

Discord is Caused by Those Who Posses

On CSR Discourse

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to describe the discursive development and to investigate the political consequences of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Since its origins in the United States in the 1950s, CSR has developed into a symbolic powerhouse, affecting corporations, governments and peoples. CSR as a concept provides a convincing common-sense argument: why should the affluent *not* contribute to the public good while still being able to make a profit? My argument is that rather than providing a solution to our predicaments (e.g. environmental crisis, massively unequal distribution of resources), CSR is a symptom telling us that something is 'not right'.

Using discourse theory, this thesis analyzes Business Administration literature in order to map out the development of CSR. The analysis constructs two main discourses: Autonomy CSR discourse which primarily serves as a strategy for business to maintain its autonomous position within the social structure, and Legitimacy CSR discourse which goal it is to construct legitimacy for the autonomy given to corporations in late capitalism.

The conclusion of the thesis is that Legitimacy CSR discourse (the discourse of present day) is ill equipped to significantly alter the system we inhabit, and thus provides few long-term solutions to our predicament.

Key words: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Discourse, Legitimacy, Political Theory, Power

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1 The Problem

Oscar Wilde (2014 [1909]) once wrote apropos private benevolence that: “It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property.”¹ Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), this highly fashionable practice and concept, is the latest and most relevant version of this kind of private benevolence. What proponents of CSR argue for is the integration of benevolence and caring into the business process itself. What is presented are claims of win-win situations, of corporations making profits while at the same time creating value in other areas of social and environmental life. The allure of CSR is this common-sense logic of: why not? Why not let the affluent corporations and individuals of the world take responsibilities for their actions, making their practices sounder and less harmful?

My first hypothesis is that what we are dealing with here is a symbolic powerhouse. Meaning that – independently of its effective, *real* mechanisms – the very story of CSR is strong enough to have mass appeal. A reference to Žižek’s (2012:12) reflection over the legend of the inquisition of Galileo Galilei should clarify things:

[I]n 1633, Galileo Galilei muttered, “*Eppur si muove*” (“And yet it moves”), after recanting before the inquisition his theory that the Earth moves around the Sun. [...] There is no contemporary evidence that he did in fact mutter the phrase, but today the phrase is used to indicate that, although someone who possesses true knowledge is forced to renounce it, this does not stop it from being true. But what makes this phrase so interesting is that it can also be used in the exact opposite sense, to assert a ‘deeper’ symbolic truth about something which is literally not true.

¹ I owe this find to Slavoj Žižek (2011)

The task for the self-proposed critic of CSR discourse is therefore both to describe how the narrative of the concept is constructed, *and* to explain what is provided in its articulations for it to ‘move’ independently of its material effectiveness. Further, this means that it is not enough to show how the articulations of the discourse of CSR are against the interests of a large number of people, but one also has to argue for *how* the discourse works and especially *why* (e.g. why it has its believers). In other words, one has to map out its *hegemonic* qualities (cf. Laclau & Mouffe 2001), to show that “beyond the fiction of reality, there is the reality of the fiction” (Žižek 2012:13).

Those who argue against CSR as theory and practice usually do this either with economical arguments (cf. Friedman 1970; Whelan 2012), without convincing differentiation when it comes to their alternative (cf. Freeman & Liedtka 1991) or with a too simplified perspective on the political dimension of the issue (cf. Hertz 2002). What has not been done however is to study the discourse of CSR as such. Sure there are an abundance of literature reviews of this now well established discipline, but there are to my knowledge no real critical analysis of the power inscribed in the practice and theory of the CSR discourse, neither a mapping of the order which is generated through the burgeoning journey of the phenomena.

The entire premise of CSR as a practice rests upon the notion that there are actors with an abundance of resources, as well as recipients of the benevolence provided by the affluent actors. The notion that there are those who are in need of others charity can logically be derived from an unequal distribution of resources (be it on a local or a global scale). Is CSR then late capitalisms practice of redistribution of resources? My argument with this thesis is that CSR is a symptom of a malfunction in the global order, rather than a solution for the problems that we, the people of the global order, face.

The purpose of this thesis is thus to investigate the discursive development of CSR throughout its history. In summary, CSR started as a strategy for business to deal with the growing power of government in western capitalist societies after World War II. The strategy’s purpose was to maintain corporations’ and their leaders’ autonomy within the social structure. Naturally, the discourse of this first phase was thoroughly embedded in the logics of that era, where economic, political and civil actors were seen as competitors over social authority. There are

some truly political notions within this early discourse since it recognizes the connections between responsibility and authority. I will call this initial phase of the discourse Autonomy CSR due to its explicit strategizing over the corporation's role in society.

Somewhere in the middle of the 1970s the autonomy of the corporations start to become less of an issue, mainly due to a politics aimed at shifting the power, resources and influence between politics and capital, away from the former for the benefit of the latter. Once the autonomy of the corporations was somewhat secured, CSR discourse reflects this development with its emphasis shifting from maintenance of autonomy (which is already a reality), to efforts being made to legitimize the autonomy possessed. I will call this latter phase of the discourse Legitimacy CSR. With the shift towards Legitimacy CSR the political dimension of the discourse found earlier is increasingly obscured. Legitimacy CSR also increasingly poses itself as post-ideological, as the mediator of interests among (now global) society's different groups, a tendency that is symptomatic for late capitalist discourse. And where Autonomy CSR's intention was to be a strategy for the corporation as private social actor, Legitimacy CSR firmly poses itself as a new world order.

In order to investigate the development of CSR discourse I will pose the following questions:

-How has the discourse of Corporate Social Responsibility developed since its origin?

-What are the political consequences of Corporate Social Responsibility?

1.1 How it is to Be Done

The task at hand is to describe the discursive development of the discipline of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). In order to do this, the concept of discourse has to be defined, explaining its function and components. I will try to do this as stringent as possible, and without diving into too many heavy ontological and epistemological investigations. After all, this thesis is an analysis

of the development of a particular discourse, not a contribution to the debate over discourse analysis in general (cf. Žižek 1990; Torfing 1999; Chouliaraki & Fairclough 2000; Howarth 2000, 2005).

