain theory. By this approach, the researcher will leave the cage and put step
to a risky playground. In this playground, the researcher can play his or her own
game while having more space to move. This space enables the researcher to
position and express herself or himself far beyond any fixed position or theory.

This study shows how postmodern ethics is conductive to helping managers
and decision-making to consider ethical issues in their decision far beyond of any
rules and regulations. The new crises in the capitalistic landscape demand new
modes of thinking which pursue new ideas and bringing new solutions for ongoing
crises. In other words, the organizations need some fresh blood, in the hope that
they remain a sustainable company in the world of business and prevent unethical
behavior in order make the world a better place to live. Therefore, we echo the
voice of Woermann (2010:20) that “now is the time to sow the seeds of new ideas
in the hope that these may grow, take shape, and blossom in the cracks of a
capitalistic landscape”. Bearing this in mind, this study could be seen as one such
seed.

1.4 Key concepts of the study

“...researchers need clear, unambiguous definitions of concepts to develop
sound explanations”.

(Neuman, 2013: 205)

Key concepts are important because they help researchers and audiences to focus
on the discussion. With this regard, the key concepts of this study is discussed in
this section.

Ethics and Morality

Ethics and morality are often used interchangeably, or with questionable
differences (Becker & Becker, 1992) and slightly different resonance (Grayling,
1996). Ethics refers to the Greek word éthos, which means character, and morality
comes from Latin, which means mores and refers to character or to custom and
habit (ibid). In order to have a holistic view of how ethics and morality is defined
In scientific literature in Table 2, I summarized all of the definitions and characteristics.

**Table 2. A comparison between ethics and morality.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethics</th>
<th>Morality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venkatadurai et al., (2014)</td>
<td>the character of a person;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explicitly adopted by a group of people;</td>
<td>could be a lesson especially from an experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>internally defined and adopted;</td>
<td>tend to be externally imposed on other people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>formulated norm for behavior;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is self-accepted;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has a dynamic core in nature;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>has a larger connotation than morality.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clawson (2007)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the established and accepted guidelines of behavior for organizations or individuals</td>
<td>the individual determination of what is right or wrong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams (2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>describes in reference to second order</td>
<td>describes in reference to first order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addresses the questions of the Good</td>
<td>addresses the questions of the right and the just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraser (2001)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addresses the questions of the Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De George (2006)</td>
<td>covers the principles and activities that are considered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethics studies morality;</td>
<td>importantly right and wrong, the rules that govern those</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is a systematic attempts to make sense of our individual and social moral experience;</td>
<td>activities; and the values that are embedded, fostered, or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determine the rules that ought to govern human conduct;</td>
<td>pursued by those activities and practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In some occasions, ethics is synonymous with morality; for example, an action that is morally right is called an ethical one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grayling (1996)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>carries a broader conception including a concern with the value of different kinds of life and activity</td>
<td>is more related to the experiences;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tends to narrow its interest to rules and obligations, and to the experiences and considerations most closely related to them;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethics | Morality
---|---
Becker and Becker (1992) forms an alternative to morality; | is difficult to define
Lacks characteristic narrow features of morality while still being concerned with the issues related to morality; | is a narrow concept so that some ethical theories have been said to lack morality.
addresses questions like how we should live and what we should do. | Example: personal morality
Example: Professional ethics, medical ethics, social ethics, family ethics, business ethics etc.

In this study, I consider ethics as a set of rules and principles that prescribe and proscribe the organizational behavior. These set of rules are called ethical theories. These theories include concepts of moral duty or obligations. They try to regulate human behavior. While morality is more concerned with the individual level. Morality is a process that human being learned during their lives. Rules and regulations are a part of this process, not the whole process. Morality is very dependent on social context. Human beings are not born moral/immoral; instead they construct as a moral/immoral agent.

**Postmodernism**

Postmodernism is very hard to define. According to Feldman (1998) postmodernism has been evolved in different disciplines across the social sciences and humanities. He defines postmodernism as a theoretical framework focusing on the role of knowledge and symbolism in the phenomenon of social and psychological control (ibid:60). Postmodern leaves an absolutes standard, universal categories, law and grand theories in favor of local, contextualization, and pragmatic conceptual strategies (Seidman, 2016). In other words, postmodernism does not prescribe any certain form of living.

**1.5 Positioning of the study**

In this section, the practical positioning that leads to the present study is provided. Subsequently the theoretical positioning which is based on existing literature in business ethics is described.
1.5.1 Practical positioning

This thesis is a story of a journey. A journey based on my work experience. The story began in an international trading company based in Iran where I worked between 2009 and 2011. During that period, Iran faced international sanctions. Working in an international company under the shadow of heavy sanctions was an extremely difficult and challenging experience. In order to bypass the sanctions, our company had opened an office outside Iran which was responsible for ordering products or interacting with companies outside Iran. This office then facilitated the import of the purchased products to Iran.

The company I worked for was the importer of electronic and mechanical parts and related accessories that could be used in oil, gas and petrochemical industries. Once in around October 2010, I received a request from a customer to order a spare part for a mechanical pump used in petrochemical operations. These sorts of parts had to be ordered from the origin source, a German factory. Usually, after receiving a request from a customer we prepared a purchase order under the name of our company and then submitted it to either the manufacturer or their regional sales representatives. In this occasion, after emailing and submitting the purchase order I rang the manufacturer’s office in Germany to confirm they had received the order. The company’s sales informed me that they required the serial number of the equipment as well as the name and details of the end user in order to make sure that they were quoting the right parts. What I was asked to do put me in a challenging situation. I had two options: I could give away the name of our customer and the equipment serial number; but then they would have rejected our purchase order since the petrochemical industry, the end user of the part, was in sanctions list. This could even put our company in a big risk of revealing working with a customer which was included in sanctions. Alternatively, I could provide a fake company name outside of Iran which I found an unprofessional and unethical decision.

At the end I informed the sales department of the German factory that my colleague would contact them to provide the requested information. I remember clearly that my manager was not pleased about my decision and suggested that I should have provided the name of a petrochemical plant from one of the neighboring countries. He then assigned another person to finish the task.

That experience ignited a few ethical questions in my mind:

- What would have been the best decision?
Was I supposed to do what my manager expected me to do and provide the manufacturer with the name of another petrochemical company to order the part?

What if my order was for food, medicine or medical devices? And many other similar questions.

I did not know the answers to those questions, but I was sure with the heavy sanctions against Iran, working in the field of international trade and commerce was not possible for me anymore. Even though many companies managed to take advantage of the conflict and make profit out of the situation.

Soon after, my family and I decided to begin a new life and move to another working environment with the aim of finding solutions for such complicated issues. Shortly after, I began my research journey based on the questions that first came to my mind on a rainy autumn day in October 2010.

1.5.2 Theoretical positioning

De George (2006) opens up a discussion of the necessity of the moral background of business. He discusses that business activity is human activity, and thus it can be assessed from moral points of view, like any other human activity. For him business and morality have a deeper relationship, hence business presupposes a background of morality and would be impossible without it (ibid). Jones (2003) argues that ethics is essential for business and is helpful for minimization of risk, or at least of the public perception of risk, but also that there are the direct and indirect financial benefits of ethics. According to Vallance (1995:84, cited in Jones, 2003:235) “ethics can also be a business’s core strategic center—an overt ethical position may also give a business a direct competitive edge”. In this regard, the role of business ethics in a world of economic turbulence, uncertainty, change and chaos is more significant than before, but at the same time it is very critical and complex.

Traditional or normative ethics rely on the ontology of the individual, so the most important issue is rights (Burton & Dunn, 1996). In addition, Traditional ethics is also based on a view of knowledge as abstract, universal, impartial, and rational (ibid). As a consequence, moral and ethical theories tend to be legalistic and contractual in nature (ibid). While ethics in complex and unpredictable environments demands a critical perspective not in the sense of ending all the other approaches in ethics, but rather it needs a new way of thinking and looking at ethical dilemmas from different perspectives. In the realm of business, it is the right
time to allow the other approaches to tell us their contributions in business ethics and pave the way for further approaches for understanding moral phenomena from another dimension. In this sense, the academic sphere is the best place to examine new approaches and try to find the shortcomings of old approaches by criticizing them. From the heart of critique, a new horizon will be appearing. According to Crane and Matten (2004) the critical perspective has received little attention in business texts, while this perspective offers an important alternative worldview which should not be ignored, and it may become increasingly more influential and powerful in the business ethics literature. I was motivated to apply a critical perspective to business ethics because, according to Losoncz (2003), the critical perceptive is not supplementary to business ethics but rather a necessary component of it. Hence, in order to study a system—here, business ethics—we need to study all of the system’s components. In addition, living in uncertainty needs a dynamic approach to business ethics that paves the way for the questioning of the metanarratives of business ethics that take the forms of fixed rules and principles. With this regard, this study is based on a critical perspective and among different traditions it focuses on postmodern business ethics.

While we cannot make a sharp distinction between different critical approaches to business ethics and they take up some point from each other, feminist ethics and discourse ethics are not applied in this study. According to Brennan (1999) feminist ethical theories concentrate on achieving a theoretical understanding of women’s oppression with the aim of providing a path to ending women oppression and developing an account of morality which is based on woman’s moral experiences. These theories challenge perceived male bias in ethics (Becker & Becker, 1992). Discourse ethics refers to peaceful settlement of conflicts which requires a dialogue in a power-free space in which there is no coercion for consensus and choosing the best argumentation (Habermas, 1996). In my perspective the postmodern approach to business ethics is a holistic approach and includes both human and non-human viewpoints in ethical decision-making.

In postmodernism two opposing standpoints are discussed as skeptical postmodernism and the affirmative postmodernism (Kilduff & Meirah, 1997). The advocates of skeptical postmodernism believe all interpretations of the phenomena are equally valid, and the world is so complicated that concepts such as prediction and causality are irrelevant (ibid:455). The belief of rationality for them has been replaced by a sense of continues change, lacking any direction or aim (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999). This group mostly focuses on the negative or critical function of deconstructing modern worldview structures that connect power and knowledge
Skeptical postmodernists do not believe in empirical social science and capture more in critiquing existing work instead of tackling new empirical approaches (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997). They tend to be pessimistic and this perspective leads them to nihilism and a belief that we are experiencing the end of morality (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999).

In contrast, affirmative postmodernism holds the possibility of discriminating between competing interpretations (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997:455). While skeptical postmodernism offers a pessimistic, negative and gloomy assessment of social science, affirmative postmodernism is more optimistic in constructing new identity, knowledge, and community as an alternative to the modern worldview (Rosenau, 1992). Thus, radical interpretations are pursued by affirmative postmodernism (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997). They believe there are possibilities for improving the human situation, however, in a localized setting and for a short period of time (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999). This characteristic of affirmative postmodernism according to Rosenau (1992:169 cited in Kilduff & Mehra, 1997:456) “would underscore novelty and reflexivity as it looks at the richness of difference and concentrates on the unusual, the singular and the original”. Consequently “any attempt to outline a postmodern social science will, on balance, depend more on the affirmatives than on the skeptics” (ibid). For affirmatives the criticism of authoritative, hierarchical and paternalistic structures is still possible in order to address society’s danger areas (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999). This group believe that discourse is actively created and naturalized, instead of discovered (Gill & Johnson, 2010). In this study I follow affirmative postmodernism in ethical and moral decision-making in organizations.

Among different advocates of affirmative postmodernism such as Jean-François Lyotard, Richard Rorty, Kenneth Gergen, Robert Cooper, Gibson Burrell etc., I engage myself with Emmanuel Levinas and Zygmund Bauman. I explore Other-oriented ethics in business environments, which is much related to responsibility. The notion of responsibility in Other-oriented ethics is different from traditional ethical discourse. While in traditional ethical discourse this notion refers to accomplishing duties and obligations (Borgerson, 2007), in Other-oriented ethics responsibility toward the Other is infinite and unconditional. Schematically the theoretical positioning of my study is depicted in Figure 1.
1.6 Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation consists of six chapters. The first chapter contains the introductory parts, where I discuss the background of my research and research questions. The significance of the study as well as key concepts and the positioning the study are in the following subsection of chapter one.

Chapter two is the beginning of my dissertation journey. It starts with moving from modernism to postmodernism and the basic tenets of postmodernism. Then I explain the strengths and weaknesses of postmodernism. Positioning postmodernism in organizational studies is the last part of this chapter. My journey
continues in chapter three where I discuss the necessity of the critical perspective in business ethics and the reasons why we are not happy with normative ethics. Then the role of bureaucracy in normative ethics is elaborated. The remaining part of this chapter is the story of postmodern ethics and its position in uncertainty.

Inspired by Levinas, in chapter four, I provide an alternative tale for business ethics as Other-oriented ethics. I describe what this alternative tale is and how it awakens our emotions for ethical decision making. Since Levinas is the main philosopher guiding this study, the last part of this chapter deals with Other-oriented ethics in corporations. A summary of the articles is the next chapter of this study. Finally, conclusions are the last part of this journey. In this section I provide theoretical conclusions and conceptual contributions. I also propose future research pathways as well as the limitations of this study.
2 The age of postmodernism

We as a nation must undergo a radical revolution of values. We must rapidly begin the shift from a thing-oriented society to a person-oriented society. When machines and computers, profit motives and property rights, are considered more important than people, the giant triplets of racism, extreme materialism and militarism are incapable of being conquered.


In this chapter, I will start a short journey from modernism to postmodernism. The reason for this journey is to know why postmodernism as a critical approach in organizational studies has emerged. In order to have an in-depth understanding of postmodern traditions, in the next section I provide some basic tenets of postmodernism. Like any other school of thought postmodernism has some strengths as well as weaknesses that are contended within the next section. This chapter will end with the positioning of postmodernism in organizational studies. This section shows us how postmodernism came to play a significant role in organizational research and practice.

2.1 Form modernism to postmodernism

The history of philosophy can be defined in different ways. Bisong (2017) defines it into the three periods of the premodern, the modern and the postmodern. In the premodern era (prior to seventeen century) God was considered as defining reality; so, the concerns of this period were mostly ontological which means it addressed what exists (ibid:43). Ontology presupposes metaphysics (Levinas, 1969). In the modern period mostly, epistemological Enlightenment naturalism governed and addressed how to know what exists. The postmodern period is governed by pragmatism and existentialism and addresses how language functions to construct meaning. This trend shows a shift from being, to knowing and now to create meaning (Bisong, 2017:43).

The project of modernity commenced with the Enlightenment (around 1687 to 1789) with Isaac Newton who believed that through science as dominant intellectual paradigm the world could be saved (Barrett, 1997). The idea that man can be an interpreter of nature (Bacon) or an observer of the universe through an instrument such as telescope (Galileo) are the other grounds of modern world view (Silverman, 1990). The project of modernity was followed by René Descartes
(1596-1650) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) with the idea that through reason they could create a solid foundation of universal truths (Barrett, 1997) and the human mind would be liberated and enable to develop a universal knowledge for the whole of humanity (Ozumba, 2017). In this project reason represented itself as not only the source of all truth but all justice (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998). According to Kant the idea of right and wrong that transcends particular contexts can only be found in people’s reason (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011). The philosophers of the Enlightenment tried to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, with the guide of their inner logic (Habermas & Ben-Habib, 1981). The social world has a complex coherent and the advocates of modernity believed that this complex coherent could be expressed theoretically (Antonio & Kellner, 1991). This idea leads to the democratic revolution in America and France as well as the First and Second World Wars (Barrett, 1997). According to Lyon (1999) the most important negative impacts of modernism are alienation and exploitation, anomie and loss of direction, the iron cage, and a society of strangers and control. Best (2003:238) identifies two main characteristics for a modern identity:

1. to be like the other people within a group, and
2. a common categorizing of outward phenomena, such as race or the clothes people wear.

Edgar Morin in his book “Seven complex lessons in education for the future” (1999: 36-36) has a sharp critique to modernity. He argues that:

“The civilization created in the West cast off its moorings and headed for what was thought to be infinite progress. It advanced with concomitant developments in science, reason, history, economy, democracy. But we learned, with Hiroshima, that science is ambivalent; we saw reason regress and Stalinist madness masked in historical reason; we have recognized that there are no laws of History leading us ineluctably to a radiant future; we realize that the triumph of democracy was nowhere permanently ensured; we have seen that industrial development can entail cultural ravages and deathly pollution; we have seen that the civilization of well-being can at the same time produce ill-being. If modernity is defined as unconditional faith in progress, technology, science, and economic development, then that modernity is dead”.

Postmodernity as a critique of the Enlightenment has no special place of origin (Silverman, 1990). The term postmodern was initially used for art and architectural
movements that rejected the function of chrome and steel in favor of an eclectic approach which reminds of the past and incorporates rich ornamentation (Green, 1993). Postmodern in the beginning was coined by an English painter, John Watkins Chapman, when he talked about ‘postmodern painting’ around 1870 to describe a style of painting that was supposedly more modern and avant-garde than French impressionist painting (Best & Kellner, 1991). Arnold Toynbee, a British historian, describes the postmodern age as a fourth stage of Western history after the Dark Ages (675-1075), the Middle Ages (1075-1475), and the Modern (1475-1875) (King & Zanetti, 2005). In the 1970s, postmodernism became popular among philosophers (Walton, 1993). This term first entered the philosophical lexicon in 1979, when Jean-François Lyotard published his book “The Postmodern Condition” (Ekanem, 2017). Arnold Toynbee is often ascribed for using the term in social and political history (Hauke, 2000). With this term he described the decline of Western influence, the demise of atomistic individualism, and the emergence of plural narratives (King & Zanetti, 2005). In the economic domain postmodern stands as a synonym for “post-Fordist”, “late”, or “fast” capitalism, as a sign for the rise of Western consumer culture, multinationalism, and the globalization of corporate culture, capital and labor (Gannon & Davies, 2007). Now postmodernism as an intellectual movement has become one of the most influential approaches in social sciences (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999). Postmodernist entered sociological thought because many scholars in this field started to believe that societies had begun to move toward a new and specific kind where the concepts and instructions of modernity were becoming confusing misleading (Hossain & Karim, 2013). The idea of postmodern social theory which coined by Susen (2015:5-8) is described in Table 3.

Table 3. The idea of postmodern social theory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key assumption</th>
<th>Postmodernist contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>Overcome the disciplinary boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>endeavor</td>
<td>Cross-fertilize the knowledge created within different epistemic comfort zones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reveals the fact that there is no monopole analytical approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The capacity to capture the entire complexity of human reality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundationless</td>
<td>Warn about the danger of the quest for foundation and for a totalizing theory of society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>endeavor</td>
<td>Grasping the complexity of society by virtue of big-picture explanatory ideologies and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the system-building task is not valid anymore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key assumption</td>
<td>Postmodernist contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directionless endeavor</td>
<td>Different individual and collective actors are motivated by different interests and aspirations, lacking a common dominator in terms of one overarching telos shared by all of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public endeavor</td>
<td>Development of reality is shaped by everyday process. Daily conflicts and public debates are important. The clear-cut separation between ‘common sense’ and ‘expert knowledge’ is rejected. Cross-fertilizing academic and non-academic discourse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situationist endeavor</td>
<td>It speaks the language of particularity rather than obeying the logic of search for lawfulness and universality. The complexity of materially and symbolically differentiated realities cannot be captured in terms of the contextransceding framework and principles of grand sociological theories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pragmatic endeavor</td>
<td>Interested in discursive processes carried out by ordinary actors which are able to mobilize their cognitive resources in relationally constituted contexts. The existential significance of social practices is highlighted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethno-conscious endeavor</td>
<td>All modes of knowledge creation represent culturally specific practices performed by spatiotemporally embedded entities. All modes of cognition are influenced by context-dependent prejudices, preconceptions, and presuppositions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-conscious endeavor</td>
<td>Because of the relational contingency the human condition is separated through radical indeterminacy: highly differentiated societies create intersectionally constitute actors expected to take on multiple roles, develop plural identities, and carry various coexisting- and, often, conflicting-selves within themselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pluralist endeavor</td>
<td>It is related to critical exploration of, and active involvement in ‘heterogonous struggles’ around a plurality of sociological variables, such as class, gender, ethnicity, age, and ability. In a jungle of flow, networks, and diversified local events, the human actor is a self with numerous identity and group dependences, which is entangled in heterogeneous struggles with many possibilities for empowerment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historicist endeavor</td>
<td>Unlike the modernist tales the human history is not only western history (ethnocentrism); the grand narratives of industrialization, modernization, secularization, and democratization, should be abandoned (evolutionism); the binary categories that artificially homogenize the heterogeneously constituted constellations of historical realities are rejected (dichotomism).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Postmodernists set themselves apart from all or most modernist beliefs, attitudes, and commitments (Barrett, 1997) and bring the modernist hegemony to closure (Silverman, 1990). The notion of universal theories based on reason is rejected by postmodernists because such theories fail to grasp today’s complexities and local variations (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999), especially in the realm of ethics. The discourse of postmodernism starts with the idea that systems have their own life and that makes them fundamentally independent of human control (Cooper & Burrell, 1988:94). The way to understand systems is through the analysis of their self-referential workings because they express only themselves (ibid). For postmodernists, systems do not have meanings or purposes; these are human projections where all of us uncritically assume that the world exists only for us and by which we put ourselves at the controlling center of everything (ibid). So, the self-referential characteristic of the world leads us to the issue that the world is neither pro-human nor anti-human: it just is (Cooper & Burrell, 1988:94).