The following sections explain the concept of discourse, how to analyze discourse, describes particular forms of power relevant for the analysis, and presents the object of study.

1.1.1 What is Discourse?

Discourse theory understood correctly should be seen as materialist (cf. Laclau & Bhaskar 1998, Laclau & Mouffe 2001), what matters in the political and the social are external relations of subjects and objects of different discourses. The object of study is *articulations*, meaning combinations of social elements (linguistic and non-linguistic), which should be equated with any form of practice affecting identity (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 105ff). This means that methodologically, there is no difference in studying the practice of an institution (like corporations) from studying the ideology of a social movement (like Environmentalism) to the theories of a discipline (like CSR). Accordingly, discourse is defined as a “structured totality resulting from [...] articulatory practice.” The elements articulated in a particular discourse are relational; they combine to lend each other meaning. This is done through logics of equivalence and difference, i.e. through defining a social objects/ subjects’ identity in reference to the *other*, for whom it differs (2001: 125ff). This temporary fixation of elements into a symbolic system is what we call discourse. These systems are never neutral in their relations, but instead define each subject’s particular power resources in the present constellation.

For example, throughout the development of CSR discourse, corporations as a social subject are continuously contrasted to both government (a subject of its own) and society (who in its otherness encapsulates both government and corporation). Corporations can be defined as social actors only if they can be distinguished from other elements of the discourse. It is easy to identify different discourses that share this distinction between corporation and government. But it

is equally easy to see that the particular relation between the two varies depending on which discourse you study (e.g. socialist or liberal). The relations established in discourse render particular orders; the logics behind these processes should reversely be seen as ordering (Dyrberg 1997). Consequentially, since discourse is articulations as practice, social actors act discourse. What makes discourse different from e.g. intersubjectivity is the integration of objects into the symbolic universe alongside the subjects and the socio-symbolic order (the big Other) – “the medium” of the subjects’ “relationship” (Žižek 2008:148).

The creation of a social subjects’ identity, through the logics of equivalence and difference, brings with it the inherent possibility of *antagonism* in the social structure, since a relation of us/them (necessary in identification) always has the possibility of turning into a friend/enemy constellation (Mouffe 2000: 12-13). In ideological struggle, social actors work to stabilize the floating (non-fixed) elements into a structured discourse through the intervention of a certain *nodal point* (Žižek 1989: 95-96). These attempts at stabilization of meaning through reference to a nodal point will not always proceed uncontested, hence the inherent antagonism.² The potential for antagonistic relationships between social actors is more likely if one or more of the actors’ identity is threatened (Laclau & Mouffe 2001: 120ff). This does not mean however that there are essential identities ‘out there’, which must not be questions. The inherent antagonism of social relations stems instead from what Žižek refers to as “the radical contingency of naming.” Since the Real (i.e. that which is to be signified) “contains no necessary mode of its symbolization,” (Žižek 1989: 107) the struggle for naming through articulations has no referent beforehand. This means that there is no end to the game of symbolization, and thus no end of the political nor the social; struggles, stabilizations and hegemonies will vary over time as well as in space. Antagonism erupts when a particular symbolization fails in its signifying practice, i.e. when there is no form of consensus over a fundamental element in a particular discourse. Reversely, the contingent cover-up of antagonism is what we call *hegemony*, which is a condition for every stable political system.

² How many wars have been fought over how e.g. democracy or equality should be defined?

The outcome of discourse, the intervention of a nodal point that fixates the meaning of the rest of the elements, can be referred to as the ‘sedimentation’ of an order (Žižek 1999: 215-216). The concept of sedimentation – which connotes layers of compressed materials – should be seen as the temporal end result of a stabilization of a discourse, its objectivized state of being. Discourses can be variously sediment, where the very sedimentation of discourses serves as the foundation of the social life-world. This foundation of discourses provides a “horizon of meaningful practices” (Howarth 2000: 9), determining possibilities for actions. The discourses of CSR that I will construct in the analysis below should be seen in this way, as discourses articulating meaning, as providing horizons from which to conduct practice. They should further be seen as orders in which different actors are given different opportunities to *make a difference* (Dyrberg 1997), i.e. being variously powerful contingent upon ones position within the discourse.³

Sediment discourses logically belongs to the social, as opposed to the political – which is the arena, regardless of how slowly it happens, designated for changing the social structure. Sediment is the temporary cover up of contingency; it is non-questioning. It also exists because not everything can be questioned all the time, which would be the case if everything were political simultaneously (Mouffe 2005: 25). What is commonly referred to as institutions can be seen as more or less sediment discourses: they provide mechanisms and practices that guide social actors’ practice. The corporation as an institution is easily distinguishable as a relatively stable social construct in modern/ post-modern discourses, providing numerous articulations of social conduct, it is metaphoric in its stability (Burke 1945, Dyrberg 1997). Part of the objective of the present analysis is thus to investigate this sediment of the corporation, the locus of meaning embedded within, and to analyze its trajectory throughout the development of the discourse. And what can be found in CSR discourse is precisely a change in the identity of both corporation and government.

³ E.g. no matter how good of a politician you are, you would have a hard time gaining political success in the United States while calling yourself a communist. For the time being at least.

1.1.2 Identifying the Nodal Point

The identification of nodal points is done through interpretation of a discourse's system of meaning. The basic principle is that the hypothetical replacement of a nodal point in a particular discourse should alter the meaning of the other elements in that particular discourse.

To exemplify I have in the analysis below singled out two concepts that ties the CSR discourse together throughout its development: autonomy and legitimacy. In its early stages (circa 1950-1975) the articulations within the CSR discourse is chained to the notion of the autonomy of the corporation as a social subject. The discourse is therefore mainly articulated as a *strategy* to maintain/ proliferate the autonomy of the corporation in relation to government and society. From circa 1975 and onwards, when the autonomy of the corporation is effectively secured, the discourse's articulations shift in order to instead justify the rectified autonomous position with the new nodal point of legitimacy. What has happened then is the sedimentation of the autonomous position of the corporation, and the consequential struggle from CSR as a discourse to cover up the contingency of this state of being through the intervention of the concept of legitimacy, the attempt at quilting its meaning (Žižek 1989: 95). As Dyrberg (1997: 126) has pointed out, nodal points are inherently ambiguous. They are what ties discourses together, but in themselves they are empty: autonomy and legitimacy are quilting points that other elements are chained to and differed from in order to 'make sense' of the discourse.

To summarize, discourse is a socially structured totality, consisting of elements that have been fixed in their meaning through the intervention of a particular nodal point. The objective of the discourse analyst is to identify this/ these nodal point(s) and to show how it/they structures the rest of the discourse(s). To further map out a discourse, the analyst has to show how objects and subjects of the discourse are constructed through the logics of equivalence and difference, and how this is connected to potential antagonisms. To investigate a discourse is to study articulations, which are combinations of social elements that mutually define identities within the discourse.

1.1.3 Power in Discourse

What has been established thus far is that the concept discourse implies order among social elements. The logics behind this have also been identified as equivalences and differences among objects and subjects of the social environment, of ‘quilting’ nodal point that stabilizes discourses (creating order), and antagonism as the mechanism that in its impossibility to be symbolized creates a dynamic and contingent social system. What we are to delineate now is the power present in every discourse, and its logics of order and ordering.

Given the contingent nature of every historical constellation, different orders imply different functions of power for different social actors. In this analysis I will refer to the concept of power as *the ability to make a difference* (Dyrberg 1997). Every order defines limits and possibilities of actors, their ability to make a difference. Discourse therefore includes combinations of rights and obligations, domination and permissiveness, regulations and disciplines, injunctions and prohibitions. Their particular articulation, i.e. combinatory practice, defines actors’ power within discourse. As Foucault has outlined, there are numerous different techniques of power distinguishable in different discourses. He singles out three predominant technologies: law, discipline and security (Foucault 2007). These technologies have in common that they are concerned with multiplicities as their starting point: “The individual is much more a particular way of dividing up the multiplicity for a discipline rather than the raw material from which it is constructed. [...] So sovereignty [prohibition] and discipline, as well as security, can only be concerned with multiplicities” (2007: 12). In contrast to most liberal theories on power then, Foucault’s conceptualization of technologies does not propose the individual as the primary ontological unit (the irony here being that these technologies are derived from predominantly liberal political practice). By bringing these technologies with me into the analysis I will be able to investigate more specifically how CSR-order is constituted. Does it fit one of the technologies better than the others, or is there a mix between them? Will I maybe find yet another technology that is more original to this kind of discourse? But lets first see how these technologies work according to Foucault.

The *law* as a technology of power works with the logic of prohibition, i.e. it tells its subjects what not to do, and consequentially anything that is not

prohibited is allowed. The law is also in its logic imaginary, since it “can only formulate all the things that could and must not be done by imagining them” (2007: 47). Law is of course well embedded with the articulations of the state and sovereignty, with the actual potency of making its subjects – *subjects* before the state. The law works as an “empty place,” the subject knows that there *is* a Law, but not what the Law *is* – “Prohibition means that *the place of the law itself must remain empty*” (Žižek 1999: 446-449). To clarify: without this self-referential emptiness based on the logic of imagination, law would stop being law and become another form of power. With the logic of the law “[o]rder is what remains when everything that is prohibited has in fact been prevented” (Foucault 2007: 46). The concept of law will shift in meaning throughout the discourses of CSR. In the origin of the discourse, the law is seen as a means for government to provide responsibility where it is lacking in business. Throughout the development of CSR discourse, it is increasingly articulated in contrast to the law, as the positive action in polemic relation to the law’s negative logic.

The technique of *discipline* is instead to be complementary to reality. It is not as interested in prohibiting as it is in prescribing what must be done; it provides its subjects with “artificial and constraining” obligations in order to counteract their deviant behavior, their wickedness. Where discipline is concerned, there should be no questions of what should be done *in every instance* (Foucault 2007: 46-47). It is also “centripetal” in that it “concentrates, focuses, encloses,” that is, it aims at controlling behavior down to the very last instance. It works with enclosing spaces to be able to exercise power and control “fully and without limit” (2007: 45). Discipline is therefore the positive power if there ever was one, the question is always how to change the subjects very being, and nothing should be left for chance. The obvious example of this kind of power is the Panopticon of Bentham (1995), later highlighted by Foucault himself (1979). The logic of discipline will also be present in CSR discourse, although often as a self-imposed discipline, seen as internal to the subject of business/ management. The discipline will often be articulated in reference to ethical consideration and moral action.

Security finally, works instead within reality, with its “elements.” It is, as opposed to discipline, centrifugal in that its aim is to incorporate as many elements as possible, its expansion has no limits since it is not as concerned with absolute control (Foucault 2007: 45). Security is a self-posed less normative

approach in that its interest lies in how things ‘really’ are, and how these things can be used to greater utility. It is the administration of flows, of circularities, of trying to let the elements work their way and to reduce the potentially harmful consequences (2007: 46-47; 65). Finally, it “tries to work within reality, by getting the components of reality to work in relation to each other, thanks to and through a series of analyses and specific arrangements” (2007:47). Also security power logic is present within CSR discourse. Especially later in the discursive development, with the negation of the law, and in reference to concepts like globalization and pluralization, there will be heavier emphasis on working with what is at the table, reducing the potentially harmful consequences of e.g. disproportionate power of corporations.

In sum, Foucault provides three distinct techniques of power: law, discipline and security. They obviously each have their unique technique (prohibition, prescription and response) for conducting power over subjects and objects of a particular discourse. But they are also distinguishable in their respective relations to reality (imaginary, complementary and internal) as well as in their specific modes of function (abstract universal, centripetal and centrifugal). Table 2 illustrates the basic concepts, which will be a part of the following analysis.