Among scholars there are two main strands of postmodernism: postmodernism as a historical periodization or an epoch, and postmodernism as a theoretical perspective or a critique (Chan & Garrick, 2002; Hassard, 1993). Post-modernism (with a hyphen) considers itself an epoch with the goal to “identify features of the external world that support the hypothesis that society is moving toward a new postmodern era” (Hassard, 1993:2). This is an epoch of culture and intellectual life (ibid). In contrast, postmodernism (without a hyphen) as a theory or epistemology suggests that “the world is constituted by our shared language and that we can only “know the world through the particular forms of discourse our knowledge creates”” (ibid:3).

The idea that postmodernism is an epistemology is more highlighted by scholars. Fullerton (1998) argued that postmodernism has emerged as a reaction to the failures and shortcomings of modernity and it is far from making modernism obsolete (Huyssen, 1986). According to Turner (2015) the prefix ‘post’ in postmodern is not against the modern or after the modern; it means a critical perspective to modernity. It cannot be considered as a phase beyond modernity, instead it represents the final stage of modernity (Delanty, 2000), it is a reaction to modernism (Ozumba & Udofia, 2017). For Bauman (1993) postmodernism cannot be discussed only to chronologically follow modernism; it does not want to displace or replace to modernity, but it implies that serious efforts of modernity have been misguided; it is not a part of modernism rather, it is a response to it. Postmodernism should be considered as a fruitful hybrid of modernity, not as its antithesis (Gustafson, 2000) and the continuation of modernism and its transcendence (Jencks,
According to Ozumba and Udofia (2017) postmodernism tries to correct the imbalances of modernism. Gustafson (2000:651) points out that postmodernism as the “son” of modernism does not have radically different goals than modernism (equality, justice, suspicion of dogma). Rather, it has a different strategy of approach, a strategy that does not seek absolutes, universalness, or foundations. According to Huyssen (1986), postmodernism only rejects the ideas of modernism that have been codified into a narrow dogma, not modernism as such. In some ways, “the story of modernism and postmodernism is like the story of the hedgehog and hare: the hare could not win because there was always more than one hedgehog, but the hare was still the better runner” (Huyssen, 1986: 218).

Hassan (1985, cited in Chan & Garrick, 2002) argued that postmodernism needs both an epoch or historical specificity and theoretical precision. In a similar way, modernity and postmodernity can be considered in terms of logic of supplementarity (Derrida, 1976). For Chia (1995) postmodern is the modern in a nascent state. This approach as an intellectual movement opens spaces for all margins, voices and viewpoints that have been neglected or ignored (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997) during modernism where social class was an important criterion to be heard. Jung (2001) discusses that as soon as social awareness of modernity’s inability to develop a perfect order grows in a society, the transformation into postmodernity begins. Delanty (2000: 132) identifies the four main movements which constitute postmodern culture as:

1. The question of aesthetic;
2. The theoretical turn to poststructuralism and the method of deconstructionism;
3. The sociological and cultural analysis of postmodernity in terms of postmodernization, that is, as a social condition; and
4. Postmodernity as a political practice.

For some scholars who follow affirmative postmodernism, postmodernism is the logical outcome of enlightenment thinking, it is the last step of recognizing that the meaning is created in part, at least, by my personal perceptions (McQuilkin & Mullen, 1997). Nietzsche around hundred years ago used some names like “pragmatism”, “existentialism,” and “postmodernism” when he wrote anti-Platonist movements (Rorty, 2006). These names which proliferated from that time have the same echo: “there are no unchanging essences to be grasped, only new ways of describing both ourselves and the universe to be invented” (ibid: 371). Giddens (1995:261) expresses that “Nietzsche offers a refuge for those who have lost their modernist illusions without relapsing into complete cynicism or apathy”.

1996).
Modernism pursues humanity’s improvement by an objective truth which is achieved by utilizing theories based upon categories, measurements, and formulas (Zompetti & Moffitt, 2009). This objective truth represents an aspect of the subject-object dualism adopted by positivists (Chan & Garrick, 2002). Postmodern thinkers rely on deconstruction as a strategy for critique (Gannon & Davies, 2007) which seeks to release boundaries that conceal domination and authority in favor of providing an umbrella for diverse ideologies (Walton, 1993). Postmodern philosophers have a profound desire for justice, personal responsibility, and communication (Gustafson, 2000). Modern theory is criticized for seeking for foundation knowledge, for trying to reach universalizing and totalizing claims, for its pride to supply a clear truth, and for its allegedly inaccurate rationalism (Best & Kellner, 1991). By contrast, postmodernism is criticized because of relativism, irrationalism, and nihilism (ibid). In the postmodern approach knowing is never the ultimate state of affairs and that different knowledge can never be judged for their truth content (Parker, 1998). With the advent of postmodernism, the locus of power shifts to the underprivileged, the marginalized, and the oppressed (Bisong, 2017).

The discourse of modernism is the idea of the essential capacity of human beings to perfect itself through the power of rational thought while postmodernism critiques this idea, and rejects the rationalism championed by modernism (Cooper & Burrell, 1988) because it represses human spontaneity, difference, desire, and power (Antonio & Kellner, 1991). Postmodernists discuss that social practices and institutions in modernity lead to legitimate domination and control by a powerful few over the many while the advocates of modernism promised equality and liberation of all people (Barrett, 1997). Postmodernism is not a coherent theory, it critiques in particular humanism and social science and brings more questions that it does answers (Zompetti & Moffitt, 2008).

The qualities of stability, homogeneity, predictability and control are the characteristics of modernity (Styhre, 2001). While according to May (1992) modernism tends to make us more static and the world knowable (Parker, 1998), Lyotard (1984) cites that postmodernism is the search for instabilities. It is evocative rather than didactic, calling possibilities rather than closure (May, 1992). Postmodernity is known by heterogeneity, change, ruptures, fluxes, breaks, bifurcations, and turns (Styhre, 2001). Postmodernism rejects the idea that the world can be objectively represented or measured and proposes that the interpretation of facts is not objective, rather are guided by the ideas and standpoints of researchers, research communities and the social system in which they are embedded (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999).
The idea of “truth” within society or history had been criticized by Nietzsche and Heidegger. Nietzsche discussed the very specific interest of power behind ‘objective’ claims and Heidegger believed that language does not simply correspond to reality (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011). Many continental philosophers accordingly express such an important issue like truth as an ongoing process (ibid). Others contend that instead of seeking for an all-encompassing explanation of reality, we must more focus on specificity and particularity (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011: 5). This idea leads to the criticism of grand narratives or metanarratives or big stories (ibid).

Lyotard announced the decline of the legitimating power of “metanarrative” as a distinctive feature of postmodernism (Seidman, 1994) and he offered that philosophers and scientists should be more engaged in ‘small stories’ (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011). In this sense small stories are taken from real life, whereas big stories lack any connection to it (ibid: 6). For Lyotard (1984:26, cited in Best, 2003) narratives are made up statements which are in themselves moves within a framework of generally applicable rules and what is transmitted by these narratives is a set of pragmatic principles and rules that make the social bond. When Lyotard discuss the narratives, he explains three characteristics for them:

- Narratives bestow legitimacy upon institutions, which are referred to as the function of myth (Lyotard, 1984: 20). Little stories are very important here because through reading them people can learn the culture of a society. The repetition of these stories brings a kind of legitimacy for them (Best, 2003).
- Narratives show positive or negative models which result in creating a successful or unsuccessful hero (Lyotard, 1984).
- Narratives which flourished in the forms of legends and tales have this ability to integrate individuals into established institutions (Lyotard, 1984). Narratives allow the self-identification of a culture and helps to maintain the self-identity of a people who share a culture.

By these means Lyotard rejects metanarratives. Metanarrative as a founding father which privileges other ways of thinking, results in ignoring other perspectives (Zompetti & Moffitt, 2008) and makes certain ways of thinking and paradigms dominant. Put in another way, one approach to life is not superior another (Barclay & Smith, 2005). Seidman (1994) defines metanarratives as the foundation theories of knowledge, morality or aesthetics and grand stories of social progress. These metanarratives have a central role in the legitimation of modern knowledge, culture
and social institutions (ibid). Metanarratives lead to metatheories that try to put all the other theories, activities, and fields of interest in rank and file order (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998). Such big theories have rational foundations, legitimated by the power of the reason or history, and become the final referees of all human affairs (ibid). Global theory was criticized by Foucault (1972: 83) when he discussed about subjugated knowledge, which is the combined product of erudite knowledge and popular knowledge. What appears of this subjugated knowledge are genealogies that are not possible and could not even have been tried except on one condition, namely that the tyranny of globalizing discourses, with their hierarchy and their privileges of a theoretical avant-garde, is eliminated (ibid:83). By using genealogy, Foucault tried to write the histories of unknown, forgotten, and marginal discourses (Best, 1994:36). Hence, such genealogy is characterized by a new mode of historical writing (ibid). Genealogy is an approach that attempts to re-examine the social field, and it critically analyzes the rationality of modernism by a history of human science and a description of its practices (ibid:35). By rejecting metanarratives and big theories, postmodernists allow for renewed attention to the traditional and to the particular (Rosenau, 1992:6). In this regard Jancks (1996:29) defined the postmodern approach as “the combination of modern techniques with something else (usually traditional building) in order for architecture to communicate with the public and a concerned minority (usually other architects)”.

Postmodernism not only affects culture, but it has also made developments on polities, industry, media and social movements, this epoch characterized by fragmentation, multiplicity, plurality and indeterminacy (Shipman & Powell, 2005). By the nature of multiplicity and plurality of postmodernism, it is possible to have a more diverse, open and contextual politics that rejects to privilege any general recipes for social change or any particular group (Best & Kellner, 1991). Bauman (1993) describes postmodernism as a shift of focus from universalism to pluralism of culture, communal traditions, and ideologies, form of life or language games. According to Parker (1998) postmodern theories dismantle this claim that knowing subjects have the potential to create any universally valid categories of explanations, because such a claim represents a particular view from a particular knowledge producer. In other words, consensus as an outcome of rationality in modernism is no longer deemed valid by postmodernists and the term of consensus is replaced by dissensus. Consensus is a horizon that is never attained (Lyotard, 1984:61).

According to Best and Kellner (1991:261) we are living in a borderline region between modernity and a new era. In such an era, both modern and postmodern theories are needed to theorize the continuities with the past and the novel,
Jacques Derrida proposed the idea of ‘deconstruction’ which emphasizes the slippery nature of the meaning and sense in language (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011). With this regard many core concepts in business ethics such as globalization, responsibility, value or sustainability have a continual shift in meaning (ibid). Among the different postmodern philosophers, Levinas has inspired this study because he criticizes the metaphysics of presence, violence through cognition, and other Enlightenment attitudes while equipping us with a strong phenomenologically grounded ethics of responsibility (Mbogu & Onuoha, 2017). I follow Levinasian ethics because Levinas provides us with a unique grounding for ethics beyond those of theism and universal principles, one based on the equality of men created by the concrete phenomenal experience of encountering the Other (ibid). Levinas’s idea of the Other and Otherness, makes him an important thinker in this century, and his work will be a central pillar of continental ethics for years to come (Mbogu & Onuoha, 2017: 223).

The advocates of postmodernism claim that our current form of intellectual activity and critique are fettered by an outmoded intellectual heritage which neither defends their reliance on universal reason nor delivers on their promises of revolutionary progress (Beyer & Listen, 1992). Simon Susen (2015) in his book “The postmodern turn in social science” correctly argues that judging whether postmodernism is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ is not an important issue. He raises a very valuable question about how social sciences and the humanities have been affected by its legacy and he invites us to think how the idea of ‘postmodernism’ such as ‘indeterminacy’, ‘heterogeneity’, ‘multiplicity’, ‘complexity’, ‘irreducibility’, ‘incommensurability’ and etc. have influenced the whole vocabulary of contemporary research. For this reason, in the last part of this chapter, I try to position postmodernism in organizational studies. But before that we move to this part, in the next two sections I provide some basic tenets of postmodernism as well as some of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. Before closing this discussion and as a wrap-up some foundations in the discourse of modernism and postmodernism are depicted in Table 4.
Table 4. Foundations of the discourse of modernism and postmodernism.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modern</th>
<th>Postmodern</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationality</td>
<td>The limits of rationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universality</td>
<td>Particularity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center</td>
<td>Decenter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universal law</td>
<td>Law of difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictable situation and long-term strategy</td>
<td>Unpredictable situation and flexible and rapid responses to changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regularity</td>
<td>The limits of regularity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stability/Static</td>
<td>Instability/Dynamic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniform worldview</td>
<td>Plural worldview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
<td>Anarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
<td>Participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totalization</td>
<td>Deconstruction</td>
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</table>

2.2 Basic tenets of postmodernism

Postmodernism is used in philosophy, literature, architecture and social science. The basic idea of postmodernism in each category helps researchers to know how to apply it in their own field. Thus, in order to know how postmodernism enhances our understanding of business ethics in this section I will concentrate on some of the main tenets of postmodernism. In chapter 3, I will show how these ideas apply to business ethics. Although the tenets of skeptical and affirmative postmodernism are not easily separated (Sandage & Hill, 2001) and although affirmative postmodernists share many ideas and points with skeptical postmodernism (Downing, 2000), as I mentioned earlier in this study, I follow affirmative postmodernism because, as discussed by Gioia (1998), affirmatives postmodernism has have more contributions to our view of organizations. In this regard, the basic tenets are discussed form an affirmative perspective. The most important tenets that will be discussed are self, individual, language game, deconstruction, difference, fragmentation, hyper-reality, and anti-dualistic.

**Self:** According to Chang (2008) from early Greek philosophers to contemporary postmodern scholars the discussion of the self has been rich and prolific. For modernists the characteristics of the self, remain in people’s ability to reason, their beliefs, opinions, and conscious intentions (ibid). But postmodernism decenter the individual in which the self is only an effect of language, social
relations, and unconscious (Barrett, 1997). Selves in contemporary life are neither empty nor conjured up ontologically full-blown but constructed in practice (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995:558). The self is considered as an ephemeral, liquid image, tossed, turned, and decentered by rampant consumerism and disembodied electronic media (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995). Gergen (1991:7) as a postmodern scholar claims, “selves as possessors of real and identifiable characteristics—such as rationality, emotion, inspiration, and will—are dismantled”. According to Gergen (1991), affirmative postmodernists consider the self as relationally constructed and saturated with various identity possibilities and the fact that there is no fixed, essential self allows one to create whatever self one choose. The modern belief in “moral imperative” and autonomous self (Grenz, 1996; Taylor, 1989, cited in Chang 2016) is replaced by the postmodernists’ recognition of a “saturated” self that is overcommitted to often divergent pulling forces and demands of surroundings and a “protean self”, in Lifton’s term, that constantly adjusts to “turbulent, dislocating, and often violent global forces and conditions” (De Munck, 2000:44, cited in Chang, 2016:24). Postmodernists call us to look at self as a “fragile” and interdependent being (Chang, 2016:24). Levinas, as the foregrounded philosopher for this study, had a special treatment of the sphere of the self. The self is unable to be at one with itself; the self does not even coincide with itself (Levinas, 1991:109, cited in van de Ven, 2005:12). In this sense Levinas tried to articulate the passivity of the self as something other than being (van de Ven, 2005:12). Hence, the self for Levinas is nourished by content in life, and the self identifies and affirms itself though the enjoyment of this content (ibid: 12). Levinas (1991) argued the concept of self, sensibility, and enjoyment in relation to responsibility of the-one-for-the-other. Levinas highlighted the importance of the love of life and the enjoyment of its contents if we want to understand what the moral responsibility that the-one-for-the-Other entails (van de Ven, 2005). Levinas (1991:72) argued that “It is the passivity of being-for-another, which is possible only in giving the very bread I eat. But for this one has to first enjoy one’s bread, not in order to have the merit of giving it, but in order to give it with one’s heart, to give oneself in giving it. Enjoyment is an ineluctable moment of sensibility.” In regard to this, sensibility is a (necessary but insufficient) condition for the development of our moral responsibility (van de Ven, 2005). This treatment of the sphere of the self will be discussed more in Section 4.5 of this study when I discuss Levinasian ethics in corporations.

Individual: The role of the individual in postmodernism is important because they make sense of experience, construct and maintain social worlds (Kilduff &
Mehra, 1997). As Brann (1992) discusses, human beings’ beliefs and opinions should always be taken seriously. For skeptical postmodernists, the individual has an anonymous existence and she or he is not responsible for events, actions, and outcomes; nor will the individual be the author of a caring relationship or creative individualism (Rosenau, 1992:53). Affirmative postmodernists believe that an individual’s struggle for autonomy and the search for a way to construct a new identity by appealing to life, personal freedom, and creativity (ibid:58). In this sense, an individual is not autonomous, self-contained being (Zompetti & Moffitt, 2008) and is not an abstract de-contextualised being (Soares, 2008). Individuals experience their lives at continually shifting intersections of different discourse and language games (Shipman & Powell, 2005). Individuals construct, deconstruct and reconstruct themselves all the time (ibid) in the interpretation of everyday life but without the analytically prior trappings of a centered self (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995:556). By deconstructing the self, the self’s substantial groundings in local interpretative practices are revealed in which individuals actively show and manage their identities (ibid).

For affirmative postmodernists, the individual is not a modern subject in search of conquest, rather, she or he seeks self-defined affirmation that is apart from any vast global project or modern collective (Rosenau, 1992:58). This individual participates in fluid coalition, a temporary issue-oriented alliance that merges rich and poor, men and women, and diverse ethnic groups (ibid:58). This alliance allows us to see the Others and their significant role in our decision-making. For Levinas, individuality lies in listening to the call of Others (Ben-Ari & Strier, 2010). In this sense, the individual becomes a moral agent from the moment that he or she places his or her center of behavior outside himself or herself, and through this behavior, the individual shows his or her commitment to the Other (Soares, 2008).

**Language game:** Language has a central importance in the postmodern perspective. All knowledge is mediated by culture and language (Barrett, 1997). For postmodernists language is not a reflection of the world and its events, rather it is the world- it does not describe action, but language is a form of action (Gergen & Joseph, 1996). According to Wittgenstein (1953, cited in Gergen & Joseph, 1996) language gains its meaning not from its mental or subjective underpinnings, but from its use in action which he called language game. For Wittgenstein (1953: P1.23) the concept of language game is grounded in human activity when he asserts: “the term "language-game" is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a form of life.”
Human interactions give meaning to language (Gergen & Joseph, 1996). The purpose of interpreting and re-interpreting a text is not to discover some new understanding and knowledge about our social, cultural or personal worlds, instead to create a new meaning by playing signifiers/signifies (Beyer & Listen, 1992). The global discourses in postmodernism are replaced with pluralistic theoretical practices that emphasis playful participation in a vast amount of different kind of language games and the creation of diverse microscopic approaches and critique (Lyotard & Thebaud, 1985, cited in Antonio & Kellner, 1991).

Language games that show a multiplicity of social theory viewpoints (Green, 1993) shape our understanding of one phenomenon based on different interpretations and translations. The system of signs in this game allows for new substitutions through a kind of intellectual playfulness (Beyer & Listen, 1992). For Lyotard, language games are important because they do not prohibit human and organizational functioning, nor do they suggest an immutable infrastructure for human experiences (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998). The concept of language games for him searches for a social solution to the bureaucratic problem wherein groups of organizational actors discuss the relevant language game each is willing to play (ibid). In other words, language is a metaphor of a box of tools and there is no global way for determining the function of the different usages of these tools apart from its actual usage (Ozumba & Udofia, 2017). Since no one tool has any cliché for usage, the function of the tool or language is determined by its usage at a particular time and it has the ability of being used differently in another context (ibid). By using language games Lyotard breaks up social practices and analyzes them based on a linguistic model (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998). As a consequence of this analysis, organizations in the postmodern perspective are linguistic outcomes instead of rational outcomes (ibid).

Deconstruction: The language game of postmodernism leads to deconstruction. According to Rosenau (1992), deconstruction emphasizes negative critical capacity while interpretation expresses a positive perspective. Because of this positive side, affirmative postmodernism values interpretation over deconstruction (ibid). The affirmative postmodernism also applies deconstruction to undercut privileged texts, but he or she is, at the same time, wary of it because his or her views are as vulnerable as anyone else’s to being deconstructed (ibid:118).

Derrida proposes a process of deconstruction which is the delimiting of ontology (Derrida, 1988:4). Deconstruction is considered a particular method and philosophy in use within the postmodernist movement for dismantling linguistic and symbolic culture (Feldman, 1998). De George (2008) discusses that by
deconstruction Derrida looks for hidden contradictions or fissures in the foundations of thought. By this tool the accidental or marginal aspects and dimensions of a text can be found by close analysis to undermine the main intent of the text. Texts have multiple meanings, and none of them is ‘real’ or ‘right’ one. By using this approach any text or topic resists the obvious and accepted meaning or interpretation, thus unsettling and calling into question accepted beliefs and presuppositions (ibid:80). By testing and considering the margins of a text, deconstruction aims to examine what it represses, what it does not say, and its incongruities (Ozumba & Udoña, 2017).

By deconstruction, postmodernism reverses the theory of universal reason, objective truth, the meaning of perfectibility of societies by continual progress and the concept of using a grand, total or universal theory or narrative to explain reality (Ozumba & Udoña, 2017). Deconstruction allows us to ask new questions and criticize the current paradigm in business ethics. The ideal society and organization allows many competing language games to engage in continuous combat (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998). From the heart of this constructive combat new language games emerges when old games become mortally wounded in these battles of ideas (ibid). According to Morin (2008) we should leave the solutions that have worked in the past. The future needs new strategies and policy. In this sense, deconstruction help us to overcome our bias and open ourselves for new interpretations and new modes of thinking. It is discursive binaries which unsettle and displace binary hierarchies, not to create a better foundation for knowledge and society, rather to dislodge dominance, providing a social space that demonstrates its tolerance of difference, ambiguity, and playful innovation (Seidman, 1994, cited in Stinson & Bullock, 2012).

Difference: Unlike modernists that seek for the universal, postmodernists identify differences (Barrett, 1997) and offer a way of explaining issues of multiplicity and difference (Shipman & Powell, 2005). The notion of difference is more associated with the work of Jacques Derrida through deconstruction (Hassard, 1993). By deconstruction, Derrida shows the inherent contradictions which reside in any text (ibid). According to Cooper and Burrell (1988:98) difference is a state of self-reference in which terms include their own opposites and then refuse any singular grasp of their meanings. Difference is intrinsic to all social forms (ibid). The idea of a human agent is the central point in Derrida’s analysis of difference (Cooper, 1989). This “agency” is the unconscious and automatic work of repression and censorship, a double-value process which denies that which gives it power (ibid: 490). In this sense, “the subject is pervaded by the uncertainty and doubt intrinsic
to difference and writing; indeed, that difference is incorporated into the human subject as its founding principle” (ibid:490). Difference as uncertainty and doubt is create into the very fabric of the agent as a social being (ibid:491).

By difference the monolithic and homogenous is replaced with diversity, multiplicity and heterogeneity (West, 1999). Interdependency is possible by recognition of the differences in which difference is not only tolerated but celebrated and protected (Beyer & Listen, 1992). According to May (1977), difference is considered to be a fundamental factor in communities, in language, in ethics, and in ontology. Among the opinions of philosophers, Levinas considered the privilege of difference as a constitutive element of some part of our existence (ibid:2). When Levinas highlighted the role of the Other in our life, it means that he took difference seriously because by considering the Other we also consider difference. In this sense, with the idea of the Other it is possible to create a site of absolute difference because the recognition of difference is part of the process of knowing the Other (Lumsden, 2000).

**Fragmentation:** The transition from pre-modernity to modern and postmodern, society has witnessed the increasing complexity of social organization and forms and this complexity is reflected in the fragmented, constantly fluctuating and floating self-identities of postmodern individuals (Layder, 2007). Societies exist in fragmentation (Zompetti & Moffitt, 2008). With the rejection of grand narratives as a coherent explanation, the postmodernist seeks partiality, fragmentation, illusion, and contradiction (King & Zanetti, 2005). By this fragmentation it is very difficult, or impossible, to do the public’s business (ibid). By emphasizing fragmentation postmodernism rejects the very concept of a coherent social order (Antonio & Kellner, 1991). The metanarratives of modernity that have been challenged by postmodernism also capture the fragmentation of society (Rosenau, 1992).

**Hyper-reality:** Postmodernists adhere to the idea of eternal return of Nietzsche (Bisong, 2017). It refers to the loss of the difference among real and the external world, in order to make the conclusion that this distinction itself does not reappear, and that repeat is neither real nor apparent in the traditional sense, but it is a phantasm or simulacrum (ibid:49). According to Baudrillard in today’s life and society there is no difference between reality and illusion, and it is the simulation of reality that individuals live on (Shipman & Powell, 2005). The individual has a decenter character in postmodernism. This characteristic leads to experiencing several truths by an individual during its life, these experiences can never be objective reality, and instead is called hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1991).
Hyperreality is a simulacra or simulation of reality (Fox & Miller, 2005) and the image of something more real than reality (Hossain & Karim, 2013). Songs and images have replaced the real in the current era (Antonio & Kellner, 1991). According to Hossain & Karim (2013) the media has an important role in postmodern society as it creates the popular culture that encourages consumption which makes lifestyle become more important than before. Thus, our thoughts and media consider reality as hyper-reality (ibid).

Anti-dualistic: In postmodern literature the binary opposition such as male vs. female, black vs. white, or east vs. west is no longer valid (Hossain & Karim, 2013). According to Murphy (1989) anti-dualism in the centerpiece of postmodernism. The fatuity of dualism has been recognized by some scientists and philosophers (ibid). In the realm of business ethics, according to Blok (2017), the possibility of Levinasian ethics is rejected if somebody accepts the dualistic conception (the corporation on one side and ethics on the other) (cf. Beven & Corevellec, 2007; Robert, 2001). As discussed by Blok (2017), Levinas’s business ethics helps some philosophers to conceptualize the notion of corporate rules and regulation in order to solve this dualism. As an example, Mollie Painter-Morland rehabilitated the concept of the corporate codes of ethics by focusing on the relational aspects of codes and by emphasizing that codes of ethics should be a part of an ongoing questioning of decisions, actions and practices (ibid: 4). In a dualistic code, the language tends to be very general while avoiding the struggle of undecidability (Painter-Morland, 2010). In such a dualism, the Other cannot easily be accommodated (ibid).

2.3 Strengths and shortcomings of postmodernism

The adaptation of postmodern perspectives within social science has received strong critique. At the same time some of the advocates of postmodernism believe that this perspective provides a considerable contribution to social sciences and is needed for the world we live in. This section takes a look at these claims. In the first part I discusses the strengths and then I will move to the shortcomings of postmodernism.
2.3.1 Strengths

In the current era, most sociological theorists do without adhering to a general theory. The sociological theory itself has become a fragmented and hyperspecialized subdiscipline without integrating problematic or central challenging discussions. In this sense, when postmodernism addresses the exhaustion and irrelevance of professionally compartmentalized social theory it makes an important contribution to contemporary social theory (Antonio & Kellner, 1991). According to Zompetti and Moffitt (2008), in the realm of social sciences hidden ideologies and subtle findings can be revealed by the postmodern approach which are not captured by traditional research, by helping us to understand the limits of our reasoning ability and knowledge (Ozumba & Udofia, 2017). In this respect, postmodernism corrects the modernism.

Earlier in this study, I argued about deconstruction as one of the main tenets of postmodernism. Deconstruction can be considered as one of the most important strengths of postmodernism because it invites us to continual revision and careful examination of standard texts in order to make interpretations more relevant to changing social conditions (Walton, 1993; Gustafson, 2000). Deconstruction in postmodernism “focuses on what is nonobvious, left out, and generally forgotten in a text and examines what is unsaid, overlooked, understood and overtly recognized” (Rosenau, 1992:168). It denies privileges and by this idea deconstruction becomes a method for rejecting the idea of marginalizing some groups in society. In this vein, feminists and other minority groups are a strength in this approach (Walton, 1993). Postmodernists confronted some of the most novel and potentially important social conditions and considered minorities which had been ignored by sociological theorists and scholars (Antonio & Kellner, 1991).

According to Walton (1993:295), we are all suffocated by the logic of capitalism, which is atomistic, individualistic, and antisocial. So postmodernism is a constant reminder of how capitalist practice has gone wrong in the past and how it can continue in the future. He reminds us of the pitiful plight of underpaid women in French factories that led many to enter the “sex service profession” (ibid:298). For Best and Kellner (1991), discourses, new technologies, and different forms of culture can be analyzed better by postmodern theory because postmodernists advise respect for other people’s values and cultures (Walton, 1993).

To conclude on the strengths of postmodernism, I should add that in the field of ethics, ethical pluralism over ethical monism allows everyone the possibility to examine various ethical perspectives before making a decision in particular
situations (Stateman, 1992) and highlights the role of responsibility and seeing the Other in ethical decision making. By highlighting the Other in postmodern ethics, Levinas does not wish to provide an abstract systems of obligations that provide a thickness to human ethical life; but, ethics is born and retained through the necessity of a response to the other person, and such a responsibility necessarily comes before the solidification of any theoretical rules or political norms of ethical behavior (Nealon, 1997:131). As it is discussed in one of my papers, this approach calls for a new form of subjectivity in which the production of new bodies, desire and discourses are valorized (Best & Kellner, 1991).

2.3.2 Shortcomings

One of the most common shortcomings of postmodernism is lack of a foundation and coherent theory. Best and Kellner (1991) claim that the postmodern approach cannot provide normative accounts of intersubjectivity, community or solidarity. This approach lacks any fixed truth or meaning which leads to a nihilistic and undermines any possibility of moral action (Shipman & Powell, 2005). In other words, postmodernism cannot introduce a consistent philosophy and a comprehensive foundation for a system, it seeks to destroy any foundation including ethical theories (Walton, 1993, Rasmussen, 1993). There is a contradiction in the postmodern approach as this approach claims that there can be no general theory, while this claim is itself a general theory (Sibeon, 2007).

Postmodern theories are concerned with linguistic indeterminacy and linguistic relativism; they are involved in the ‘minutiae’ of everyday life and they are not interested in the objectives of the enlightenment and are thus not able to determine action in terms of wider issues like structures, systems and organizational design (Chan & Garrick, 2002). Postmodernism shows a sharp distinction between the particular and general, while for a more dialectical relationship between these issues: the sense that the local can elucidate the more general, and the global can raise our sensitivity to the more particular (Beyer & Listen, 1992). By rejection of metanarratives and denying reason as a source of non-particular and non-local claims to knowledge, postmodernism cannot ground this commitment to a totality, or what criteria might be suggested to help us make choices about competing heuristics, analysis, and calls to action (Beyer & Listen, 1992:376).

In the realm of ethics, Beyer and Listen (1992) believe that among various ways of describing reality which are not equally valuable for particular purposes,
postmodernism still provides little moral guidance about how to select among those purposes and descriptions and hence about how to act (morally) in the world.

In sum, despite all the critiques of postmodernism, which seem to rest on a skeptical perspective on postmodernism, I believe that the affirmative postmodernism that I follow in this study can be considered as a complementary and in some cases alternative for traditional worldview of ethics, in particular in uncertainty. Affirmative postmodernists have a more hopeful and optimistic view of the postmodern age that helps them to construct new identities, knowledge, and communities (Rosenau, 1992). They stress reflecting different constructions of social reality, and the practice of multi-method research leads to applying multiple perspectives (Fielding, 2008). According to Prilletensky (1977, cited in Sandage & Hill, 2001) the voices of affirmative postmodernism that challenge the hierarchies that exploit while promoting empowerment and distributive justice are more political and liberationist voices. Sandage and Hill (2001) argued that the affirmative postmodernists encourage reconsidering the rapprochement of ethics and recognize the inter-relatedness of the construction of morality, and they contextualized the nature of morality. As a last point, I would like discuss the fact that, despite the above shortcomings of the lack of coherent theory and a comprehensive foundation for ethical issues, affirmative postmodernists employ the theoretical connections between virtues, narratives, and human purpose in order to create a broader and more diverse conceptualization of human strengths, including virtues like hope and forgiveness (Sandage & Hill, 2001). It would be understandable better if we placed postmodernist in the mainstream in organizational studies, which I will discuss in next section.

2.4 Postmodernism in organizational studies

In postmodern organizational theory, the prison metaphor (and the attack against the principle of authority that is represented) is used as the central image of organization (Burrell, 1988 cited in Feldman, 1998:60). The postmodern approach received some sharp criticism by many organizational theorists (cf. Reed, 1993; Thompson, 1993; Feldman, 1998) because of the eclectic feature of postmodernism. This allows theorists to eclectically combine fragments of sociological analysis, library and cultural readings, historical theorization and philosophical critiques (Chan & Garrick, 2002). On the contrary, some scholars (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997; Gergen & Joseph, 1996; Chia, 1995) believe certain arguments and discussions within the postmodernism, when properly extended and applied, yield a promising
vision of future organizational studies. The technological ethos, information intensity, and economic globalization that are the characteristics of modernist organization are no longer viable, instead a new wave of postmodern discourses is applied as means of describing and creating what is often called the postmodern organization (Gergen & Joseph, 1996).

Kilduff and Mehra (1997:457) emphasize the eclectic feature of postmodernism rather than the exclusive feature. In this sense, the postmodernist standpoint holds the position that includes and applies techniques, insights, methods, and approaches from different kinds of traditions, reaching backwards, forwards, and sideways with little regard for academic boundaries or the myth of progress that abandons some texts as old fashioned while advertising others state of the art. From this perspective, all styles are simultaneously available (ibid). Since the postmodern approach gives voice to those groups that are not represented in the dominant discourses and breaking down disciplinary boundaries, organizational studies try to challenge the content and the dominant models of knowledge in favor of producing new forms of knowledge (Giroux, 1992). This leads to acquiring a better understanding of societal and organizational development, such as flexibility, multiskilling, decentralization, and mass media (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997:459).

Cooper (1989) applies the deconstruction of Derrida in organizational analysis. For Cooper, deconstruction in organizational studies means that organization always harbors within itself that which transgress it, namely, disorganization. Whereas traditional organization theories presuppose, and therefore give priority to, the notion of organization, Derrida’s strategy is to demonstrate how the supposedly rational and stable forms of organization are constantly under threat by their devious and insidious countermovement. (ibid:480). Derrida also shows that the task of understanding organization from the perspective of disorganization demands an appropriately reflexive logic and intellectual practice from the analyst (Cooper, 1989).

The tradition of organizing the structure and logic of organization does not apply in postmodern organizational studies, instead the structuring of space and time by division, ordering, listing, framing and etc., supply the raw material for organizational studies. For Drucker (1995:77) the postmodern condition can be illustrated in post-industrial organization that should be organized for the systematic abandonment of whatever is established, customary, knowable, and comfortable, whether the organization is a product, a service or a process; a set of skins, human and social relationship; or the organization itself. Briefly, the organizations must be organized for constant change. Lončar (2005) argues that the
concept of postmodernism as a very slippery concept is depicted by a number of examples of organizations that clearly abandon the traditional bureaucratic course. This shift from the old to the new paradigm in organizational studies is illustrated in table 5.

### Table 5. The transition from old to new organizational paradigm.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forces on organization</th>
<th>Old Paradigm</th>
<th>New Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Markets</td>
<td>Local, domestic</td>
<td>Global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workforce</td>
<td>Homogenous</td>
<td>Diverse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Mechanical</td>
<td>Electronic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Stability, efficiency</td>
<td>Change, flexibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Competencies</th>
<th>Old Paradigm</th>
<th>New Paradigm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Profits</td>
<td>Profits, employees, customers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>Autocratic</td>
<td>Distributed, empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach to work</td>
<td>Individualistic</td>
<td>Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Competitive, conflict</td>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Senge, 1990, cited in Lončar, 2005

The problems of modernist’s organizations like their hierarchies, singular logics, and clear separation of boundaries and individual view of leadership are replaced in postmodern organizations by participatory performance, interactive decision making, reality creation, multi-cultural resource, and coordinating interpretations (Gergen & Joseph, 1996). For instance, while for modernism reality can be understood objectively, for postmodernism reality cannot be known nor described objectively (Ozumba & Udofia, 2017). Reality is not only mirrored in the human understanding of it, but rather, is created as the mind attempts to understand its own particular and personal reality (ibid:9).

Van der Ven (2011) discusses that although the obvious attractiveness and merits of rationality in organizational theory seem almost undeniable, there are two clusters which shows the problematic aspects of rationality in this area:

1. In this cluster many organizational scientific theories have an unworldly character and simplify reality in an unacceptable method by their descriptions. By this approach the rigidity of thinking is associated with rationality. The scholars that address this approach link those phenomena to the linear and
structure-oriented nature of organizational theory. The problem of this cluster is deception because of the problematic distortion of reality which happens.

2. In this cluster the problem is being formed around the observation that organizational thinking produces a hierarchical, and hence a constraining effect. This problem corresponds with an encapsulating, totalizing tendency of rationality. The advocates of this cluster connect these hierarchizing effects with the pretension of objectivity which is inherent to all rationality. The problem of this cluster is exclusion.

Postmodern ideas can help organizational researchers to reshape their activities in a way that enhances rather than detracts from the research adventure (Kilduff & Mehra, 1997). According to Chan and Garrick (2002) Foucault’s contribution in questioning of methods to address one’s own present as difference in history are valuable for organizational theories. By this means organizations put some questions on our ethics, values and the practice of our institutions that organizational theorists cannot avoid responding any further. By the postmodern approach organizational studies consider that the ‘organization’ itself is a question and not yet a given (Chia, 1995). In this sense, the idea of ‘problematization’ of Foucault and ‘deconstruction’ of Derrida can apply in organizational studies because they challenge the modernists’ cognitive stance by questioning the organizational order (ibid). According to Kikoski and Kikoski (2004:28, cited in Painter-Morland, 2006) the modern manager’s “book of standardized practices” is insufficient in the descriptive, non-linear information epoch. Because it cannot compete with fast-paced change and it is not able to develop innovation (ibid). This is an important reason for the emergence of the postmodern management paradigm. This paradigm focuses on “learning organizations” that operate as an open system and maintain a delicate equilibrium close to the edge of chaos (Painter-Morland, 2006:91).

Postmodern theory by criticizing of modernity moves toward a radical critique of the organization (Styhre, 2001). Postmodernism influences organizational studies because it calls for a new metaphor, the organic organization (Gade & Lowrey, 2011). It accounts for changing environments and creates more flexibility. The organic organization is a move from bureaucracy to fluidity; it accepts decentralization while flattening the organizational hierarchy (ibid). In this kind of organization, employees are considered as a source of organizational competencies and knowledge; organizational interests collaborate, and authority is shared (ibid). According to Bergquist (1993, cited in Gade & Lowrey, 2011) postmodern
organization is liquid, with fast-shifting and unpredictable boundaries. The liquid organization includes elements of stability and change, but most important and interesting are the shift boundaries because this is where innovation and organizational learning happen.

The characteristics of postmodernism already discussed in this study, create a nomadic organization. According to Styhre (2001:2) a nomadic organization considers an organization that is always on the move, linking itself with other organizations through alliances, joint ventures, mergers, and acquisitions rather than an isolate entity; an organization whose boundaries disappear when it becomes complicated to discern between the inside and outside, between employee and temporal labor and consultants; an organization whose output is only one component in the whole product chain, and is thus interrelated with other organizations in network. In postmodernity, market hierarchy focus has no place in understanding an organization, rather a new set of perspectives, insights and a new epistemology are examined (ibid). In this regard, organizational theories have to deal with different views. Instead of applying a coherent theory for a given situation, there is a need to combine several theories for achieving a solution.

In the postmodern perspective organizational actions are immersed in a hermeneutical ontology that produces debates confronting each other in interpretative flux (Viteritti, 2004). In this sense, organizations are not a place of the ontology of definitive organizational being (Chia, 1995) rather there are sites of becoming (Viteritti, 2008). In the area of organizational theory, the ontology of becoming emphasizes the procedural nature of organization rather than organized and established orders and formal structure (Loacker & Muhr, 2009). In this sense, according to Styhre (2001) the nomadic organization as a becoming entity is not only based on its own identity; rather it is always in a situation of change, creation, and novelty. Based on the epistemology of becoming dominant thoughts and concepts are questioned continually. The idea that organizations lead by a dominant rationality is no longer valid; instead there are a plurality of rationalities which challenge each other, and the meaning is constructed in continuous oscillation and tension (Viteritti, 2004). In such an organization the actors continuously make meaning-references, meaning in reference to other meanings, where rationality is only a temporary, mobile and unaccomplished outcome: an open text in which interpretations co-operate to produce, contextually, non-definite and non-predictable models of rationality (ibid:169).