Techniques of Power

Power	Technique	Relation to reality	Function
Law	Prohibition	Imaginary	Abstract universal
Discipline	Prescription	Complementary	Centripetal
Security	Response	Internal	Centrifugal

Table 1, (Foucault 2007: 44-49)

1.1.4 The Object of Study

This analysis will be based on articulations from the scientific discourse of CSR. The reason for this is first and foremost because the intention is to investigate the historical development of the discourse and Business Administration scholars' are seminal in the construction of the discourse throughout the period (it was e.g. a scholar, Howard R. Bowen that coined the term *Social Responsibilities* back in 1953). Second, the discourse of the business world as such seems to run rather parallel with the discourse of Business Administration as scientific discipline. The relationship here probably mutual, i.e. in business developing practices which scholars of Business Administration writes about, and Business Administration scholars writing theories that corporations draw inspiration from.

While selecting among the literature, I have gone mostly for canon in well-cited scholars such as Howard R. Bowen, Peter F. Drucker, Edward R. Freeman, Prakash S. Sethi and so on. The articles and books cited span relatively even through the period of the discourse, circa 1950-2015.

The main structuring principle of this thesis is the division of the discourse in two: Autonomy CSR discourse and Legitimacy CSR discourse. They are chronological with Autonomy CSR preceding Legitimacy CSR. For each of the two discourses though, I have taken the liberty to construct them more thematically rather than dependent on place in time.

The theories presented above are integral to the description of the discourses, where relevant concepts are used to 'explain' how the articulations within the discourses function.

2 The Discourses

[D]iscord is caused by those who possess, because the fear of losing generates in them the same desires as those who wish to acquire. Men do not feel their possessions secure if they do not also acquire the possessions of others. And the more they possess, the more power and capacity they have to cause turmoil.

-Machiavelli, *the Discourses* (2007:126)

2.1 Autonomy CSR as a Model for Business

CSR as a concept was crystalized mainly in post-war United States and predominantly by Business administration scholars. The main concern during this initiation of the discipline was how to maintain autonomy/ counteract intervention in relation to the growth of government's power. Thus the problem is posed as strategy: how business can respond to external threat. Common in the discourse is the notion that management as a profession has duties in relation to the public interests, they are to be seen more as servants than masters of the social environment, and their self-interest must not be opposed to the public will. But even more important is the argument that regardless of the preferences of management, their autonomy and license to act will be revoked if they do not act responsible in the eyes of the people. Autonomy CSR also recognizes the link between responsibility and power; that it is hard to have one without the other. As Bowen ([1953] 2013: 6), often referred to as the founding father of CSR (cf. Carroll 1999: 270), puts it: "When it is felt that the powers exercised and the choices made by businessmen do not contribute to the general welfare, business have either to revise their behavior voluntarily or to be subjected to control."

2.1.1 Responsibility as a Strategy for Survival – of Business and Society Alike

Autonomy CSR discourse primarily functions as a strategy for business. But the questions asked by scholars of the discipline are often normative: As with Bowen who posed the following questions back in 1953: “Are businessmen, by virtue of their strategic position and their considerable decision-making power, obligated to consider social consequences when making their private decisions? If so, do they have social responsibilities that transcend obligations to owners or stockholders?” His answer was “clearly yes” (Bowen [1953] 2013: 4). The justification of businessmen’s behavior must be derived from public interest. If the private freedom of business threatens the public interest the system needs modification, the motto being: “Business, like government, is basically ‘of the people, by the people, and for the people.’” This freedom for private actors exists because ‘the people’ believes it to be beneficial. Alas, misbehavior will lead to discipline if it is not reconciled voluntarily; the freedom is a given freedom, which can be revoked ([1953] 2013: 5-6). Consider here how the initially normative questions are explained through inherently empirical claims. The first link in the articulation is thus the one between responsibility and ‘the people.’ The people here being the other, who can justify business’ action, alternatively chastise it. This is thus the origin, the beginning with the attempt at re-articulating the role of business in society, to dig into its sediment.

This injunction upon business to act responsible is simultaneously seen as a call for managers (often as a social class of their own) to be masters of their own destiny. Since by ways of serving the public interest they should be able to maintain their autonomy and with that their social power. The output of business will alter somewhat but the joy in being the vanguard of social change will remain: “If their philosophy is positive (i.e., for something, rather than against almost any change) they can take the initiative as instruments of social change related to business. They will then be managers in the true sense of shaping the future, rather than plaintive victims of a more restrictive environment. The choice is theirs” (Davis 1960: 74). One can witness here a sense of vitality under pressure. Corporations as social actors are subjected to control under the public interest, but at the same time powerful enough as a collective agent to potentially

manage their freedom. The articulation is therefore that there will be no true management without autonomy, likewise any maintenance of autonomy without taking responsibility. There is not at the time a sense that the economic and political systems of the day are irrevocably stable. An autonomy enjoyed by a certain social segment, like businessmen, can be revoked further ahead on the journey; the outcome being contingent on the actions of the actors of said social segment.

Autonomy CSR discourse is therefore about the play between several strong social actors, all of them enjoying simultaneous freedoms and responsibilities fit for a pluralist society (Davis 1967: 46-47). But congenially, government – with their mandate from society – is seen as strong enough to control business almost to whichever ends it sees fit. “Society gave business its charter to exist, and that charter could be amended or revoked at any time that business fails to live up to society's expectations. Therefore, if business wishes to retain its present social role and social power, it must respond to society’s needs and give society what it wants” (Davis 1973: 314). The threat of prohibition through law is looming, no one knows what imaginative regulations society and its state has in mind to curb business’ autonomy.

This leads to processes in which business repeatedly has to justify its autonomy. But this does not make business a weak actor *per se*. Much of its role in modern society is to act responsible as a private actor to protect the system from itself. Responsible private action is presented as an alternative/ antidote to socialism (i.e. as economic life controlled in its entirety by the state).⁴ By voluntarily involving themselves in social issues, management can at least present an alternative to “further control of the economy by the state” (Bowen [1953] 2013: 28). It lies in their interest as social actors to champion their duty as beneficial beyond private gain. Therefore, within the discourse, management really has the ability to make a *difference*, i.e. have access to power, although contingent on the notion that they can articulate their actions in line with societies interests. In this particular convincing of, the primacy of private property is to be linked with the public good at large.

⁴ The definition of the term *within* the discourse you may note.

Consequentially, the manager is the servant of the public as well as the watchdog of economic life, since “the strategic position of the businessman in our economy places upon him, perhaps, a greater onus of responsibility than upon other functionaries in our system” (Bowen [1953] 2013: 29). This view is shared by Drucker ([1955] 1968: 455) who claims that responsible behavior by management is essential “for the very future of our economic and social system and the survival of the enterprise as an autonomous institution.” The lesson to be learned here is thus that even though the public – and government in form of one of the public’s representatives – may be pro-enterprise capitalism at present day, management/ business/ enterprise still has to actively watch out for subversive proceedings. It is ultimately their responsibility to maintain the fundament of the system for which they operate within, by ways of acting responsible in the eyes of the public. Reflectively, business needs a healthy society for it to be successful in the long run, and management has to act ‘ethical,’ by ways of considering interests beyond their own, in order not to turn society “sick” (Davis 1967: 46). The relationship between business and society is thus reciprocal and mutual, change one part and alteration of the other will follow.

To summarize, business’ claim of responsibility is to be seen as a maneuver with the aim at survival. Business and its managers, with their – at the moment – privileged position within the discourse (i.e. a recognition of their ability to make a difference), has to enact some sort of self-discipline in order to not be bogged down by prohibitive power provided by government. Here we find the origin of the voluntarism that will be present throughout the development of the entire discourse. The voluntarism of Autonomy CSR discourse is contingent on the feeling of being threatened/ being an object of suspicion by government and society. As social subjects businesses are to choose discipline to provide an alternative to intervention. The process can thus be described as centripetal, as a conscious enclosing of behavior as collective social actors. With the lack, and even resentment of external regulation, business is supposed to tighten and structure its own conduct, to complement the reality of its being. At the same time there is a deep identification with the system as such, and thus no real urge for altering the structure of conduct. The approach is also symptomatic in that it seems somehow to recognize unrest while not connecting itself to the symptom.

2.1.2 Responsibility, Authority, and Power

Autonomy CSR discourse also includes the connection between responsibility and power. This connection is both ethical and political within the discourse. It can be illustrated with Davis' (1960) two principles: that "Responsibility Goes with Power" and that "Less Responsibility Leads to Less Power," the former being an ethical- and the latter a political principle. The ethical principle that responsibility goes with power is a reflective and proportionate one, in which the degree of power a social actor possesses is to be "balanced" by equivalent responsibility. It thus becomes a question of order, of how actors with different powers should be related to each other (the more powerful being more responsible for the output of its actions), but it does not tell us much about how this order is to be maintained.

With this in mind the political principle that less responsibility leads to less power illustrates better Autonomy CSR discourse's logic. Davis states that "[i]f power and responsibility are to be relatively equal, *then the avoidance of social responsibility leads to gradual erosion of social power*" (1960: 73, emphasis in original). To be fair, Davis derives the political principle from the ethical one, but the mechanism I would argue is actually the reversed one.

The logic is quite simple: the one who claims/ is delegated responsibility over a part of the social structure will be the one with power to, and thus with authority to, determine the process of that particular entity as long as this responsibility is not questioned, the social discourse being sediment. With this logic, responsibility is not only distributed, it is potentially contested for, and with that becomes a question of power. In Autonomy CSR discourse, the issue of responsibility is interpreted as being up for grabs. It up to business to stabilize this precarious state of the signifier (Žižek 1989: 95ff) Responsibility through articulations of what this element would mean if signified in equivalence with free business practice, before e.g. government intervenes. This stabilization, in its new metaphorical form, will in turn be the means for guaranteeing future autonomy for business.

The same logic is found with Drucker ([1955] 1968: 462) who also connects responsibility to authority. To claim responsibility is an act of power when it is connected to authority since authority demands compliance in some form. "To assert management's responsibility in any area is therefore to assign it authority in the area in question." This is the political thrust of Autonomy CSR discourse – the

logic that articulates corporations and their managers as political actors. It acknowledges that the social structure is defined by struggles over authority, that responsibility over certain functions is a key to said authority, and that responsibility and authority over social functions is means for maintaining subjective autonomy within the societal structure. What Drucker touches upon here is a discursive intervention (Laclau & Mouffe 2001, c. 3), wherein either a new order is instigated, or an old order is prolonged through assertion of its authority. Who should be responsible? – Lets end this speculative metonymic sliding of its elements (Dyrberg 1997: 127-128). The connection of power and responsibility is what lends Autonomy CSR discourse its strategic character.

Not surprisingly, the aim is to connect the elements of business and responsibility; that one comes with the other. This chain of equivalence will be foundational for the discourse of CSR throughout its entire development. The remarkable thing is that the connection between responsibility and power is articulated explicitly within this initial phase of the discourse. This link between responsibility and power will be gradually removed from the equation the further on we go. Whereas in Autonomy CSR discourse business, responsibility and power are intimately connected, they will in Legitimacy CSR discourse become re-articulated, essentially leaving the connection between responsibility and power behind.

2.1.3 Distributing the Responsibilities

Quite naturally then, CSR come to oscillate around questions of distribution of different categories of responsibilities. Carroll (1979) follows this call with his definitions of four categories for social responsibility that corporations are subject to: economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary. Corporations are here subjects to what can be defined as the public interest since “[t]his four-part framework provides us with the categories for the various responsibilities that society expects businesses to assume” at a “given point in time.” Within Carroll’s particular framework, economic responsibilities are primary because business institutions are “the basic economic unity in our society.” But the economic activities

conducted by business are to be embedded in legal and ethical structures that regulate them. In addition to this, business actors are free to assume discretionary responsibilities, e.g. by being involved in philanthropic activities (1979: 500).