In postmodern organizational studies, there is an emphasis on the myriad of heterogonous yet interlocking organizing micro-practices which collectively create
effects in individuals, organizations and society (Chia, 1995:582). According to Law (1992 cited in Chia, 1995) for a postmodern organizational analysis it is not needed to analyze the characteristics of organizations; instead the micro-practices and micro-logic of organizing should be analyzed. This occurs through local orchestrations of actions, interactions and interlocking patterns of relationships. Local patterns of orchestration make the affairs of the organization soft, flexible and as a consequence more prone to human intervention and control (ibid). This kind of organization is not limited by boundaries, and their flexibility allows them to adapt themselves to the ongoing changes and complexity. In this situation storytelling in organizations is a valuable tool for making sense of the future. According to Boje (1991:125) “As organizational boundaries become more permeable and the organizational structure flatter, requiring more networking and communication skills, storytelling can be a useful tool for managers trying to cope with rapid change”. By story and imagination, a similar kind of empathy is cultivated which can lead to a solution for challenges in a corporation. For this purpose, the story about who and what the corporation is and what it stands for in different ways (Painter-Morland, 2006) is a significant step toward challenging the corporation’s operation and decisions.

Since the focus of this study is on business ethics, storytelling ethics opens new spaces for suppressed and marginalized others’ voices and create an awareness of human complicity and responsibility for others (Jørgensen & Boje, 2010). Storytelling ethics as a particular reflective ethics considered for questioning dominant narratives of good, responsible, answerable and by adopting this approach in organizations, being is conceptualized as dialogical, plural and emergent (ibid). In this situation, the duality between narrative and the story is resituated- changes contemporary business ethics (ibid). Within any organization there are different forms of stories such as myths, legends of heroes, stories of failure and success and etc. These kinds of stories as a discursive resource construct the organizational identity in which the employee can learn how to behave. Each of the stories can be inspiring in their own way.

According to Gergen and Joseph (1996) postmodern organizational science would extend the discussion of organizational theories in manifold ways and the organizational science curricula are revitalized by postmodern arguments. By this approach organizational science has specialized in the language of “is” rather than “ought”, a language of rational judgment as opposed to an ethics of care (ibid:371). All in all, the postmodern approach helps theorists to examine existing organizations through new perspectives and brings new ideas to organizational
theories by deconstructing the dominant theories with the hope of bringing forth a new one which is more compatible with the times of change and novelty. And this is a time when the boundaries between the inside and outside of organization is transgressed constantly.
3   Business ethics as a postmodern phenomenon

The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not at the beginning.

Foucault, The hermeneutics of the subjects:237

In this chapter, I explore why we need a critical perspective. I discuss how by critique, the dominant discourse is challenged in favor of finding an alternative discourse. Then I will explain why we are not happy with current normative business ethics. The aim of this section is to surface the importance of an alternative tale in business ethics. Since bureaucracy is one of the main features of normative ethics, in the next part I will argue that rigid bureaucracy changes the meaning of ethics today. The story of postmodern business ethics which is the heart of this thesis, is the next section. In order to understand the importance of postmodern business ethics in uncertainty, the last part of this chapter deal with this topic.

3.1 Do we need a critical perspective in business ethics?

According to Rossouw (1994) ethics in modernity resulted in the exclusion of vast areas of human life from rational discourse. The postmodern approach to business ethics wants to draw attention to these exclusions by considering all alternative possibilities in ethical decision making. This critical perspective does not aim to reach a coherent single answer to a specific problem (ibid). The goal of critique is to make our familiar world a little bit stranger than it usually is (Jones et al., 2005). According to ten Bos and Willmott (2001) critical business ethics would acknowledge the multiple moral struggles of people in the organizational context. The recent scandals are a witness for the necessity of a critical perspective toward business ethics and responsibility. Painter-Morland (2006) argues that the recent spate of corporate scandals is the main reason for bringing the significant role of responsibility and ethics into sharp relief. According to Solomon (1993, cited by Losoncz, 2003:149) business ethics has “evolved from a complete critical attack on capitalism and the profit motive to a more productive and constructive examination of the fundamental rules and practices of business”. By a critical reflection of business ethics the hidden dimensions and unquestioned and neglected issues within the world of business are recognized and disclosed (ibid).
Business ethics, which is first and foremost concerned with the enhancement of life (Painter-Morland, 2008), has always desired to improve the status quo but not question the status quo (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011). This made it impossible to question and critique business motivations from a normative perspective (ibid) while the first and most important contribution of critical business ethics is to show that the common way of considering and examining business ethics are window-dressing and sugar-coating (Cortez, 2015). The purpose of critical questioning ethics is not to provide answers or solutions, rather it is bringing questions, puzzles or dilemmas to the surface (Painter-Morland & ten Bos, 2011). This critical questioning and critical perspective to ethics leads to the understanding of the moral self’s condition (Bauman, 1993).

Our contemporary world is tied up with uncertainty, unpredictability, and complexity. In such a condition business parties cannot heavily rely on fixed boundary rules and regulations for social sustainability because absolute rules restrict the ability of organizations to move quickly in unpredictable conditions. According to Woermann and Cilliers (2012), ethics in complexity, as opposed to setting a normative system that proscribes the right action, should be comprehended as constitutive of knowledge and identity. Woermann (2012:160) expresses that in situations of complexity, we may make life “a bit more moral” and in such a condition ethics cannot be taught by moral lessons (Morin, 1999). It must take shape in people’s mind (Morin, 1999).

In the uncertainty and dynamic world of everyday business, we face new crises and, as Hirschman and Lindblom (1962) mention, there are no complete theoretical solutions to problems and difficulties that we can prepare in advance. So, in each situation remedial actions have to be made, marked by uncertainty, disorder, and imbalance. It is not necessary to select a single and definite theory and stick with it; it is sometimes even better and more practical to take what seems most plausible from multiple theories and seek insights from all prospective (Bowie, 1982). The difficulties and dilemmas in today’s business environment need continuous sensitivity and a readiness to reply appropriately to the singular contingency of every new situation and problem (Painter-Morland, 2006). In such a situation, we cannot find concrete and fast principles and rules for practitioner’s moral responsibilities to stakeholders (ibid). In such a situation, as Popke (2004) asserts, modernity ethics is impossible, because its universal discourse codes, principles and legitimations cannot guarantee a normative foundation for ethical conduct in particular for caring at a distance.
According to Parker (1998) in postmodern ethics there are no ‘golden rules’ or a stable reference to ethics. The continual movement of language and meaning leads to having different concepts of gold standards and people use the same rules in different ways (ibid). The postmodern approach allows business practitioners to consider new ways in which business organizations can answer to issues regarding their operations, in particular ethical issues. This critical perspective does not define ethics by some words and sentences and as a close system that guides corporations to act upon it in order to be ethical. Rather, by this perspective ethics involves thinking and re-thinking, denaturalizing and problematizing (Cortez, 2015:103). Furthermore, understanding business ethics in a corporation is not separated from the employee’s perception of morality and ethics, and a critical perspective toward business ethics can be perceived as the constitutive aspect of the capacity of developing a moral identity within an employee (Losoncz, 2003). Such a critical approach allows an employee in a corporation to become actively engaged in moral debate, discussion, criticism, and decision making without necessarily supporting their beliefs by appealing to rules, requirements, or any ethical theories (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999). This approach helps corporations to return to morality rather than escape from it (ibid).

Ethical decision making is always challengeable. Ethics is not a matter that can be concluded or enclosed, rather it is a dynamic and continuously developing area within the heterogeneous practice of every day organizational life (Loacker & Muhr, 2009). Here we can use the notion of undecidability by Derrida. According to Painter-Morland (2006, cited in Cortez, 2015:107) “If decisions were in fact foregone conclusions that could be identified via a set of steps or rules, we could program computers to make those decisions for us”. Undecidability, as Derrida discusses, does not mean indecisiveness, rather it means always we have to keep a certain level of discomfort on our decision (ibid). “A decision is always something that has to be pondered over time. It challenges us to an ongoing process of questioning, wondering whether we could not have done better” (ibid:107).

In sum, according to Lim (2007:259) business ethics must tries to cultivate two critical modes of being in the world: first, intersubjectivity and alterity, and second, a mode of “participatory identity construction”. In this regard, the Other-oriented ethical approach in this study is an approach that can criticize the current business ethics by considering the above modes. As we will see later, through seeing the Others and considering them in their alterity, human being can construct him/herself as a moral agent. According to Levinas (1969:16), the Other-oriented mode of thinking “will pay less attention to things as they appear to the separated
self, and more attention to the search for what they are in themselves, in their radical otherness, even though this is less certain and always more difficult to find”. This will mean less interest in conceptual constructions and a greater readiness to listen and learn from experience. Levinas discussed that “before Being”, one is always in a social world, always in relation to other people (Jones, 2003). Hence for Levinas, the relation to the Other comes before Being, and as a result, he posited the primacy of ethics over ontology; ethics in this sense is not simply a branch of philosophy—instead, it is the first philosophy (ibid). For Levinas the central point for thought is not the Being of an isolated or individual subject but rather that of the relation between the subject and other people (ibid:226). In article I of this study, I discussed more about the ethics of the Other. I integrated the idea of Other-oriented ethics in stakeholder theory as one the most dominant theories in business ethics. By this integration, I aimed to show how postmodern ethics in general and Levinasian ethics in particular can advance our understanding of business ethics. The proposed model for stakeholder theory includes all the Others involved in ethical decision-making that are, to some degree, ignored by business practitioners.

Kaulingfreks (2005) argued that in civil society the theorists transformed everything into reason and rational laws and principles. By these means they made ethical codes take the place of morality, and as a result the people lost sight of their moral impulse and solved the ambivalence and apprehension of it with universal rules that create distance between the self and the Other (ibid).

3.2 We are unhappy with today’s standard approaches to business ethics

Normative ethics as a branch of philosophy deals with moral obligation and intrinsic value in the actions and character of human beings (Robinson, 2003). The current standard approaches to business ethics that have dominated business ethics, such as utilitarianism and deontology, have tended to simply give instructions concerning what is right or wrong. Deontological ethics try to ascertain the content of duty without considering the consequences of actions and behaviors (Macdonald & Beck-Dudley, 1994). The absolute necessity of duty, irrespective of the rewards or punishments that may follow, is the main grounding of deontology ethics (Robinson, 2003). In contrast to deontology, utilitarianism ethics evaluate a human being’s actions by their consequences—the best action is the action that produces the greatest proportion of good over evil (Macdonald & Beck-Dudley, 1994).
Standard approaches to business ethics seek to reveal, develop, and justify the basic moral principles, or the fundamental values, of a moral system found in a given society, and more generally and ideally in human society as a whole (De George, 2006:21). According to him the task of these standard approaches is fourfold:

First, to form into a related whole the various norms, rules, and values of a society’s morality. It attempts to give these as consistent and coherent as possible, with perhaps some hierarchical arrangement of norms.

Second, to find the basic principles from which the special norms can be derived.

Third, to try in different ways, to justify the fundamental principle of morality.

Fourth, to create a procedure by which conflicting norms can be adjudicated and particular cases decided (ibid:21).

Popke (2004) argues that in modernity tradition ethical questions have been addressed by transferring ethics to the realm of the political and in this transformation, they have manifested in a universalist discourse of rights. But the effectiveness of such a universalistic discourse is not very convincing today. According to Ghoshal (2005) in order to prevent some ethical crises like Enron’s, there is not a need to create new courses in teaching business ethics, rather, it is better to stop teaching the old ones. He argued that some management theories are in the air, legitimizing some actions and conducts of managers, delegitimizing others, and generally forming the intellectual and normative order within which all day-to-day decisions were made (ibid:75).

The inclination of considering ethical issues in management theories is discussed by some scholars. Business ethics cannot bracket off from organizational studies. Nielsen (2003), for example, argues that ethics and strategy are related to each other and we can find the footprints of ethics or normative foundations in every organizational theory. According to Shaw (2008), unethical conduct damages an organization’s reputation and makes for some difficulties in attracting customers, maintaining good employees, or seeking other organizations that are willing to do business with it. In this regard, Shaw (2008:567) concluded that business systems cannot survive without widespread acceptance of certain shared norms.

The influence of modern management theories can cover a part of responsibility and ethical behavior. According to the modern scientific method both natural and human systems are considered by a rule-driven mechanism (Painter-Morland, 2006). By using this mechanistic perspective, it was possible to distinguish between “right” and “wrong” in any action by predicting how a
corporation would operate under certain conditions (ibid). This formulation is the same as with natural science in which scientists try to identify natural laws and make predictions on the basis of them (ibid). In the realm of business ethics, the mechanistic perspective in the form of normative ethical theories could not change the behavior of business practitioners to this today, because the world still witnesses some ethical crisis every day. As an example, many of the biggest corporate scandals in history only in accounting, occurred in past two decades; some scandals such as Waste Management (1998), Enron (2001), Worldcom (2002), Tyco (2002), HealthSouth (2003), Freddie Mac (2003), American International Group (AIG) (2005), Lehman Brothers (2008), Bernie Madoff (2008), and Satyam (2009). These misconducts not only undermine trust in corporate leaders, but also they cracked the face of the business community as a whole (Jones et al., 2005). Osterloh and Frey (2003) assert a theory that assumes managers cannot be trusted has the potential to make managers less trustworthy. Since the theories of business ethics go above and beyond the requirements of law, it is possible to do an unethical action or behavior without breaking the law (Norman, 2011). Jones (2003) claims that it is an obvious mistake if we think that ethics can be reducible to a logical set of rules about how we should conduct ourselves.

According to Norman (2011) business regulation is one of the reasons for market failure. In the era of transitional economy which we live in, there is not an economic system that can be said to display stability (Barclay & Smith, 2003). Bauman (1993:32) asserts that, “at the time we face choices of unprecedented magnitude and potentially disastrous consequences, we no more expect the wisdom of the legislators or perspicacity of philosophers to lift us once for all from moral ambivalence and decisional uncertainty”.

According to Shaw (2008) in a situation where whistleblowers like consumer groups, public interest lawyers and journalists are very active to uncover corporate behavior perceived to be unethical or irresponsible, almost all companies try to portray themselves as a good, socially responsible citizen, concerned to promote diversity, to promote the wellbeing of their employees, to engage positively to their local community, to abstain from using sweatshop labor, and to play their part in protecting the environment. Consequently, they show their tendency to ethical business by engaging in CSR activities because according to Jones et al. (2005) the notion of responsibility is one of the concepts that received more attention from business ethicists. Corporations try to make responsibility more lawful by way of universally defined rules, instruction, and requirements about the right kind of behavior and action (Loacker & Muhr, 2009), but in this sense responsibility is
unclear and obscure concept in business ethics, and corporations have different competing and confliction responsibilities with respect to different stakeholders (Norman, 2011). This ambiguity leads to pseudo CSR activities which use CSR only for managerial gestures or to address only the statutory requirements.

The benefits of socially responsible business are not deniable in different sectors of business. These activities can create more motivation and trust among employees, find profitable market segments by green or sweatshop-free products, and help corporations to avoid of certain risks such as costly fines and law suits (Norman, 2011). But according to De George (2008) businesses soon found that they could not control the CSR agenda, and lots of critique has arisen regarding CSR policies and implications. Despite the efforts of CSR implications there are still some barriers and limitations to experience such an important phenomenon. Lack of consensus about what the CSR concept really means (Panapanaan et al., 2003), unclear boundaries (Lantos, 2001), amorphous targets (Margolis & Walsh, 2001) and cost/benefit ratio (Laudal, 2011) are the most important barriers. There are also some barriers in developing countries that make the phenomenon more complex than in developed areas. Hossain et al. (2012) for instance investigated the barriers of CSR in Bangladesh including: lack of regulatory framework, enforcement, sustainable education, motivation from government and awareness as well as socioeconomic and cultural problems. In another study Arevalo and Aravind (2011:404) found the main barriers of CSR in India are competitive business practices, poor ethical decision making, corruption in the government, lax regulation, confused policy, excessive bureaucracy, lack of executive commitment and unprofessional management, and inadequate evaluation of CSR initiatives. Stohl et al. (2009) found that still there is a long way, especially for the largest and most powerful corporations, to meet the dynamics and challenges of globalization and complete the promise of globally integrated enterprise.

In a nut shell, the standard approaches to business ethics cannot prepare a satisfactory answer for the ethical dilemmas of today. One burden in this stream is concrete bureaucracy which I discuss in next section.

3.3 Bureaucracy as a begotten child of reason

Within an organization, three mechanisms coordinate together: market, bureaucracy, and community. Each agent in organization pursues her or his own goal because of the market; top-down goals are imposed upon an agent because of bureaucracy, and goals are negotiated between agents due to the community
Although the market and community make some barriers for ethical considerations, the idea of “rule following” is of major importance in an organized society (Jones et al., 2005:82). In an organization, people tend to obey orders and rules to continue because the instructor was wearing a white coat and pretending to be conducting a scientific experiment (ibid:83). With this regard, in this section I criticized bureaucracy because it creates a number of problems in organizations. Merton (1940, cited in Jones et al., 2005:83) listed these problems as follows:

1. Relationships between members of the organization tend to become depersonalised as they respond to rules rather than to persons;
2. Rules become so important that they are seen as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end;
3. Moral decision making becomes a technical matter: people only check whether they have abided by the rules.

Our social context is very related to our ethical decision making. According to Jones et al. (2005) business ethicists have spent lots of time into creating some guideline for managers to know what they should do, and they also put lots of time into considering the relationship between their businesses and the society in which they operate. But, we cannot find much evidence that business ethicists have considered the opposite side, the way in which social context has shaped business (ibid). This social structure according to Merton and Merton (1968) involves clearly defined patterns of activity and behavior in which, ideally, the purpose of organization can justify every series of actions. The actions are normally done within the framework of the pre-existing rules of organizations (ibid). This ideal type of organization is bureaucracy. According to Lončar (2005) the bureaucratic/modern organizations and post-bureaucratic/postmodern organization have two contrasting way of conceptualizing organizations.

Max Weber in the beginning of twentieth century defined an ideal type of bureaucracy in which every individual as the structuring elements of work is treated equally. With this regard he proposed a clear-cut division of integrated activities in organization by division of labor and authority, hierarchy of offices, precise specification of office functions, recruitment and promotion based on merit, and coherent hierarchical system of discipline and control (Lončar, 2005). In this sense, the term of bureaucracy is applied to explain all forms of rational or modern organizations (ibid). Bureaucracy helps in his efforts to increase productive efficiency, decrease the process, and increase the standard of living (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998). But by the end of twentieth century bureaucratic organizations...
appear increasingly fragile (ibid) in particular in the realm of ethics and responsibility.

There are some debates regarding either praising or burying bureaucracy. Among them, Paul du Gay (2000), in his book *In Praise of Bureaucracy: Weber, Organization, Ethics.* opened up a discussion in which he praised bureaucracy. He argued that one of the common stories that formed the 20th century idea of organization was the “end of bureaucracy,” but he believed that bureaucracy should not be disposed of so easily. For this reason, he injected some pragmatism into the breathless rhetoric of change (Parker, 2002). Some of the critics of bureaucracy share a certain “unworldliness” about what human beings are and do (ibid). At the end of his discussion, du Gay comes to praise bureaucracy, not to bury it.

In this study I follow the idea that bureaucracy cannot result in ethical decision-making in today’s business world, concurring with the idea put forward by Macintyre (1981) when criticizing bureaucracy in his book *After Virtue.* For him, moral language that has its roots in tradition and solidarity is no longer valid, so we are living in a situation that he called “after virtue.” For Lončar (2005) inflexibility that results in the lack of adequate response to changing environments, is the most important shortcoming of bureaucracy. Weber in his later writings argue that bureaucracy becomes an iron cage as it restricts and constrains the set of options for human behavior (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998) Maybe Weber’s later writings is more illustrated in Bauman’s work. Zygmunt Bauman in his book “*Modernity and the Holocaust*” (1989) expresses one of the most passionate critiques of bureaucratic rationality. He believes that in modernity bureaucracy was essential and the Holocaust was a direct consequence of bureaucracy (Best, 2003). For Bauman (1989: xiii) the Holocaust is an outcome of a unique encounter between factors by themselves quite ordinary and common. Jones et al. (2005:82) discuss the ordinary people who involved in the Holocaust and they raise a question that did they all know that they were acting unethically? They reply this question by referring to Arendt. She suggests the judgement of this issue should not only be made based on condemnations of individual character, rather it must consider the social contexts in which certain ideas and thinking about good or bad were constructed (ibid:82).

Bureaucracy for Bauman is the central mechanism that develops the instrumental rationality to a dominant position within modern society to the detriment or exclusion of alternative moral criteria of action and behavior (de Gay, 1999). Because the rational bureaucratic organization has three main characteristics
that till date cannot prepare a solution for ethical dilemmas. These characteristics are:

Formalization of rules, procedures, policies, reports given in a standardized written form;
Instrumentalization in which the organization is an instrument or machine with the ability to transform tasks into achieved goals in a routinized, algorithmic and predictable way; and
Rational-legal authority based on formal position, which is derived from objective personal qualifications and merits as opposed to nepotism, tradition or charisma (Jaffé, 2001, cited in Lončar, 2005:107).

According to Lyon (1999:38) bureaucracy would simply hastens the inhumane, and not only individuals suffered but democracy was jeopardized by bureaucracy. In a similar vein, Lončar (2005) argued that dehumanization, alienation and demotivation of employees in a bureaucratic system consider employees as a tool or instrument (production factor) for performing the pre-defined tasks. Mansell (2008) argues that bureaucracy and an emphasis on rule-following has a tendency to foster this form of de-personalized, ethically neutral behavior. For Parker (1998) the most important outcome of the Weberian perspectives of the bureaucratic organization is utilitarianism. The reason is that the bureaucratic system is a modern form of ordering, for instance placing people and other things in a systematic relationship (ibid). This relationship creates people like machines that just perform instructions without thinking of the consequences. Merton (1940, cited in Jones et al., 2005:83) defined a number of problems of relationships in bureaucratic organizations as relationships between members of the organization tend to become depersonalized as they respond to rules rather than to persons; in this relationship rules become so important that they are seen as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end; and moral decision making becomes a technical matter: people only check whether they have abided by the rules or not.

Bauman (1989: 29) discusses that the main characteristics of bureaucracy is its de-moralizing tendencies and that the fundamental condition of success of bureaucracy, as an instrument of rational coordination of action, is its silencing of morality. For him bureaucracy and rule following principles create moral distance instead of proximity (ibid). The individual cogs are undermined because of the functional division of labor (du Gay, 1999). In this division moral awareness and responsibility is dissolved, in a situation where a complete process is split into minute functional tasks and those tasks are in turn separated from each other. By
focusing on their own individual tasks, each bureaucrat is able to avoid overall moral responsibility for the outcome to which their own efforts ultimately contribute (ibid). In other word, bureaucrats are more self-oriented that Other-oriented because the Others are ignored in such a kind of concrete division. Ethics in such a way that highlights responsibility to the Other cannot be assigned under the rule following of bureaucratic procedure (Mansell, 2008). For Bauman the Weberian bureaucratic system may be helpful for technical responsibility but the story of moral responsibility is very different (du Gay, 1999).

Bauman (1993) seeks moral impulse in individuals and he believes that societies and organizations neutralized the moral impulse through three complementary arrangements as denial of proximity, effacement of face and reduction to traits. As a consequence of effacement of face dehumanization occurs. “Dehumanization is inextricably related to the most essential, rationalizing tendency of modern bureaucracy . . . once effectively dehumanized, and hence cancelled as potential subjects of moral demands, and human objects of bureaucratic task-performance are viewed with ethical indifference” (Bauman, 1989:103).

Godfrey and Madsen (1998: 706–707) in a seminal work, argue for three remedies for the ailments of bureaucracy. The first remedy is letting bureaucracy heal itself. By this remedy we should keep all the “good” of bureaucracy and remove the “bad” by assigning a set of rules and procedures that surgically eliminate the negative aspects of bureaucratic behavior. This solution suggests that the physician should simply heal herself or himself. However, by this remedy all the difficulties and problems of modern bureaucracy will remain. Taking a postmodern approach to this remedy, any hope placed in reason and bureaucracy as emancipating forces would act against itself. The second remedy is to call for changes in individual behavior within traditional hierarchical structures. The logic of flat hierarchies isolates the problem of bureaucracy on a number of layers. Postmodernists have discussed the fact that this solution only glosses over the problem and, despite of having short-term benefits, the long-term cost remains the same. The third remedy, which seems to be more acceptable, is to rely on jointly negotiated social contracts (language game) to assist bureaucracy to become more human. From a postmodern perspective, the authors use a language game (inspired by Lyotard) as a remedy. Language games are related to “weak” thought because they do not offer human and organizational functioning, nor do they propose an immutable structure for human experience (ibid:711). The language games by
Lyotard call for a social solution to bureaucratic problems wherein groups of organizational actors negotiate the relevant language games each is willing to play (ibid: 711). According to Godfrey and Madsen (1998) the advantage of this solution is not to remove hierarchy, rather it is to expand the possibilities for individual autonomy.

To sum, the above discussion informs us that ethics is not only provided in defined parts with red tape which we can find in a bureaucratic system, instead it is found in the gap between social roles and the moments when they are breached, and undecidable decisions need to be made (Jones et al., 2005). From a Levinasian perspective, bureaucracy can provide or safeguard the moral inspiration and, vice versa, the responsibility of the-one-for-the-Other should hinder the system from becoming the tyranny that both Levinas and Bauman feared (van de Ven, 2005). However, ignoring bureaucracy is neither possible, nor necessary, and according to postmodern philosophers grounding bureaucracy in rationality is no longer possible (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998). Bureaucracy presents itself as the only begotten child of reason for both modern and postmodern thinkers (ibid:697). By following the third remedy discussed in this section, I explore ethics beyond this red tape and bureaucracy where there is potential for people to tackle their own ethical decision making.

3.4 The story of postmodern business ethics

In this thesis I emphasize postmodern ethics because it moves beyond fixed rules and principles. Postmodern ethics calls for a new type of human behavior and responsibility. According to Nietzsche the concept of “I” should be considered to be nucleus of metaphysics (Bisong, 2017). This concept arises out of moral imperative to be responsible for our actions. In this stance human beings are the cause of their actions and the rewards and punishments are accepted as consequences of actions. In this sense, the concept of “I” is related to social creation and moral illusion (ibid). Referring to Nietzsche (2003 cited in Bisong, 2017:48) “the moral sense of the “I” as an identical cause is projected onto events in the world; thus logic is born from the demand to adhere to common social norms which shape humans into a society of knowing and acting subjects”. The context of shaping humans is very crucial in postmodern ethics.

Postmodern business ethics from one side, questions the modern approaches to framing moral problems and from the other side, calls us for a new way of thinking and considering ethical dilemmas. The task of ethics, and the postmodern ethical
discourse in particular, according to Mineva (2007) is not to make a complicated situation simple and an inexplicable issue explicable; rather it is to seek whether the complexity and uncertainty of the world and the fragmentation of life makes us more sensitive to humaneness or more insensitive. In this sense, according to Gustafson (2000) what postmodernism offers to business is not rules or principles, rather it provides questions that raise the issue of responsibility. Postmodernism is a call to define ethics in narratives and stories rather theories (Walton, 1993). Levinas argues that ethics is not a subject of theory or thesis, instead ethics should consider as a part of the most practical everyday experiences (Jones et al., 2005). A set of principles, in the spirit of Kant or Mill, are out of fashion (Green, 1993). They are out of fashion because they dictate formal decision procedures which are not able to resolve ethical issues, hence, they do not work (Duska, 2014). The ethical problems in the particular business environment which is always in trouble cannot be answered by the substantive guideline of an ethical system (Woermann & Cilliers, 2012). For Levinas, as a postmodern philosopher, ethics is not a rule to be followed (Roberts, 2001) Green (1993) rejects this idea that the growing ethical problems of organizational and economic life can be captured or eliminated by a single economic or social theory. According to Antonio and Kellner (1991) postmodernists avoid evoking any specific historical development scenario or universal morality with the aim to acknowledge the spontaneously arising free play of different desires and tastes. Crane and Matten (2004:115) define postmodern ethics as below:

"Postmodern ethics is an approach that locates morality beyond the sphere of rationality in an emotional “moral impulse” toward others. It encourages individual actors to question everyday practices and rules, and listen to and follow their emotions, inner convictions, and “gut feelings” about what they think is right and wrong in a particular situation”.

The complexity of the current business environment demands inspiring the business ethics community with stories and narratives of business heroes, suitably complemented by horror stories about business villains (Rorty, 2006). For such an environment, Woermann and Cilliers (2012) propose a provisional imperative by the mechanism of provisionary, transgressivity, irony and imagination in contrast with categorical imperative. The provisional imperative implies at the same time that we must be guided by imperative and that we must justify the exclusionary nature of all imperatives (Woermann & Cilliers, 2012). Recognizing and solving ethical issues is more like an art than a science (Duska, 2014) that’s why it needs
imagination (Rorty, 2006). This imagination leads us to accept other standpoints across boundaries and time, to visit ‘otherness’ and let it speaks its own language (Wenger, 1998). For Gustafson (2000) the ambiguous moral dilemmas in the twentieth century lead us to a decrease in optimism for finding absolute foundations.

In response to some critics concerning the lack of a coherent foundation for business ethics in the postmodern approach (Walton, 1993; Rasmussen, 1993), Gustafson (2000) discusses instead providing a foundational set of principles to business ethics, where postmodernism can be used as an ongoing strategy to be applied in the case of developing a theory. By this approach researchers and practitioners may not receive a solution but they will be able to question everyday practices and accepted norms. It gives an openness to criticize the concrete foundations with the hope of finding a better solution for upcoming difficulties in the realm of business ethics. Jones (2003) investigates Derrida’s work on ethics and responsibility. He discusses that Derrida indicated certain directions for ethics, responsibility and justice by deconstruction.

ROSSOUW (1994) discusses moral sensitivity for the practical and other implications of one’s moral persuasion. Such sensitivity cannot be obtained by ethical theories; rather it should grow inside of human being’s thoughts and feelings. For Rossouw rational interaction for moral sensitivity to moral decision-making is too time consuming. Moral sensitivity is a valuable weapon for ethical dilemmas in uncertainty and for unforeseeable situations in the business environment because it arises from a discussion and dialogue about different possibilities of unethical behavior within a corporation. After these discussions, most employees would be at least more aware of and sensitive about the way in which they interact (ibid) in ethical decision-making in a given situation. Geva (2006) argues that the core of moral awareness is recognizing the existence of a moral dilemma in a situation. By creating moral sensitivity, corporations have an opportunity to motivate employees to become involved in ethical decision-making. According to Rossouw (1994:20) this moral sensitivity enables and empowers employees to actively help in shaping and creating the culture in which they have to work and live.

Green (1993:220, 222) states that business ethics is profoundly a postmodern phenomenon. He contends two key features for postmodern business ethics. First, it rejects the “grand narratives” of historical and conceptual justification, it rejects a unitary or totalizing explanation on reality. For better understanding, he reminds us about the narratives embodied in Marxism and Milton Friedman/Adam Smith which have dominated over the past two centuries in the area of the economic life (ibid). This claim has been criticized by Gustafson (2000) as he believes there are
some other accounts that are accepted in business ethics by practitioners and providing only Marxian or Friedman accounts is a false dichotomy. The second feature is that the “de-centering” characteristic of postmodernism and its discovery of “otherness”, “difference” and marginality as a valid approach to experience helps business ethicists for moral decisions (Green, 1993:222).

The two features that were discussed by Green (1993) and covered in the previous paragraph are the main reasons for me to endorse postmodern business ethics. The metanarratives in business ethics (such as utilitarianism and deontology, which were introduced in Section 3.2) have flourished in the underlying rules and practices of business ethics. By these standards, business practitioners think in certain ways and behave in accordance with certain rules and principles while they are embedded in a set of prescribes and proscribes. This embeddedness prevents them from questioning the basic narratives of business ethics. The second feature of postmodern ethics for Green (1993) is discovering Otherness. This is the main issue in Levinasian ethics that encourage me for postmodern business ethics. According to Bevan and Corvellec (2007:209), Levinas criticized the Western ontological traditions because the practice of reducing the Other’s Otherness to being the same as it negates his or her radical Otherness. All in all, although this thesis is based on postmodern business ethics, which emphasizes Otherness, diversity and rejecting metanarratives, I do not ignore the coherent system in business ethics as Frederic Jameson, a famous American analyst of postmodernism, believes that a theory may include diverse strands and yet keep a coherent system (Walton, 1993). According to Gustafson (2000), postmodern business ethics is not radically different than modernism in some discussions like equality and justice, rather, it has a different strategy of approach. This strategy does not seek absolutes, universals, and foundations for ethical decision making (ibid).

In postmodern approach, ethics is a responsibility toward the Other by putting the Other before the self which is non-logical (Aasland, 2004). Moral action in this approach is connected with the final and indispensable responsibility of the person (Junge, 2001). Although the degree of success of this responsibility is not guaranteed, at least corporations can decrease and mitigate the risk of suffering of the Other (Roberts, 2001). Gustafson (2000) discusses postmodern thinkers such as Levinas, Caputo, Wyschogrod, and Bauman, who leave us with more responsibility and a louder invitation to care than modern theory normally invokes. Postmodern business ethics helps to re-personalize morality which is returning moral responsibility from the finishing line to the starting point of the ethical process (Bauman, 1993: 34). Hence, moral responsibility is more rooted in the very
way we humans are (ibid). This means being ethical without a code of ethics, principles and foundations; a pure responsibility toward Others.

Postmodern business ethics consider political and social pluralism in a culture in favor of obtaining a systemic but flexible procedure of making ethical decision making (Gustafson, 2000). For Alan Wolf (1989:220) morality is an issue “negotiated between learning agents capable for growth on the one hand and a culture capable of change on the other”. Bauman discusses that the rejection of the typical modern approach to framing moral problems is only one part of postmodern ethical discourse; the other part is an ongoing demand that moral problems are considered and discussed in a new way (Mineva, 2007). This approach allows all individuals to think and discuss in finding a new way or a solution instead of following any ubiquitous rules without thinking. In chapter 2, I discussed some of the basic tenets in postmodernism. In Table 6, I highlight how these tenets contribute to business ethics.

**Table 6. Business ethics from a postmodern lens.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic tenets in postmodernism</th>
<th>Contribution to business ethics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self</td>
<td>Since the self continually produces and reproduces within a social context, the individual has no independent identity other than to create her/himself. By this consideration the organizational context and in particular the ethical/unethical climate can create/dismantle a moral identity of an individual.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>We cannot create a single account of right conduct (Green, 1993) because language play its own game. The ethical normative categories cannot be considered in abstract terms instead call us to be viewed within specific practices and language game (Woermann, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language game</td>
<td>In the realm of business ethics deconstruction implies a serious effort to deconstruct the normative theories of business ethics with the hopes of reconstructing it again and combining it with different perspectives. By this approach to business ethics Derrida opens up a new vista for otherness, differences, and a notion of ethics that is not presupposed on the commonality of our experiences (Woermann, 2010).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>For ongoing ethical dilemmas, we cannot stick to one theory. We should always be open to diversity and multiplicity in ethical decision making.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Postmodern business ethics is guided by the recognition of uncertainty (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999). In uncertainty, the consequences of our actions need to be considered with more caution (ibid) because the consequences will be separated all around the world and will even affect the future generations. Now is the right time that the business practitioners reassess the momentum of their decisions continuously. There is no way to escape from the consequences of their actions. This approach highlights that corporations have responsibility for each party which has relationship to it and this kind of responsibility should not be undermined in the name of rules, principles, economic growth, or profits (Soares, 2008). Bearing this in mind, postmodern business ethics allows corporations flexibility in decision making for ethical dilemmas where no universal codes and principles are available. Mansell (2008) discusses that it is doubtful that a fixed mandatory frame can be itself contain the flexibility that would be require for the possibility of business ethics.

All in all, postmodern ethics tries to create a systematic but flexible approach to making ethical decisions while considering social pluralism in cultures. Postmodern ethics brings responsibility to any realm of decision-making, and it
3.5 Postmodernism, uncertainty and business ethics

In general, people and organizations try to reduce uncertainty and simplify the world, but business people want to deny the uncertainty they face. As a consequence, they tend to behave and act as if the world is rational and they are in control (Trevino & Nelson, 2016). Being in charge and able to forecast events is a highly valued feature, in particular in business (ibid). The fact is that the uncertainty associated with globalization, technological innovation, and the impact of these on the business environment has enforced many organizations and industries to reevaluate their business models and seek to innovative (Gade & Lowrey, 2011). Luntley (2003) distinguishes two different orientations to uncertainty. The first is the objectivistic orientation that sees uncertainty as a function of our ignorance. The advocates of this discourse of uncertainty believe that uncertainty happens due to lack of our knowledge, but if we use objectively valid rules then the uncertainty will be removed. The main task of this orientation is to uncover sets of rules that will erase uncertainty in decision making. In this sense, uncertainty is not a real characteristic of our environment. The second is the realistic orientation in which uncertainty is considered as a real trait of the environment that we have to adapt to. Based on this orientation, uncertainty is not something to be coped with by the use of objectively valid rules that will bridge the gap in our knowledge. Instead, uncertainty cannot be removed and hence, our decision making is not then guided by the application of rules; it needs to be guided by a non-governed response to the environment. In a similar vein, Woermann (2010) discusses that uncertainty is not a reason for inaction or for taking a relativist position. Rather, it encourages us to work harder, to engage further, and to find strong and practical solutions in the absence of meta-frameworks. For Woermann (2010) ethical thinking is always contextually and temporally determined, which implies an engagement with uncertainty.

In this condition the postmodern approach to business ethics can be helpful because the postmodern condition is a world without certainty (Best, 2003) by becoming fluid and rejecting any static foundational system of logic (Ernest, 1997). Amiel-Houser and Mendelson-Maoz (2014) discuss that critical thinking in the 20th century is highly influenced by the historical development of this era. The witnesses for this claim, as they argue, are two world wars, a surge in capitalism, a
technological revolution, the dynamic force of globalization and mass immigration. All these issues brought a great measure of instability and uncertainty to the discourse of ethics. This uncertainty has been investigated extensively by postmodern philosophers who questioned the consequent dissolution of traditional forms of ethical thinking (ibid). According to Wagner (1994:165) “rather than resting on a secure place in a stable social order, individuals are asked to engage themselves actively in shaping their lives and social positions in a constantly moving social context. Such a shift must increase uncertainties and even anxieties”.

As we already discussed in deconstruction, postmodern theorists conceptualize change by continuous and uncertain deconstruction and attempt to permanently re-construct a new interpretation (Stinson & Bullock, 2012). For the postmodernist, change such as deconstruction/reconstruction is a continual movement in uncertain and somewhat directionless rhizomatic motion (ibid). The same situation is in rejection of metanarratives as we discussed earlier. Rejection of metanarratives embraces uncertainty (Godfrey & Madsen, 1998) because:

- In an uncertain environment one cannot subsume all activities under one umbrella as metanarratives because it would be the source of terror and oppression. In uncertainty postmodernists discusses that life must be lived without a metanarrative.
- Metanarratives dominated societies in past, while we are experiencing the information explosion age that results from technological advancement. The information superhighway undermines the ability of any single metanarrative and metagame to achieve a dominant and static status.

Rapid change and uncertainty are accepted as a part of the postmodern condition, calling into question the validity of modern social theories and forms of organization that find their efficiency in a stable environment (Gade & Lowery, 2011). The postmodern approach to business ethics makes organizations more agile to respond to uncertainty in ethical dilemmas because they are free from rigid rules and principle. Luntley (2003) argued that the ethically wise person in the objectivist orientation in uncertainty is someone who follows the objective rules in ethical difficulties, while based on the realistic orientation wise actions are those that are guided by an ethical judgement that adapts to uncertainty. As Bauman argued that, being moral means being bound to make choices under a condition of acute and painful uncertainty (Bauman & Tester, 2001:46 cited in Woermann, 2010:85). Woermann (2010) describes that being uncertain does not mean that we do not know what is the best possible action in a given situation, rather it implies that we
have to accept and grapple with the aporia and impasse that we face the moment our arguments run up against the limits of reason and logic. The deepest views and perspectives into the nature of ethics are revealed in these moments of our life. Business ethics in uncertainty need to be more future oriented rather past oriented. The reason is expressed by Morin (2008:98):

“We stand on the threshold of a new beginning. We are not in the last stages of the history of thinking, nor have we reached the limits of the human spirit. We are, rather, still in its prehistory... We are in an initial period where it is necessary to recalibrate our perspectives on knowledge and politics... And here... we must learn to work with chance and uncertainty”.