Carroll's text, written in 1979, is part of Autonomy CSR discourse since the fundamental notion of his articulation is a form of strategy for business, still about how to be an autonomous actor in the social structure while subject to control by others. By defining somewhat clear responsibilities, corporations and their ideologues can develop strategies to counteract e.g. further legal regulations. Connected to this are the definitions of issues for which one can claim responsibility over. These vary over time and between different industries, which makes them hard to pin down definitely, Carroll's conclusion being that "there is by no means agreement as to what these issues should be" (1979: 501). Taking this lack of decidability into account, the argument is put forth to leave the ethical definition of responsibilities to other social actors, and for corporations to instead assume a strategic managerial approach to certain issues in the form of "social responsiveness" (Carroll 1979: 502; cf. Frederick 1978). Business can basically conduct different responses to responsibility injunctions, all the way from seeing them as intrusive and thus fight against them, to voluntarily being involved in social issues problem solving. The model becomes a tool for business to blend the "rational" with the "ethical," by integrating "economic concerns into a social performance network" (Carroll 1979: 503). It thus functions as a voluntary domestication of business activities, once again as antidote to further regulations. This responsiveness is part of Autonomy CSR discourse, the strategy not being very aggressive, neither manipulative in the sense of re-articulating other discourses.

Similarly, Epstein (1979: 1304-5) expresses social responsibility as rational business behavior. Not explicitly for economic gains, but again as a strategy for social autonomy and power in self-determination, since CSR "conforms business behavior to ever-expanding societal expectations thereby minimizing further governmental controls and enabling business organizations to retain greater autonomy to the benefit of democratic pluralism." By ensuring their autonomy, business as a social actor actively benefits the mechanism of a pluralistic society, where a multiplicity of actors cooperates and competes at the social arena. Business's autonomy is thus intimately linked with the social structure as such.

Not taking proper responsibility according to emergent social standards will usually result in further government regulation, which on its hand leads to concentration of “decisionmaking power in a democratic society” (1979: 1305). Business rationale then, is linked to democracy, as ‘we’ know it, the logic being: no autonomous business; no pluralistic democracy. The identification is here with the structure as such, as an organic part, as a vital organ for which there is no alternative if one wishes continuation of affairs. Responsibility is then in Autonomy CSR discourse linked to the working of the system itself through reference to democracy, a crucial nodal point of the symbolic order.

By 1991, Carroll (1991) still sticks to his definition of social responsibilities but adds a stakeholder approach to it in order to include more defined social actors besides corporations. The basic notion of strategy is still intact but the ethical/moral dimension is amplified. With this Carroll illustrates an interesting middle ground between Autonomy CSR and Legitimacy CSR discourse. The concern is still in the autonomy of the corporation as social actor, but with the highlighting of morals in addition to economics there is a blurring of power relations. “Employees are human resources that must be treated with dignity and respect. [The] [g]oal is to use a leadership style such as consultative/ participative that will result in mutual confidence and trust” (1991: 46). This, among other things, Carroll includes in being a “moral manager,” as opposed to being immoral (consciously manipulative) or amoral (non-reflective over moral issues). Surely, the ‘dignity and respect’ approach is still part of strategy, but at the same time becomes personalized. In Autonomy CSR discourse, the leaders of business are for sure portrayed as ‘exceptional men,’ being capable of the most tremendous tasks. But they have throughout been treated as a social group, a common actor. By moralizing the individual businessman, Carroll adds a new dimension of belief, rather than strategy into the discourse. To signify responsibility is now articulated as a moral task. Once again, self-discipline works as a complement to the existing order, it adds the something that business as a social subject believes that the other, being state or society, long for.

With Autonomy CSR discourse the ‘issue’ as object is connected to business and management as social actors. Responsibility becomes a question of external reference, where business can be called upon to manage issues for which they previously were sparsely connected. The logic is once again positive, i.e. business

actively integrating ethical and moral considerations in economic practice. It is still strategy, still counteracting external discontent. Carroll defines abiding by the law as being part of business responsibilities. But it is not defined as an imperative, rather as conduct, or as a game of potential consequences.

2.1.4 The Representation of

In Autonomy CSR discourse the public interest is the element for which the actors (public and private) has to justify its behavior. The public interest thus functions as the other, the subject who is supposed to justify the discourse's articulations. The articulation is that business behavior becomes meaningful through its engagement, its chain with the public interest, the entity that has to believe in business (i.e. the subject supposed to believe) (Žižek 1989).

Corporations, the state, unions and other social actors either divide or compete for the opportunity to represent the public interest; doing so is the main purpose for their existence. This can be illustrated with Drucker's ([1955] 1968: 465) claim that "[e]very leading group must [...] be able to claim that the public good determines its own interest. This assertion is the only legitimate basis of leadership; to make it reality is the first duty of the leaders." A crucial condition for Autonomy CSR is the harmonizing of the public- and private interests, it is even managements responsibility to "make whatever is genuinely in the public good become the enterprise's own self-interest" ([1955] 1968: 464).

The actor that fails in this harmonization of its own interests with those of the public will soon be in danger of loosing its autonomy. Corporations, being subjects of the law of government, thus has to make at least as good of a claim for the representation of the public interest as government itself or the unions if it wants to remain a crucial social actor. Another take on this harmonious relationship comes from Abrams (1951: 33) who suggests a slightly more brave strategy for management and their corporations:

[We should] spend a lot more of our thought and our energies as business managers in working to achieve a redistribution of faith, and less in what has come to be a somewhat sterile discussion of a redistribution of wealth. [...] After all, when you stop to think about it, it is absurd that business and the

public, of which business is a part, should be regarded as being in conflict; or, again, that management should be opposed to labor's basic interest, and labor to management's.