In addition to being future oriented, I have argued in article I that the systemic approach to business ethics could be another way toward having postmodern business ethics in uncertainty. As I have discussed, with the flexibility of the systemic approach a business practitioner is more able to respond to some of the emerging situations in ethical dilemmas and, inspired by Levinasian ethics, I show how corporations can be more aware of their stakeholders while still being open to uncertainty through responsibility towards Others.

Last but not least, we already discussed the role of imagination in postmodern business ethics. Hargrave (2009 cited in Woermann, 2010: 218) states that “morally imaginative actors recognize and integrate contradictory moral viewpoints, and also integrate moral sensitivity... [of] contextual considerations”. In this sense, moral imagination is a critical activity that involves an element of uncertainty and risk (Woermann, 2010). This means that moral imagination as a social process calls us to tolerate each other’s opinion and also to tolerate failure (ibid). It helps decision-makers in organizations to be ready enough for uncertainty and to be more flexible in their ethical decision-making. Hence, since ethics is a complex phenomenon, ethical thinking is always contextually and temporally determined, and implies an engagement with uncertainty (Woermann, 2010: 222).
4 Another discourse of ethics: Other-oriented business ethics

*When we are no longer able to change a situation - we are challenged to change ourselves.*

Viktor E. Frankl

In this chapter I discuss Other-oriented business ethics as a way for ethical decision making in corporations. This chapter is built on the idea of Emmanuel Levinas (1906 –1995), the French philosopher. In order to understand Levinas’ contributions to business ethics I discuss in the next section who is the Other. Next, the face of the Other is explained because for Levinas this is the face that people find themselves responsible toward the Other. Since emotion is marginalized by reason in modernity ethics, in the subsequent section, I argue how Other-oriented ethics help to awake emotions. This chapter closed by the discussion on the possibility of Levinasian ethics in corporations.

4.1 A way forward

Levinas’ ethics has a considerable contribution to contemporary philosophy for having a new foundation and interpretation of ethics and responsibility (Cools, 2014). According to Jones (2003) the meaning of ethics is refigured by Levinasian interruption of the ethical tradition. For Levinas the question of the relation to the Other is ultimately an ethical question, the focus of ethics and responsibility. Responsibility for the Other is extraordinary and is not prevented from floating over the water of ontology (Levinas, 1991:141).

Responsibility is not a concept that can be defended in language. The question of responsibility can never be solved, controlled or closed (Loacker & Muhr, 2009). For Derrida (1995) responsibility always requires response to another person and concerning the idea of responsibility without a relation to another is a flawed concept. Jones et al. (2005:122) define responsibility as a concept which is certainly related to ethics, and which involves a consideration of how and to whom one responds. Butler (2001:27) conveys that responsibility requires a certain patience for others that suspends the demand that they be selfsame at every moment. For Loacker and Muhr (2009) this patience is a main factor that could create a barrier for acts of ethical violence. Soares (2008) expresses that responsibility, either on the corporate or individual level, is unconditional for the Other and all the others.
Mansell (2008) describes the Levinasian idea of responsibility. He asserts our responsibility to another person is not as an outcome of voluntary choice, but it is a feeling that we cannot escape and are categorically bound. Responsibility for the Other lies outside any laws and principles (ibid). Mineva (2007:33) relates responsibility as on the whole a synonym for the human attitude in the sense of human, moral interrelation and the reference to the Other: to Otherness. In this thesis I follow the definition of responsibility by Levinas and Robbins (2001:108), “responsibility is .... to respond to the Other; to approach the Other as unique, isolated from all multiplicity and outside collective necessities”. In this regard the following part of this thesis concentrates on the role of Others in responsibility and ethical decision.

4.2 Who is the Other?

The first flash that comes to mind for doing business is self-interest. Adam Smith tried to tie self-interest to the interests of others in society (Ciulla, 2011). Roberts (2001) asks business practitioners to move toward the Other in their ethical consideration rather than focus on the image of the self and their corporation. Shaw (2008) argues on the impossibility thesis of business ethics. He describes that the pursuit of economic self-interest, which is encouraged by capitalism, creates an environment in which people are tempted to be engaged in breaking the rules and cheating in the business game.

Nietzsche believes that responsibility starts as soon as someone asks us to, and it arises from the power that someone has received from an established system of justice (Butler, 2005). This means we feel a kind of fear and anxiety for responsibility. Butler (2005) discusses another motive and drive for taking responsibility which is having a relationship with another and that the need for retaining this relationship by narration is very important in the process of responsibility. In this sense, the narrative capacity constitutes a precondition for assuming responsibility for one’s action by that means (ibid:12). Emmanuel Levinas in his outstanding books “Totality and Infinity” (1969) and “Otherwise than –being” (1974) opens a new vista for rethinking and reconsidering ethics and responsibility. He highlights the role of the Other in ethical consideration far beyond of any rules and principles. For him the relation to the Other cannot be institutionalized in terms of duty or law (Jones, 2003). It is meaningless for someone to instruct me to have an ethical relation to the Other (ibid). It makes no sense for me to decide to answer ethically to the Other (ibid).
According to Beyer and Listen (1992) postmodern writers and thinkers very often emphasize a concern for the “Other”, those who have been ignored, oppressed or exploited. By this notion, women, people of color, prisoners, children, and the economically underprivileged have been left out of reason’s grand equation (ibid). The “Others” are highlighted in postmodern literature because their existence and credit are submerged within the official rationality of American capitalist hegemony (Beyer & Listen, 1992). Considering the Others, their similarity, difference and opposition, is helpful in understanding the self (ibid). Human understanding implies subject-to-subject knowledge (Morin, 1999). We do not only perceive others objectively, we understand them as other subjects with whom we know ourselves (ibid).

Levinas provides an ethics based in on emergent, complex and imperious injunctions about the requirements of human beings with few practical directions about the way to answer such an injunction (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007). For him ethics unfolds in our relationship with the Other (ibid) and reflects the absolute openness to the Other (Jones, 2003). Before everything our very subjectivity appears as a relationship of responsibility to and for the Other (Popke, 2004).

The word ‘Other’, which is used by Levinas, is a translation from the French word ‘autrui’ means the personal Other, other than you (Levinas, 1969:24). According to Jones et al. (2005:75) it refers to someone who is so close as to open up his or her radical difference to me, while ‘other’, or ‘autre’ in French language, simply refers to other people in general. The fundamental of Other-oriented ethics of Levinas emerges from people’s encounters with the Other (Aasland, 2004). This is always written with capital ‘O’ for more clearness because of the specific meaning.

Totality and infinity are the main ground for the philosophy of Levinas. Levinas has taken the concept of totality from Rosenzweig’s (1886-1929) critique of the totalizing inclination of western philosophy (Becker & Becker, 1992). The world infinite is borrowed from Descartes’s (1596-1650) application in his Third Meditation to designate the alterity of a thought which thought cannot contain (ibid). In this sense, infinity is a condition for every opinion as also for every objective truth (Levinas, 1969:25). The infinity is the mind before it lends itself to the distinction between what it discovers by itself and what it receives from opinion (ibid:25). The infinity that Levinas discusses is the mode of being, it does not first exist, and then disclose itself; it produces in the relation with the Other (Levinas, 1969:26). In another word, it means an embrace of the Other (Lim, 2007). Infinity opens the order of the Good, which is an order that does not contradict, but goes
beyond the rules of formal logic (Levinas, 1969). The original sense of infinity is in the inapprehendability of alterity and the unsatisfiability of the moral exigency (ibid). According to Levinas (2001) the Other is not the Other because he would have other attributes, or would have been born elsewhere or another moment, or because he would be of a difference race. The Other is Other because of me: unique and in some manner different than the individual belonging to a genus. It is not difference which make alterity: alterity makes difference (ibid:106).

The alterity of the Other is reabsorbed into our own identity (Levinas, 1969: 33). The alterity, the radical dissimilarity of the Other, is possible only if the Other is the Other with respect to a term whose essence is to remain at the point of departure, to serve an entry in to the relation, to be the same not relatively but absolutely (ibid:36). For Levinas, human beings are not hostage to specific others due to any social or historical relationship (Popke, 2004). Instead, this is an argument about the general ontological structure of alterity and subjectivity, an ethics that is an unconditional devotion, which is prior to any given social or cultural context (ibid).

Staricco (2016) counts three characteristics for alterity in the ethics of Levinas. It is concrete because being-for-the-Other is far beyond any ethical predisposition, it is to be portrayed in concrete action; it is asymmetric because we are responsible for the Other in an non-rational way; it is infinite due to non-reciprocity of responsibility and eternal duty for the Other. Bauman (1995:59) describes alterity as facing the Other as a face, not mask. We are responsible for the Other before the Other presents itself, if we cannot do that, we cannot embrace the alterity of the Other (Lim, 2007). This failure is a form of Totalization (ibid). It is not the insufficiency of the I that prevents totalization, but the infinity of the Other (Levinas, 1969: 80). Infinity is produced by withstanding the invasion of a totality (ibid:104).

By considering the Other in our ethical decision making it does not matter how their idea is different from us, how they think differently and how they differ from us. We are not seeking for a person who is the same as us in order to behave ethically. The main reason for him is the way that people see others in modern societies because currently Western thought has often rejected real Otherness (Jones et al., 2005). Wingenbach (1999:223) argues that “the systematic and legal reduction of the other to the same for political purposes helps to create conditions under which the face of the other can be obscured, transcendence hidden, and ethics ignored. It reduces the human to the object, opening space for human beings to be treated as objects rather than as unique subjects”. Seeing the Other and considering them in ethical decision making will bring understanding. According to Morin (1999:52)
the most serious obstacles for lack of understanding arise from the egocentrism ↔ self-justification ↔ self-deception loop.

According to Bevan and Corvellec (2007) distinguishing good from evil in action is not the ethics that Levinas comprehends. Rather, heteronomous relation to the Other is ethics for Levinas, the Other is not apart from us but we contain the other in our subjectivity because this other-orientation transcends our experiences and our universe (Lim, 2007). He also believed infinite responsibility for the Other is the only way to create a conjunction between the self and the Other (ibid). The Other for Lim (2007:252) occurs in the world of relations and expression but must also leave the Other in his otherness, as infinity.

In the introduction of *Totality and Infinity* by Levinas (1969:16), John Wild argues that instead of creating great systems in which the singular diversity of things and persons are passed over and diluted, the idea of the Other involves preferring to begin with the careful analysis of the peculiar features of each being in her or his Otherness and only then clarifying her or his relations with other things in the light of her or his peculiar and distinctive features. Considering Others in their radical Otherness prevents us from reducing them to being the same. According to Levinas (1969:47), *for the philosophical tradition the conflicts between the same and the other are resolved by a theory whereby the other is reduced to the same*. Consequently, Mansell (2008) expressed that any effort to rationalize responsibility to a set of rules and principles is what Levinas considers as a reduction of the Other to the same which is pure egoism. For Levinas, the responsibility for the Other is ontological, an essential and unconditional feature of human being (Popke, 2004). Levinas (1969) argues that we find ethics only in the relation with the Other, the radically other, it can neither reduced to comprehension (Critchley, 2004, cited in Bevan & Corvellec, 2007), nor be conceptualized (Derrida, 2001, cited in Bevan & Corvellec, 2007). The Other transforms the one who sees the Other (ibid:76). Other-oriented ethics constitute the self as an ethical subject that demands openness to the Other and its differences (Loacker & Nuhr, 2009). There are numerous ways one could relate to the Other. I could fail to recognize the Other, as one so often does when passing strangers in the street (Jones, 2003). I could recognize the Other but still consider the Other as necessarily the same as me, sharing my needs, desires and passions (ibid). Levinas argues that either of these responses fails to recognize the Other as the Other, as totally different from me but still in relation and making a demand for my responsibility (ibid:227).
For Levinas according to Aasland (2004) ethics precedes economy because the appearance of the Other calls for responsibility which is an ethical mode, not a cognitive or rational mode. Levinas as an anti-essentialist does not have such an aim to provide a concept of ethics in a clear or coherent closed system of rules and procedures as to how to behave (Jones et al., 2005). His ethical philosophy goes beyond the traditional essentialist definition of ethics (Jones, 2003) and it is not a matter of distinguishing good from evil in action (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007). Putting it in a simple way, for him ethics is to see the Other, openness to Others and feeling responsibility toward the Other, an infinite responsibility. Since this kind of ethics is not bound in a system, in his work he discussed "ethics without ethical system” (Levinas, 2001:81) and the matter of our heteronomous relation to the Other (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007). Openness can open the possibility of a new relationship with the Other and improve our understanding about the Other’s needs and demands, so we feel responsibility for meeting those demands.

The role of the Other is going to be discussed further among scholars. Bauman (1993:13) discusses moral responsibility - being for the Other before one can be with the Other- is the first reality of the self, a starting point rather than a product of society. We allow the Other penetrate our being without limit (Lim, 2007). For Preiser and Cilliers (2010) my situation depends on the situation of Others. The non-rationalized response to the presence of the Other beyond the notion the social contract or intertwined commitments, is the postmodernist’ gift to ethics (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999).

According to Chia (1995:580) in postmodernism the presence of the Other is implicitly recognized as the very condition for the articulation of the One. Levinas relates that we find ourselves in the world with the Other, we are already for-the-Other, and ethical responsibility to respond to the Other is prior to any selection or decision in my part (Garza & Landrum, 2010). Our potential to develop an ethical relationship as well as to develop our capacity to be human is related to the degree of openness toward the Other (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007). The self is constituted in relation to the Other (Loacker & Muhr, 2009) in which we have fully responsible. By responsibility to the Other I understand my own freedom (Lim, 2007). An encounter with the Other constitutes a central frame of reference for the formation of the self (Loacker & Muhr, 2009:270) and transcends my experiences and my universe (Lim, 2007) and it continually reinvents me. From the above discussion it can be drawn that according to Levinas (1995, cited in Mineva, 2007: 35) the Other is not simply an opposite of the Self, instead it is a transcendance of human being. This transcendance is neither metaphysical nor religious but
ontological, because it can manifest itself through the notion of the end and of death, but cannot objectified, thermalized, or recognized (ibid).

The relation with the Other always includes the responsibility of the self for the Other (Loacker & Muhr, 2009: 271). Responsibility starts by a gesture toward the Other, a free and unconditional gesture, a gift without an expectation and obligation to be returned (Junge, 2001). This consideration brings more solidarity in morality because “the Other appears in solidarity with all the others” (Levinas, 1969: 280). Solidarity is achieved through a greater ability to see Others as being ourselves in important respects (Yuthas & Dillard, 1999). The Other is a part of our identity. Identity is incomplete without approaching of the Other (Lim, 2007). The Other, according to Levinas, is the starting point of all meaning and all signification (Garza & Landrum, 2010). The Other can interrupt oneself, create some challenges for one’s perceptions, understanding, and interpretations of the world, teaching oneself to see more (Davy, 2007) and expand one’s perspective reading treating with the Other. Levinas’s idea of the Other can be more understandable when we know that the face of the Other has a pivotal role in her or his discussion. Hence, in the next section I will discuss about the concept of the face.

4.3 The face: what does it mean?

Levinas argues that the ethical relation involves more than simply seeing the Other (Jones, 2013). It involves a recognition and openness to the face of the Other, which entails, as Derrida puts it, ‘a total question, a distress and denuding, a supplication, a demanding prayers’ (1978:96, cited in Jones, 2013:227). The otherness of the Other is exposed in their face (Fagan, 2009). The idea of infinity is specifically produced in the form of a relation with the face (Levinas, 1969). The intangibility of the ethical relationship and the significant role of the face of the Other in Levinas’s philosophy provide a strong argumentation (Mansell, 2008). The face that is discussed by Levinas is not any particular individual, but is the very essence of other human, prior to any cultural coding (Popke, 2004). This is the face that people find themselves responsible for the Other and which they try to respect and protect (Fagan, 2009). He discusses instead of predefined ontological decisions for ethical relationship and responsibility, that the face of the Other interrupts solitude, demands a response, and imposes a fundamental responsibility (Coeckelbergh & Gunkel, 2014). "The face is what one cannot kill or at least it is that whose meaning consists in saying ‘thou shalt not kill” (Levinas, 1985:87). The face is a living presence which speaks (Soares, 2008) and expresses the vulnerability of the Other.
(Davy, 2007). The face opens onto an incapacity to grasp the infinite of the Other in its totality (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007:210). Equality is begins with the welcoming of the face (Levinas, 1969). Equality is produced when the Other does the same and discloses himself or herself to the same responsibility; otherwise equality is but an abstract idea and a word (ibid).

By the call of the Other’s face the self is needed to care for the Other instead of passing the Other by (Loacker & Muhr, 2009:271). Levinas (1969:50-51) describes the face as:

"The way in which the other presents himself, exceeding the idea in me, we here name face. This mode does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze, in spreading itself forth as a set of qualities forming an image. The face of the Other at each moment destroy and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure and to the measure of its ideatum-the adequate idea. It does not manifest itself by these qualities.... It expresses itself. The face brings a notion of truth".

The face of the Other calls for responsibility without reservation or possession, and my relation to the Other is essentially non-violent, born of Desire rather than of Need, of enjoyment rather than fear, of freedom rather than of possession (Lim, 2007:256). The presentation of the face does not reveal a new world which was previously closed, rather it’s a new region to understand the Other (Levinas, 1969). This presentation puts us into relation with being which can perform in the non-postponable urgency with which the Other requires a response (ibid).

The discussion of Levinas provides a strong argument for the intangibility of the ethical relationship and the significant role of what he calls the ‘proximity’ of the face of the Other (Mansell, 2008). By this argument he warns us of the danger of a completely rational ‘Totality’ masquerading as the ethical (ibid). Ethics and justice are impossible without proximity (ibid). In humanity from one individual to another, a proximity is established that does not take its meaning from the spatial metaphor of the extension of a concept. Immediately, one and the other is one facing the other. It is myself for the Other (Levinas, 1994:124).

Rational judgement does not help us to access and feel the Other; rather we see the Other through our bodily sensitivity in proximity to the Other, in which we act ethically in response to the call or need of the Other (Blok, 2017). The proximity of the face-to-face brings the moral urgency to the surface. Our humanity is grounded in our subjectivity and our subjectivity in turn is grounded in our face-to-face with the Other (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007). Drawing heavily on Levinas,
Bauman contends the moral impulse as a way to see the Other only for the Other’s sake which is pre-rational. Bauman (1993:60) believes as a moral person, I am always with the Other. Since the moral impulse is responsibility toward the Other, this responsibility is proximity. Proximity as a unique quality of the ethical situation for Bauman (1993:87) is not a very short distance, it is not even the overcoming or neglecting or denying and rejecting distance, it is merely a suppression of distance. Proximity is not a distance bridge or a preamble to identification and emerging, instead it is only the act of swallowing and absorption (ibid:88). Bauman aims to bring proximity to the fore that means morality becomes a contextual matter (Kaulingfreks, 2005). Distance makes the Other a stranger by which we do not feel any responsibility toward them.

The source of responsibility is in proximity to the Other (Mansell, 2008). Proximity is not just a matter of closeness and spatial vicinity. It is a comprehensive ratification of an obsession for the Other and human wholeness (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007). By seeing the Other’s face, we cannot look at him/her as an object, but only as a Person (Mineva, 2007) who calls for my responsibility, attention, and care. Creating any distancing are potentially anonymizing, degrading, and as a result deprived of humanity (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007).

As the last part of this section, I should open up the discussion by noting that, although some scholars (Soares, 2008; Calarco, 2004) believe that for Levinas the face is only the human face, other scholars use the concept of the face in Levinasian ethics for non-humans as well. Fagan (2009:8) argued that although the *face* immediately suggests a human face in terms of features (a nose, eyes, and a mouth) as an image or something recognizable, Levinas’s use of this term is somewhat different. Fagan then discuss that Levinas does not consider the face as an image or an object of perception (ibid). According to Levinas (1985:85), to look at the Other’s face means acquiring knowledge and perception, and so this negates the possibility of entering into a non-totalizing relation with the Other because it brings the Other into our sphere of ownership and thus such a relation would be tantamount to entering into a relation with oneself. The *face* is not an empirical face (Jones et al., 2005) or corporeal face (Mansell, 2008). It is something that lies behind the physical objectivity of the face (Jones et al., 2005) “*and has been described as ‘the expression of the person that overflows any concept I possess’*” (Mansell, 2008:567).

According to Davy (2007), the Other’s face that is emphasized in the philosophy of Levinas is not limited to humans, hence nonhuman Others can also be considered as person and encourage ethics in oneself. Thus, an animal can take
on a face and facing animals also means facing responsibility (Coeckelbergh &
Gunkel, 2014). They believe that although Levinas provides us with a limited
interpretation of his thinking, his idea can and does support ethical encounters with
all kinds of Others (ibid). In other words, Coeckelbergh and Gunkel (2014)
discussed the idea that there is nothing in the Levinasian ethical relationship that
excludes animals (of all kinds and varieties) a priori. With this regards, the face of
the animal becomes not a mirror of ourselves but another calling upon us to respond
otherwise (ibid:730). Facing animals is about facing ourselves and Others (ibid: 732).
For Badiou (2009) the animals are the Others, so they needed to be treated
with justice. The nonhuman Other has the potential to oblige oneself in ethics and
responsibility (Davy, 2007).

In addition to the animal, some scholars (Hardy, 2002; Llewelyn, 1991 and
2012) have discussed the extension of Levinasian ethics to the environment. In an
interview with Levinas (Wright et al., 1988:172, cited in Llewelyn, 2012:180)
about the extension of his ethics to non-humans, Levinas replied that “It is clear
that, without considering animals, as human being, the ethical extends to all living
beings ... But the prototype of this is human ethics”. Continuing this line of thought
Llewelyn (1991, cited in Hardy, 2002) developed and defended the possibility of
the extension of the Other to cover the whole environment, embracing all living
organisms and the non-living components of the environment. Llewelyn developed
an eco-ethics that embraces the non-human Other (Hardy, 2002:463). These eco-
ethics are developed and justified by an identification of the needs of the Other in
the non-human realm (ibid:463). The inclusion the non-human under the Other was
discussed in more detail in article I of this study. This extension to non-human gives
me the possibility to consider the face as a metaphor that can be used to highlight
our feelings toward the Other. In fact, these are our emotions that come to the sphere
of our ethical decision making which I discuss in next section.

4.4 Awakening emotion with Other-oriented ethics:
Operationalizing Levinasian ethics

One could ask if it is possible to apply Levinasian ethics when Levinas does not
offer a set of rules and principles. As I have already discussed in this study, Levinas
(1985:90) argued that “my task does not consist in constructing ethics; I only try to
find its meaning.” Ciaramelli (1991, cited in Perpich, 2009) argued that Levinas,
among other philosophers, does not introduce “ethics” as one branch of philosophy
and he does not wish to construct a normative moral philosophy; rather, his work
is a search for the significance of ethics and the ethical. This means that Levinas calls us to rethink the meaning of ethics and the ethical dimension of the relationship between the Self and the Other. This invitation is given out of a respect for the alterity, the difference, of the Other (Perpich, 2009). Levinasian thought is employed to analyze social, political, and economic injustice (ibid:21). In this sense, it is not possible to understand that it has nothing to do with normative ethical concerns (ibid). Andrade (2018:224) discussed how Levinasian normativity consists of an attitude that embraces our ethical responsibility to the Other as infinite, even though we cannot assume that people adopt such a responsibility. This kind of responsibility has a distinctly normative dimension: it is an elucidation of the sense in which we are bound by an ethical relation (Perpich, 2009:22). The important point is that this normative relation does not provide a set of universal and abstract rules that could guide us in regard to what is right or good to do or how we should live (ibid). In sum, if Levinas offers us an original and compelling account of normativity, it is nonetheless a normativity without norms (Perpich, 2009:22).

The normativity of Levinasian ethics places as a meta-ethics (Andrade, 2018; Nortvedt & Nordhaug, 2008), which try to seek the basic source of moral demands (Nortvedt & Nordhaug, 2008) when Levinas invites us to discuss the meaning of ethics. In exploring of the meaning of ethics, our emotions come into play because emotions inform how we see things in the world that affects us; in particular, emotions make us tune into and assess the special situations of Others (Nortvedt, 1998:388). Hence, emotion is not something static; rather, it is an open-ended and dynamic mode of connecting to the world, more importantly, to the moral world (Vetlesen, 1993). Emotions provide us with an inner understanding and give us the ability to read the souls of others, putting us in contact with their human experiences (Nortvedt, 1998). In this sense, emotions are complex beliefs about a situation (ibid) that cannot be captured by reason alone.

Ten Bos and Willmott (2001) raise the question whether business ethics is possible which decenters reason as it allows more space for emotion. In order to address this question, they discuss how rationalistic assumptions guide business ethics. In general, they argue that emotion is marginalized and demonized because the categories of business ethics identify reason as the main principle for ethics. They claim is that in business ethics emotion is routinely subordinated to reason. Teleology is obsessed with calculation; deontology focuses on universal moral law and rules that can and should be rationally comprehended; and a system ethics is concerned with the monitoring and manipulation of the broader environment in
which working people find themselves (ibid:772). According to Falдетта (2017) ethical systems lack any reference to love, empathy, compassion, or any other human emotions associated with ethics.

The ethics that is discussed by recent philosophers such as Bauman and Levinas, rediscover the role of emotion in morality. Bauman derives the term proximity and face from Levinas. For Bauman (1993) proximity is the area of intimacy and morality. The face of Others calls to me and triggers in me a moral impulse. Regulations that are guided by reason are incompatible with this moral impulse (van der Ven, 2011). Human beings make their choice between good and evil only in relation to the Other (Best, 2003). In such a relation the moral impulse is fostering. The moral impulse is a driver for acting and creating society (Kaulingfreks, 2005). The moral impulse was suppressed by the Enlightenment (ibid) because the Enlightenment is as totalitarian as any system in which the process is always decided from the start (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1994:24). Fineman (1999:17) expresses, “If we cannot feel, or anticipate feeling, love or guilt or shame, moral functioning is crushed.” In a similar vein, Levinas (2003: 67) argues “No one can stay in himself; the humanity of man, subjectivity, is a responsibility for Others”. According to Ignatieff (1985, cited in Yuthas & Dillard, 1999) developing a close understanding of Others is the most possible way to develop compassion toward Others.

According to Best (2003) the difference between being-with and being-for the other is concern with the level of an individual’s commitments. It is about the emotional engagement with the Other. This emotional perspective involves regarding the Other not as a type or category rather as a unique creature which means:

- rejecting indifference towards the Other;
- rejecting stereotyped certainty about the Other;
- viewing the Other in a fashion that is free from sentiment (ibid:228).

By taking the affirmative postmodern perspective and according to Yuthas and Dillard (1999) understanding the benefits and concerns of others, having face-to-face interaction with others, and experiencing others as part of our/corporations identity allows us/corporations to empathize with those others. The main reason for this empathy according to Levinas (1969:92) is that “the world is offered in the language of the Other”. According to Mansell (2008) sensibility and sensation in proximity to the Other is the ethics that is argued by Levinas. Responsibility to the
Other limits certain forms of violence in concrete circumstances (Popke, 2004) and awaken emotion toward the Other.

Cultivating the capacity for empathy is also a way to apply the ethics of Levinas. Earlier in this section, I discussed about the moral impulse. The moral impulse for Bauman is valuable, but rational business ethics does not know what to do with the emotional nature of the impulse. For him obedience to rules excludes empathy (1993:144). Empathy is the capacity to enter into and understand the condition of our fellow human beings, their uniqueness and emotional world, and then acting with love for one’s neighbor as the situation demands (Nortvedt, 1998:385). In regard to this, such empathy is a spontaneous response to the Other’s soul. For Andrade (2018), empathy operates through imagination. In this study, I already discussed about the importance of imagination in postmodern business ethics (Wenger, 1998; Boje, 1991; Robert, 2002; Rorty, 2006; Hargrave, 2009; Woermann, 2010; Woermann & Cilliers, 2012). Moral imagination occurs when people imagine themselves in the suffering situation. Here, understanding empathy as an act of imagination allows one to develop one’s understanding of the Other’s suffering through questioning the assumption that one can recognize suffering as being like one’s own (Andrade, 2018:106). My concern is that empathy has a positive impact on exercising imagination and it can foster critical and creative ways of thinking about the Other. In sum, awakening emotions through understanding the feelings of the Other and practicing empathy by imagining ourselves in the Other’s situation and developing our imagination in this process are possible ways of operationalizing Levinasian ethics. In this regard, the last section of this chapter will deal with operationalizing the ethics of Levinas in corporations.

4.5 The Others enrich corporations' understanding for ethical decision-making

The application of Levinasian ethics in business is a debate between scholars. Bevan and Corvellec (2007) raise the question whether corporations can be an ethical subject in a Levinasian sense. They argue that a corporation cannot leave the logic of self-interest and open itself to the Other and experience the infinite otherness of the Other (ibid). They also claim that the nature of corporate code of ethics neglects the singularity of the Other hence, applying the Levinasian ethics in corporations is a contradicting situation.
Earlier in this study (in Section 2.2) I discussed the concept of the self from a Levinasian perspective. According to van de Ven (2005), Levinas ties the concept of the self to enjoyment, happiness, and love of life. Van de Ven (2005:8) believes that in the spheres of enjoyment, happiness, and the love of life, and in the unique responsibility towards the Other, self-interest does not amount to egoism. Furthermore, self-interest is not separate from the interests of Others or those of the (sustainable functioning) natural environment. This non-egoistic conception of one’s responsibility for oneself as enlightened self-interest can be used to understand the legitimate role of self-interest within businesses (ibid). The notion of enlightened self-interest means that one recognizes one’s responsibility for the Other and the dependence of one’s happiness on the Other (van de Ven, 2005:11). Through this clarification, van de Ven (2005:11) then argued that the shared interests of the stakeholders can be perceived as shared egoism as it is determined by a calculative rationality which optimizes self-interest. He then concluded that the notion of the self-interest of a corporation diverges from the concept of self-interest that is based on the work of Levinas (ibid:11). By distancing the shared egoism of self-interest from the pure egoism of self-interest we can apply the idea of Levinas in a corporation because the interests of all stakeholders and the corporation will be considered. When adopting the Other-oriented ethical approach in business decision-making, individuality is not only an expression of individual self-interest, it also seeks to express humanity in relation to the Other (Barclay & Smith, 2005).

Post-industrial corporations live in uncertain conditions. In this condition ethical flexibility creates a space for the play of ideologies in process (Lerman, 2000) and examining different theories with the hope to get closer to the answer. One implication for uncertainty would be that any framework of principles and procedures should incorporate an element of flexibility (Mansell, 2008). An Other-oriented ethical approach helps managers to promote their ability to provide a response; they pass the limitations of ethical theories. It gives them an opportunity for face-to-face communication, and they have the possibility to redefine corporate goals and responsibility towards the Other. By using this approach, the decision makers free themselves from the bounded rationality and inflexible rules that can lead to unethical behavior. The more flexible a set of principles and rules is, the more the opportunity for aligning these rules with a responsibility for the Other will exist (Mansell, 2008). This flexibility helps in the organizational change that is demanded by living in uncertainty. The importance of Otherness in organizational change has been discussed by Durand and Calori (2006). They argued that
Otherness corresponds to what is derived from encounters with Others and leads to changes in an entity. Durand and Calori (2006) discussed the limitations of organizational change and they described how sameness integrates the Other under the same banner. In this sense, in the relation between the self and the Other, sameness places itself against Otherness (ibid). They also assert that there is no normative principle for considering the Other in organizational change and they introduce an Other-oriented stance as a missing block in the base of organizational change theories.

By showing respect for differences, corporations can exercise responsibility toward Others (Woermann & Cilliers, 2012). This responsibility can be exercised by recognizing other ways of action (Woermann & Cilliers, 2012) which are different from bounded rules and algorithms.

In fact, the way that corporations are able to respond to the different calls of the Other such as customers, shareholders, societies, employees, and etc. is linked with the identity of those corporations (Soares, 2008). The Others are not considered to be from the outside of corporations, rather they become a part of the identity elaboration of a corporation (Durand & Calori, 2006). By responsibility toward the Other corporations are able to discover their true aim and meaning (ibid). According to Painter-Morland (2006) it is only through the everyday and continuous business interaction with the Others that a corporation finds the true nature and extent of its moral obligations.

According to Jones et al. (2005) those companies that have the loudest voice in responsibility, are often the least concerned for Others. This is because responsibility is not embedded in their corporations; it remains only in managers’ mouth. In my view, the responsibilities that are fixed in a set of rules and principles cannot respond to the ongoing change in ethical issues in the current business world because they remain static. In order to escape from this static situation, ethical principles must always be questioned, criticized, and re-assessed in favor of responding to the Other. This brings dialogue to the sphere of corporations. Mansell (2008) discussed dialogue and mediation as ways in which proximity to the Other can be kept alive in the business context. For Weneger (1998), knowing the Other can be articulated by a framework of negotiation, dialogue, and open communication.

Other-oriented business ethics is a way of thinking critically about how and why corporations should experience openness to the Other in their daily activities. By Other-oriented ethics, corporations can be more critical of the current order of things. Considering the Other in ethical decision making is a simple instruction...
beyond the narrow version of ethics by ethical codes and rules. This critical thinking allows business practitioners that think the world is not in the best position in which everything is in its right place. In all parts of the world there are some Others that call business practitioners to take responsibility. Taking this responsibility makes the world a better place. My concern is that considering the Other in our ethical decision-making can enrich stakeholder theory as a general theory in business ethics. To do this, in article I, I developed a dynamic stakeholder theory by highlighting two missing Others as stakeholders, namely a green earth and future generations. The green earth is important as a common heritage that we should leave for posterity and by this means we help to bring future generations into existence. The doctrine of Jonas (1984) also emphasized that ethics are grounded in person’s duty toward himself or herself, his or her posterity, and the environment. In my view, the ethics of Levinas can create a moral free space in which we can extend his idea in business operations from different dimensions. For instance, according to Phillips et al. (2003) this moral free space enables corporations to take actions that are not obligatory from a stakeholder perspective. According to van de Ven (2005), the clear purpose of Levinasian ethics in stakeholder theory is to prevent the exclusion of the Other, who is not able to further his or her self-interest.

Jones et al. (2005) argues that Levinas’s idea might guide us in our efforts to imagine a different world. Business practitioners play a significant role in this imagination. They can be our hero who saves the world by their courage, or they can play the role of an evil villain who destroys the world by unethical and irresponsible operation all around the world. At the beginning of this section and by following the work of van de Ven (2005), I opened up the discussion of self-interest as a form of enlightened self-interest that is the foundation for one’s responsibility to oneself. For van de Ven (2005) this responsibility for oneself communicates with managerial responsibility allowing one to understand and justify the dependence of a corporation on its environment. Furthermore, van de Ven (2005) argued that corporations unintentionally generate justice in their daily activities. The reason is that simply through the typical workings of a system, the uniqueness of the Other will be pushed into the background. Levinasian ethics can inspire us in this situation because, by everyone having an ethical responsibility towards the Other, this tendency toward injustice will be counteracted (ibid). Justice is a concept that is driven by from Levinas’s notion of the Third.

Levinas opened up a discussion of the Third in his philosophy of ethics. This discussion started a debate among scholars regarding the interruption of the ethical
relation between self and the Other because of the Third. According to Hardy (2002: 464), the unwavering “copresence” of the third party interrupts the transcendence of the face to face, causing a movement from ethics to justice and politics. Levinas uses the Third to move from the anarchical realm of ethics to the totalizing realm of language, justice, and politics (Simmons, 1993:96). Roger Burggraeve (2003: 136, cited in Bevan & Corvellec, 2007) claims that the Third opens up a tension, or even a contradiction, in the pure and lofty responsibility of being “one-of-the-Other.” Woermann (2016:133) argued that this idea of Levinasian ethics has become problematized because infinite responsibility for the Other is always destroyed by the face of the Third (that is to say, by another Other that makes equal, yet unique, demands on the self). According to Andrade (2018:176–177) the third party, as contemporaneous and coterminous with the Other in the face-to-face encounter, mitigates the asymmetry of infinite responsibility and restores a measure of autonomy to the moral agent. This is because the presence of the Third requires the ego to calculate justice and compare the Third, the Other, and include itself as another Other to the Other. Justice, or politics, is required to give an effect to ethics and, as such, “politics provides the continual horizon of Levinasian ethics” (Critchley, 1999:223, cited in Andrade, 2018:177). Fagan (2009:20) discussed that for Levinas the ethical and political are interconnected through the figure of the Third. Fagan (2009:20) believes that Levinas foregrounded the difficulty in responsibility and politics, and that there is no pure responsibility without the element of violence and negotiation that the Third brings.

In the discussion of the Third, I follow the idea of van de Ven (2005:10) who argued that the responsibility of the-one-for-the-Other should hamper the system/business from becoming too oppressive, and this can be substantiated by referring to Levinas’s discussion of the Third. Van de Ven (2005) referred to an interview of Levinas that was done with Richard Kearney. In this interview, Kearney asked Levinas “Is not the ethical obligation to the Other a purely negative ideal, impossible to realise in our everyday being in the world? After all, we live in a concrete historical world governed by ontological drives and practices, be they political and institutional totalities or technological systems of mastery, organization, and control. Is ethics practical in human society as we know it? Or is it merely an invitation to apolitical acquiescence?” Levinas answered this question as follows: “Of course we inhabit an ontological world of technological mastery and political self-preservation. Indeed, without these political and technological structures of organization we would not be able to feed mankind. This is the great paradox of human existence; we must use the ontological for the sake of the Other
[italics in original]. To ensure the survival of the other we must resort to the technico-political systems of means and ends” (Cohen, 1986:28, cited in van de Ven, 2005:12–13). In such a political context van de Ven (2005) argued that Levinas opened up the discussion of the third party. As already discussed, the appearance of the Third introduces new dimensions, namely justice, politics, comparison, and universality (Simmons, 1993; Fagan, 2009). Levinas stated that “It is the third man with which justice begins” (1991:150). Levinas also stated that “In the measure that the face of the Other relates us with the third party, the metaphysical relation of the I with the Other moves into the form of the We, aspires to a State, institutions, laws which are the source of universality. But politics left to itself bears a tyranny within itself; it deforms the I and the Other who have given rise to it, for it judges them according to universal rules, and thus as in absentia” (1969:300, cited in van de Ven, 2005: 3). In this context, the responsibility of the-one-for-the-Other applies as a corrective to the institutions and laws of political society (Bernasconi, 2005: 48, cited in van de Ven, 2005:13). Van de Ven (2005) extended it to serve as a corrective to the institutions of the economy as well: “Justice, society, the State and its institutions, exchanges and work are comprehensible out of proximity. This means that nothing is outside of the control of the responsibility of the-one-for-the-other” (Levinas, 1991:159). Van de Ven (2005) then discussed how social instructions are included in this discussion and that it is expected that they behave in accordance with the morality of a certain society and, from a Levinasian perspective, that corporations do not operate in a value-free zone that is only limited by the law. Since the political is anything but absent in a firm, the ethical and political are involved in all institutions (ibid). The third party makes it necessary to compare the rights and duties of all people—that is, to compare what is in principle incompatible—for every Other is unique (Levinas, 1998:104). But referring to Levinas, a comparison should not lead to the degeneration of the responsibility for the Other (van de Ven, 2005:13). My concern is that justice becomes intensified by the Third in which that self understands that there is always some other Other, the Third, that needs justice and responsibility as well. But as discussed by van de Ven (2005), this comparison should not result in a degeneration of the responsibility for the Other. The important thing here is asymmetrical responsibility. According to Becker (2013), the responsibility for the Other is not based on transactional symmetry or reciprocity. Rather, it is asymmetrical responsibility: “at the outset I hardly care what the Other is with respect to me, that is his business; for me, he is above all the one I am responsible for” (Levinas, 1998:105).
Human beings and corporations cannot exist completely independently and isolated from the Other (Mineva, 2007). According to Levinas, we find ourselves in the world with the Others and we are already for the Other (Garza & Landrum, 2010). Lim (2007) discusses that human identity needs the approach of the Other in order to be complete. Human identity always includes that ethical behavior, which implies that when we meet the Other, we ought to move toward her/him, to reach out him and to understand him (Mineva, 2007:38). Hence, the Other is not separate from us or corporations; they are a part of our identity. In a dynamic sphere and in relation with a corporation, the Others have positive and negative feedback on a corporation’s existence and their identity is finally linked with the way those corporations are able to respond to all their stakeholders’ calls as the Others (ibid).

In such a dynamic sphere, Becker (2013) affirmed that the implications of Levinasian ethics for corporations is that business leaders are challenged to move from a way of doing business that insulates the corporations and its essential members from stakeholders towards engagement with the Other, with the aim of increasing their well-being through building positive social effects derived from the operation of corporation and engagement with corporate stakeholders. Other-oriented ethics according to Blok (2017:4) can be considered in the business environment by four characteristics:

1. Business ethics concerns corporate actors’ self-regulation to act ethically in response to the call of the other.
2. Self-regulation is constituted by firms’ responsiveness to the call of the other and by their self-interest or egoism (self-referentiality).
3. Because of the structural possibility that firms serve their own interests, instead of being responsive to the call of the other, the possibility of the imperfection of firms’ responsiveness should be acknowledged in business ethics.
4. Because of the structural possibility of the imperfection of firms’ responsiveness to the call of the other, the call should be taken as a call to substitute for the other, despite firm’s tendency to serve their own interests.