This view of conflicting interests, which he calls "separatism," will furthermore damage social trust. The implicit question posed here is basically how to diffuse the values of business onto the public interest rather than management all the time having to calibrate its own interest in the image of the public good. The mechanism is here reversed from what Abrams sees as the sterile attempt at redistribution. It is not unjust distribution of wealth that should be seen as the cause of lack in faith. Faith is instead something possessed by those already within business in leading positions, and it is an entity that can be diffused to other social groups. Yet again reference is made here to the public with its own interests, and business is posed by within it, and with this internality, how could business be in conflict with the public?

What is found here is a question of representation. It is a game of leaders who want to justify their power and autonomous position in the social structure by responsibly representing the public interest. With the logic of synecdoche (Burke 1945: 507ff), management and their corporations are/ should be aware of their particularity in relation to the whole (the public interest), and try to represent this whole in competition with other potential particulars (e.g. government) in a diversity of social interests. The logic of representation in Autonomy CSR is a conditioned one: "We can support freedom and private control of enterprise only if it is conducive to the general welfare by advancing progress, promoting a high standard of living, contributing to economic justice, etc. We judge its success or failure in terms of the public interest. When we consider proposals for its modification, we do so with the public interest in mind" (Bowen [1953] 2013: 5). If the actions of the particular subject of business do not satisfy the standards of the public whole, the relationship between the two elements will/ should crumble. Autonomy is therefore contingent upon responsibility, which is realized through representation of the external interest of the public/ society.

2.1.5 The Soon-to-be-Over Omnipresence of Government

As proposed above government in Autonomy CSR discourse is a force to be reckoned with, and seems to be the particular actor that at the time has the most intimate relationship with the public interest. Bowen, who as many of his colleagues at the time write primarily from the perspective of the United States, describe the American economic and social system as a mixture between liberal *laissez-faire* and socialism with slight touches of syndicalism. The liberal part includes the crucial freedom of enterprise, the autonomy in Autonomy CSR. The elements of socialism in the system have as their purpose to mitigate certain damages done by the self-determined market system. Elements as economic progress and freedom are connected to the liberal *laissez-faire* articulation while elements such as justice and security are connected to socialist articulations, both of which are necessary for the system at that time in history ([1953] 2013: 25-26). Similar articulations are present with Frederick (1960: 54-56) who analyses the fall of pure *laissez-faire* and the rise of the regulated economy, a development that serves as background for the rise of business' social responsibility.

Government then, mostly via regulation, embraces the market system, while being careful not to suffocate its subjects. Corporations being the subjects, recognize this embrace as rather inevitable, while aiming at saving what autonomy is left. This rather unequal view of the power-relation between government and corporation is to be seen in the light of the continuing decrease in autonomy for corporations during the first half of the 1900s (Bowen [1953] 2013: 120-21). There is thus a sense of humility of the businessman. Sure he has social power, he is competent and still has a lot more autonomy in the social structure compared to other actors, but still he is a subject to government will and power and has to be prudent and cunning. Or consider Davis' (1967: 47) illustrative formulation:

[T]he growing power of government looms on the sidelines waiting to add restrictive controls the moment business becomes lax in any area of

responsibility. Businessmen have learned that once a government control is established, it is seldom removed even though conditions change.

In Autonomy CSR discourse then, there is an almost overwhelming awareness that there are other actors in the social structure, more than willing to represent society, if business is not. On the other hand, in the game of responsibility and autonomy a certain degree of discretion is necessary. Management must not claim responsibility over “areas” for which it has no right to power (e.g. colleges, freedom of the press, or foreign policy), neither over “activities” it does not want other social actors (e.g. state or union) to control either (Drucker [1955] 1968: 462). In strategizing over autonomy via responsibility then, certain forms of division of labor has to be taken into account in order to act with prudence. While management must make sure to claim responsibility for the areas of which it has authority in modern society, it has to avoid the responsibilities assigned to other social actors, a gentlemen’s agreement if you so wish.

When writing several decades later, in 1984, Drucker still argues for this line of division, although it has been displaced slightly. In response to those who claim that the processes of ‘doing good’ and being profitable are incompatible, working against one another, he says that “the proper ‘social responsibility’ of business is to tame the dragon, that is to turn a social problem into economic opportunity and economic benefit, into productive capacity, into human competence, into well-paid jobs, into wealth” (Drucker 1984: 62). Since government has shown itself to be incompetent in launching big social programs, making it successfully, it is time for business to step in, curing the inefficiencies in the system. Drucker puts forth the prophecy that “in the next decade it will become increasingly important to stress that business can discharge its ‘social responsibilities only if it converts them into ‘self-interest,’ that is, into business opportunities” (1984: 59). In short then, business has the competence to convert problems into profits, and this ability they hold exclusively, justifying this takeover of responsibilities. There is no questioning here over the legitimacy of this takeover, only a critique of government inefficiencies.

2.1.6 The Construct of Autonomy CSR Discourse

The underlying logic of Autonomy CSR discourse can be formulated as: “he is a king [businessman] *because* and *as long as* people treat him as one” (Žižek 1999: 229, emphasis in original). The businessman and the corporation he manages will only be part of the elite as long as he can present himself as servant rather than master, while still of course managing business like no other. Crucial in the discourse is thus the notion of representation, of the particular for the whole; a relation of synecdoche. Responsibility is connected to autonomy, the nodal point of the discourse and for the corporation and the businessman as subject. It is through acting responsible that the objective of representation is to be realized, and the result will be a prolonging of private business autonomy. It is thus not responsibility as such that is quilting the discourse. Responsibility is instead the means for maintaining/ nurturing the autonomy of the corporation as social subject.