According to Jones et al. (2005:123), fully responsible means that you cannot know in advance how to respond nor which Other to respond to. If this kind of responsibility appears inside of human being, we can conclude that responsibility is not something that can be conditioned or controlled (ibid). In this sense, all the conditions in our business world call for responsibility and demand one to respond to the Other without knowing how to do so (ibid). Having such a feeling could lead to a way to respond to the Other and this implies that ethics and responsibility are
an intrinsic part of corporate life, from the formation stage until growth and becoming internationalized. The way to ethical understanding cannot be paved by economic, legal, social, and cultural circuits alone; in addition, we need intellectual and ethical circuits (Morin, 1999) in order to develop understanding of the Other.

All in all, one could say there are some limitations to responsibility toward the Other. This statement is true and there always are some barriers in doing any action in our life. Full responsibility toward the Other is a horizon that may not achieved but considering the Other and creating relation between the self and the Other constitutes the essence of intentional consciousness and awareness. Through this consciousness the Other enters every ethical decision made by both individuals and corporations. Although Levinasian ethics do not equip us with a category of rules, instead—as van de Ven (2005) concluded—the idea of asymmetrical responsibility and love of life and how these connect to the Other and the third party, can make us sensitive to the meaning of the ethical in a human context. Again, I would like to remind the reader of the quote of Levinas given at the beginning of Section 4.4, “my task does not consist in constructing ethics; I only try to find its meaning.” Applying the Levinasian approach would avoid the injuries to the Other committed by corporations and managers (Becker, 2013) by reminding us of what we already know about the meaning of ethics and responsibility and what is simply lost in the translation from theory to practice (van de Ven, 2005).
5 Summaries of the papers

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having new eyes.”

– Marcel Proust, novelist

My thesis includes three interrelated articles which explores the application of postmodern business ethics in the current business environment. In all three articles I am the first author. As I already discussed I have three research questions for this study that have been addressed in these articles. In this chapter I provide a summary of these articles.

5.1 Article I: A dynamic stakeholder model: Other-oriented ethical approach

This article as a theoretical article in my thesis focuses on the organizational level. The co-author of this article is Naser Firoozi. The idea for this paper came to our mind in September 2015 when the Volkswagen’s scandal erupted. The initial idea was that living in the global economy requires more comprehensive attention to the consequences of our behavior and actions. By inspiring Levinasian ethics and the notion of the Other in ethical decisions, we were motivated to write this article.

This article opens up a discussion that due to ongoing ethical dilemmas and the significant role of responsibility in business operation, the circle of the Other is continually evolving and extending. In previous studies, the Other is mostly consider a human being. But in this article, we extend the notion of the Other to the non-human as well. By this extension we advance a dynamic stakeholder model in which the role of the Other is highlighted more than in the conventional model. Since the negative results of some business operations such as the depletion of the environment and deforestation will stretch to the future generations, we propose a dynamic stakeholder model that considers a green earth and future generations in ethical decision making more than ever. In this model, a green earth and future generations (in all the forms of flora and fauna) is considered as the Others that invite us to be responsible more than before.

We argue that corporations are responsible for a green earth and future generations as defenseless Others (Fagan, 2009). Following some scholars (Mintzberg, 1984; Savage et al., 1992; Holzer, 2008, Fassin, 2009) we call a green earth and future generations as stakeabsentees. They are presently absent in an open
system. They are not present at the moment but, they will come to the exist very soon. The important issue is that their existence depends on our actions and behavior. In order to justify this claim, we enrich this article with some illustrative cases that show how a green Earth and future generations have been ignored in corporations’ operations.

The main contribution of this article is (1) highlighting the urgency of stakeholders, and (2) creating a balance in stakeholders’ claims. As a practical implication, this article has the potential to advance the audit system of CSR reports and any other relevant reports. More practically, in GRI (Global Reporting Initiative) there are some important aspects in both general and specific standard disclosures for corporations that want to make their operation sustainable. It would be beneficial if a green earth and future generations were added as two aspects in these standard disclosures in the hope that corporations can be monitored whether they respond to their stakeholder concerns or not.

5.2 Article II: In Search of Bauman’s Moral Impulse in Shadow Factories of China

This article is a joint work with Naser Firoozi and Vesa Puhakka. This is an empirical study that explores the footprints of moral impulse in the Shadow Factories of China. Visiting the working situation of some famous brands in China stimulated us to write this article. Shadow factories are the main production site for some of the famous brands in China. They are unregistered factories, so there are no official records of their existence. In the age of media and whistleblowers labor in shadow factories in China pay the expenses of the cheap price of Chinese products.

In this paper, we analyze the ethics and responsibility of shadow factories in China and we apply Bauman’s moral impulse in this analysis because for Bauman morality does not come from a rational process of cognitive sense making, but rather it arises more from the workings of the heart than the head (Kolb, 2007). By relying on Emmanuel Levinas, Bauman situated the source of ethical behavior in moral impulse.

The moral impulse is a feeling of a selfless, infinite and unconditional responsibility towards, and care for, Others. Fostering the moral impulse in managers leads to sharing empathy and sympathy, which creates flexibility in ethical decision-making and helps managers to see the Other. Fostering the moral impulse occurs through three complementary arrangements. First, proximity
between the “doing” and “suffering” in an organization even if the managers are in a remote space. By proximity, managers will understand they are never fully removed from the effects of their actions and decisions. Second, face-to-face interactions can create an obstacle for the de-humanization of the employees in an organization. Third, distancing and de-humanization leads the managerial mindset into dissembling where labor reduces to a collection of traits while a human being is an end in itself.

In this paper, we rely on secondary data because investigating business ethics involves asking some questions that can be embarrassing, threatening, stigmatizing or incriminating (Cowton, 1998). In addition, managers are not very interested in being observed and measured for ethical issues or talking about cheating behaviors in their organization (Harris, 2001). This situation is more critical in shadow factories because as we discussed they are not registered factories, and hence, they are not open for visitors with the aim of gathering primary data.

Our findings show how managers create distance between themselves and the employees when there is not enough attention being given to work safety and occupational health in their workplaces. By ignoring the labor force’s dignity, the managers and decision-makers depersonalize and dehumanize their labor force. Since the moral impulse is cultivated by three complementary arrangements, ignoring the first two arrangement leads to lack of enough attention to the third arrangement. Distancing and dehumanization lead to dissembling where labor is reduced to a collection of traits.

This paper contributes the role of Others in ethical decision-making. The principal contribution of this paper is its demonstration of how, by fostering the moral impulse, business practitioners can gain a moral identity, which is needed for struggles regarding moral uncertainty, and is also necessary for human development. Full responsibility in the workplace is a goal on the horizon that may never fully be achieved but seeing Others can lead us in the right direction. Therefore, the shadow factories in China are just the tip of the iceberg. The deeper disaster is beyond our discussion in this short paper.

**5.3 Article III: Moral laxity—the cognitive gap between true and pseudo corporate social responsibility**

As a conceptual article, this is a common work between me, Naser Firoozi and Jan Hermes. In this paper we discuss that today’s news media continually reveals one company or another somewhere in the world that is engaged in unethical acts or
irresponsible behavior in their business operations. If one were to read the reported corporation’s website, it would most likely be flourished with comprehensive and convincing data and reports, and the company would boast about their corporate codes of ethics and CSR activities. It stimulated us to think about the gap between corporations’ words and deeds.

Prior researchers show that those companies that have the loudest voice in responsibility, are often the least concerned for Others (La Cour & Kormann, 2011; Sikka, 2010). In other words, when deeds speak, words are nothing (Páez & Salgado, 2016). Borrowing from political science, we name this contradiction between words and deeds as pseudo-CSR, where organizations put on a cloak of social responsibility (Xu & Liu, 2016). We are motivated by the gap between words and deeds and how corporations can bridge it. We call this gap moral laxity because carelessness of moral issues and responsibility are main causes for irresponsible behavior (DuBrin, 2008).

For bridging this gap, we apply postmodern ethics as well as Kohlberg’s moral development theory because it enriches business ethics by creating a new type of morality within which the awareness of compartmentalization and contingency of human life aligns with moral sensitivity, toleration and readiness to engage in a dialogue (Żardecka-Nowak, 2009). We propose three cognitive interrelated processes, ethical discourse, ethical sensemaking and subjectification, that have the potential to bridge the moral laxity gap.

Ethical discourse develops a procedural moral theory, where communication and interaction are used to reach ethical judgment (Meisenbach, 2006) in a power-free sphere. The variety of ethical discourses lead to ethical sensemaking that interacts with individual identity, gives meaning to unexpected ethical events, creates more insightful views of a situation (Wieck, 1995), and promotes a better understanding of the dynamics of managing and organizing in different situations (Boudes & Laroche, 2009; Maitlis & Soneshein, 2010). Ethical sensemaking is a continuous process characterized by discourse, dialogue, communication and interaction between people, and it helps people constitute and subjectify themselves as an ethical identity in the ontology of becoming. These processes help managers to become conscious both about themselves as well as Others.

The main contribution of this paper is threefold. First, it conceptualized a cognitive gap between pseudo and true CSR, and thus moral laxity as a means for conceptualizing this gap is introduced to scientific discussion. Second, in this paper the role of the individual in bridging of the pseudo-true-CSR gap is highlighted, although it is generally accepted that CSR is on the corporate level. And third, by
taking a postmodern approach to business ethics, in this study we show the implications of postmodern business ethics in corporations not in the form of formulated instructions and codes but rather through a dynamic process and procedural cognitive processes.
6 Conclusion

I have undertaken in this study to explore the shortcomings of present ethical theories in business ethics in favor of providing a new path for ethical decision-making. In this exploration, I imagine the business environment as a curvy road among mountains and corporations as the cars moving in this road. Because of the twist and turns of this road, the drivers that are the decision-makers in corporations should understand that driving on a curvy road is dangerous and needs special skills. For example, how do drivers steer their car around the curves of this road? They need a flexible and agile hand for driving in this road. Coming back to the business environment, if we assume corporations should drive on this curvy road of business on which they do not know the road very well, if uncertainties are assumed as curves in a road, then how can decision-makers steer the company in response to changing conditions? Like the steering wheel of car, they need to run their business with more flexibility which makes the process of decision-making smoother. For me, applying only ethical standard approaches in the realm of business ethics is not a flexible and agile steering wheel. If they want to stay in their lane, be sustainable, and drive safe, they should choose a flexible and smooth steering wheel for driving. In addition, and according to Block (2017), corporations need both profitability and social license in order to secure their operation. In this sense, the Other-oriented approach to business ethics can be considered as one of the requirements for both driving safe and securing operations. To close this study, in this section, first, I provide the theoretical conclusion of my discussion and then I will draw my conceptual contribution. Limitations and future research avenues will end this section.

6.1 Theoretical conclusion

The technological progress and mass consumption society is going to lose the idea of what a human being is. This is a real danger that is lies in ambush of societies. According to Satory (cited in Mineva, 2007) human thought is becoming increasingly utilitarian and consumer-based from generation to generation, and it is very possible that humankind will eventually be nothing more than an economic animal. In order to prevent the situation of growing utilitarianism, according to Jones et al. (2005) we should ask whether the world should be as it is. This is an ethical question. This question implicitly tells us that if you are not satisfied of the status quo just try to find a solution. For this reason, the first step is to criticize the
current situation of ethical behavior in the business environment. This critique allows us instead of having solid instructions for ethical decision-making, ethical principles that can be considered as a learning process. This process lies in a movement toward the inclusivity of different perspectives and in the procedural fairness and unbiased listening to and endeavoring to understand alternative perspectives and standpoints while respecting one another (Green, 1993). By this means, managers are encouraged to introduce new metaphors, narratives, or images and new options for action in organizations.

In an era where uncertainty, business dynamics and complexity surrounded the entire globe, for some definitive rules and principles are applicable and enough in business ethics. For others, including me, driving a business only by relying on rules and principle is not enough for today business environment. In the process of criticizing the current situation, I believe postmodernism can be our lens to look at business ethics critically reflecting upon questions that arise from current business operations. This approach gives a more reliable weapon for confronting turbulence and uncertainty because it abandons a concrete foundation. The ethically wise manager in today business environment is not one who has a wide stock of rules and principles at his/her disposal, instead he/she is a person with the capacity to attend to the particulars and make a judgement of similarity and dissimilarity from which a patterned behavior will emerge (Luntley, 2003).

In this study, I chose the postmodern approach in the realm of morals and ethics because first, it is far beyond of absolute standards, rules, principles, norms and laws, and deals with relativism, reevaluation of all values and deconstruction (Ozumba, 2017) and second, business ethics should teach something other than basic business judgment, and even something other than moral theory since knowing what is moral has little or nothing to do with wanting to do a moral act (Ehrlich, 2005). According to Ploum et al. (2018), developing moral competencies among individuals is very important for business ethics, responsibility and sustainability.

In this thesis, I do not claim that I have found a solution for the ethical dilemmas in business, I believe some views are partially correct, some nearly correct, but none are complete. In organizational life, there is no one right or wrong answer (Green, 1993) only there are always more views (Duska, 2014). The bright side of this claim is that most of our questions for today business environment do not need the best answer; they only need a workable answer (Gustafson, 2000). The postmodern perspective to business ethics allows us to consider all those views and answers for an ethical issue in order to find a workable solution in a given time and
situation. In this regard, different ideas and people will not be marginalized any more.

This approach alerts us to the realities and consequences of marginalizing the voices of “Others”. It invites us to move far beyond of any rules and principles that may exclude some groups of people (in our decision-making). Among different approaches to ethics within the postmodernism mainstream, the Other-oriented ethical approach as a dynamic perspective to organization ethics awakens the emotions of business practitioners which turns their face toward the Other, looks at them and sympathizes with them before any decision.

Emotion plays a significant role in ethical decisions that are subordinated to reason (ten Bos & Willmott, 2001). By the Other-oriented ethical approach, we can claim that emotion has its own role in ethical decision making because seeing the Other leads to sympathy and empathy. In this study I demonstrate that morality is primarily compassion for the Other, not as a separate of our identity, but as a part of it. To be compassionate means mostly to be emotionally engaged and involved with the otherness of the Other. We do not exist completely isolated from the Other, we communicate with them, and this communication, dialogue, and relation with the Other is what constructs our identity. In this sense, responsibility for the Other is not a favor and we do not expect to receive any benefit from their side, rather it is a part of our identity and it happens as soon as we understand the Other. This is the main reason why we cannot prescribe morality and responsibility by rules and principles. Rorty (1999:89) describes a moral development in which “re-making human selves to enlarge the variety of relationships which constitute those selves”. Responsibility and ethical behavior cannot be captured by a mandatory framework. We ought to move toward the Other and this path is endless. According to Mineva (2007) this endless journey does not mean that making moral progress is possible, rather it ensures us that this is the only possible outcome whose infinity is guaranteed.

Humanity resides in the encounter with the otherness of the Other which is needed when we see a new wave of modern slavery or an archetype of barbarity (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007) like the situation of shadow factories that is discussed in article II. This is the time that business practitioners are becoming aware of the Other, consider the Other’s identity as their own identity, leave their ivory tower and expose people by their alterity. I discuss that Levinas and Bauman believe that care for the Other in his/her otherness is the essence of responsibility. Other-oriented ethics is a simple way for taking responsibility from top down managers and all the front-line staff. This approach is critically distanced from standard
ethical theories that are applied by individuals in an organization because these theories are always narrow. This approach is an invitation to consider management in the face of a continuous moral demand for answers (Bevan & Corvellec, 2007).

Moving toward an Other-oriented ethics bring the importance of the Other to the surface in which the Other is omnipresent and it cannot be ignored by corporations. If a corporation places its center of gravitation outside its own narrow limited interests and profits (Soares, 2008) we can believe the sincerity of a business operation in which they see the Other in their decision making.

In this thesis, I argue why it would be more beneficial if business practitioners move beyond compliance obligations in business through considering a particular knowledge, language and concepts. Creating moral awareness through ethical discourse, ethical sensemaking and subjectification can result in moral solidarity because according to Thompson (2004) in such an environment people of different beliefs have the possibility for finding shared meaning. Seeing the Other and infinite responsibility leads to the institutionalization of responsibility. By moral responsibility we find meaning for our lives, we explore humanity and we free ourselves from the obedience of any rules which makes problems for the Other, in our surroundings or any other part of the world.

Finally, and as discussed during this study, Levinas aimed to find the meaning of ethics (Levinas, 1985). In his philosophical efforts, he does not provide us an ethical instruction and he does not guide us how to behave. Instead he gives important discussion which makes us more aware and sensitive for asymmetrical responsibility and human being’s sensibility to the good life and its relation to the Other and third party (van de Ven, 2005). The relationship with the Other is asymmetric (Faldetta, 2017). The asymmetrical responsibility does not in itself preclude the requirement for a response (Kirkpatrick, 2011). The asymmetrical responsibility calls us to listen to Others exactly in so far as their interests diverge from our own, so it motivates justice (ibid). This justice under the Levinasian approach can promote a climate for ethical decision-making in a corporation because its employees will tend to reconcile themselves each other instead of only seeking to fulfill their personal interests (Faldetta, 2017). My view is that in such an environment, the meaning of ethics will blossom.

6.2 Conceptual contribution

Other-oriented ethics is a topic that is relatively unexplored in the business ethics’ studies. Hence, applying this approach to business ethics is the core contribution of
this study. This core contribution will lead to advancing the theoretical understanding and managerial knowledge in the area of business ethics and responsibility. It provides a conceptual understanding of why we need to follow a new approach in business ethics. Other-oriented ethics proves to be a useful alternative tale for standard approaches to business ethics in which can overcome to the shortcomings of the conventional theories in business ethics.

The contributions of my three articles serve the core contribution of this study. In order to consider Others in ethical decision making first, fostering the moral impulse within managers by three complementary arrangements as overcoming denial of proximity, effacement of face and reduction to traits is highly demanded. Second, bridging the moral laxity gap between true and pseudo CSR will lead to highlight the role of the Other in our ethical decision making. I propose three interconnected processes, ethical discourse, ethical sensemaking and subjectification, as the means that bridge the moral laxity gap. Third, extending a dynamic stakeholder model by the inclusion of all the ignored Others on the corporation level, act as a leverage to move toward the Other in ethical decision-making. These three contributions move around the core contribution while they are not separated of each other (Figure 2).

Fig. 2. Contribution of this study
6.3 Limitations and future research pathways

At the end, I should write some sentences about the limitations of this study that should be considered for further research. First, while recent global business scandals have intensified the necessity of ethical issues in business, the investigation ethics in business is still challenging. Ethical problems are often complicated. Bearing in mind that ethical decisions often made by individuals, they depend on different variables such as context, religion, bureaucracy, value, norms, cultures, and more importantly individuals’ perception of ethics. In some profit hungry organizations (such as sweatshops) some questions like how to manage employees fairly or how to prevent harm to the environment are still a fantasy. In this situation, managers and owners are not very interested to be observed, questioned and measured for ethical issues (Harris, 2001). For such managers their organizations are more a rational economic entity with a priority of profitability. Hence, exploring ethics and responsibility in these corporations is very problematic.

Second, the postmodern approach in this study is a critical approach in scientific debates. Criticism is usually very controversial. With critique I challenge the normative tale of business ethics and I suggest an alternative tale for ethical decision-making. To do that, I apply philosophy in management studies which is not an easy task. By this means, this study is more conceptual and under the guidance of Other-oriented ethics I do not provide too many implications. For me as an early stage researcher, it is very difficult to convince those who take a safe seat inside the discourses of business ethics why we need to reopen the question of ethics and deconstruct the dominant norms in favor of reconstructing a new mode of thinking.

My study in business ethics raises some unexplored questions. In order to address these questions more empirical investigations are needed. Researchers need to know how Levinasian ethics can help corporation to move toward ethics and responsibility. Instead of exploring to recognize ‘who is (un)ethical’ (Clegg et al., 2007), the Other-oriented ethical approach would concentrate on the question of how corporations work in relation to ethics and responsibility (ibid). In light of this study and the inspiration of Levinasian ethics, researchers may investigate how corporations engage their employees in ethical discourse and how their moral perceptions are developed? As discussed in this study, moral behavior is more than ethical knowledge and cognitive choices; it demands individual sensitivity and commitment to moral issues and action (Kvale, 1996). Hence, future research
should embrace how Levinasian ethics can influence individual sensitivity in particular, in global economy.
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