The *other* for the corporation in Autonomy CSR discourse is primarily the state. Business and state are fully external with regards to each other, and the division of responsibilities is to be distributed with this notion in mind. Society on the other hand is instead the *Big other*, the one with the (imaginary or real) injunction of representation of its interests. Looming over business is the threat of prohibition, the tool of government for controlling its subjects. It is up to business to successfully connect their elements with responsibility in order to guarantee survival of the system so beneficiary for them.

Autonomy CSR discourse is thus to be seen as a model for business, it is a social strategy with well-defined counterparts. It has to play the game of representation, the game that government has played so successfully during the last couple of centuries. While connecting representation to responsibility, and responsibility to business, Autonomy CSR discourse is well aware that this link will help maintaining and/ or gaining power within the social structure.

Regarding the techniques of power present in the discourse of Autonomy CSR there primarily a mutual play of regulative prohibition by the state (as an agent for society) and the self-prescriptive discipline of business in order to counteract

unwanted action by the state. Business is to voluntarily, yet necessarily, reinforce its defenses as a collective social actor in order not to be too easily blamed for immoral, irresponsible actions. The articulations are intrinsically conservative, even nostalgic, since there are a lot of calls for noble behavior, for an altered conduct. But every action is supposed to prevent the social structure from being what it already is, i.e. being a space for free markets, capitalist accumulation and moderate state regulation (basically the perfect western 1960s cocktail).

Considering the disciplinary technique of power it is important to emphasize that the efforts being made/ proposed are supposed to be self-imposed, that is, not externally forced upon business. There are thus no questions over who should be the active subject in the process; it is business in order to precisely prevent the other – the state or society – to even feel the need to do anything. Its aim is to pacify the other, to tell the other not to worry.

2.2 Legitimacy CSR as a Model for Society

The second, developed, and posterior discourse I have named Legitimacy CSR. As its predecessor, it mirrors the development of political, social and economic elements of its time. Legitimacy CSR is what follows us into the era of truly globalized capitalism in all its universal aspirations. The issue at hand for business is no longer the threat to its autonomous place in the social structure, but instead arises the question of how to legitimate its unmatched freedom handed to it through more or less conscious political actions from the late 1970s and onwards.

The articulations of the discourse crystalize a model not only for business but for Society as such, preferably global, where Multinational Enterprises (MNE) are essentially the only actors powerful and autonomous enough to act benevolent and to look after the interests of those in need, be it workers, poor farmer or women. Its logic is increasingly securitized, working within reality in order to nullify harmful effects of global capitalism by manipulating particular elements with tools of specific knowledge. Dispersion of power relations, and the declining ability of nation states to regulate business opens up opportunities for business to fully integrate their normative conduct into the model of society as such.

Fundamentally, the order is seen as unquestionably legitimate and the task at hand is to convince the disbelievers that they are simply wrong. Another crucial part of the discourse is that legitimacy is an element for the active, something that is gained for effort. There is thus an inherent paradox throughout the discourse, namely that of the unquestionable legitimacy of the system and the obsessive pursuit of pathological – illegitimate that is – actors working within system.

Legitimacy CSR discourse partly defines itself, logically, through reference to what it is not. The external other for the discipline are often neoliberal economists like Milton Friedman (1962; 1970), who are seen as lacking moral compass. Further, the discourse is defined in polemic reference to ‘radical’ others, who e.g.

are only capable of seeing corporations as the “bad guy” (Scherer & Palazzo 2007: 1109).

Legitimacy CSR discourse also defines itself as going beyond merely philanthropic activities, which are seen as either “paternalistic” (Visser 2014: 59) or as being all about output rather than input (University of St. Gallen 2012). The emphasis is supposed to be on systemic change rather than incremental and individual progress.

The other who is internal to the discourse is usually a member of the stakeholder (cf. Freeman 1984) family. This group includes government, employees, costumers, invertors, civil society and so on. Stakeholder as a concept is a semiotic play on ‘shareholder’, indicating that what is at stake in business is not only profits for shareholders. But to make things a just a tad bit muddier, Freeman – founder of Stakeholder theory – does not see Milton Friedman as his other in theory (Agle et al. 2008: 162-166), while holding CSR in general as his intellectual counterpart (Freeman & Liedtka 1991). But the stakeholder as social construct fits Legitimacy CSR discourse nonetheless. Corporations within the discourse have relationship to various stakeholders, with varying degrees of interdependencies among them. These relationships are seen as affecting corporations’ legitimacy; part of the social system as such is the process of which to manage the potential lack, or gap, of legitimacy in the system.

2.2.1 The Legitimization Process

Legitimization involves not only the type of corporate activities, but also the process of internal decision making; the perception of external environment: the manipulation of external environment—physical, social, and political—to make it more receptive to corporate activities.

(Sethi 1975: 60, emphasis in original)

The concept of legitimacy is presented as a means for corporations to go beyond merely legal and economic obligations to society. Corporations that do not comply with these basic obligations “will not survive” (Sethi 1975: 62), but to really assure a business’ longevity, one has to consider taking on further responsibilities. But what does legitimacy mean in Legitimacy CSR discourse?

A first approximation would be that of the alignment of corporate behavior with the social structure in its entirety. A crucial part of the argument made in the discourse is that legitimacy alters with time and space, and that by the mid-1970s in the west, the time has come for corporations to take on broader social responsibilities – beyond economic – in order to stay legitimate: “In a post-industrial and mature society [...] such exclusive and narrow [i.e. legal and economic] criteria for legitimacy are not only archaic and irrelevant but also tend to be counterproductive in that they neither fulfill the current needs and expectations of society nor provide a flexible framework to accommodate future societal needs” (1975: 61-62). For Sethi (1975), social responsibility is a means for generating legitimacy, which in turn will prevent unnecessary legal force from government. Here there is thus an overlap of autonomy and legitimacy, the latter being a guarantor for the former. By proactively achieving better ‘congruence’ with present social norms the corporation will be a part of creating its own legitimacy.

Another way to achieve legitimacy for corporations is to anticipate contemporary and future potential pitfalls in the social structure: “Corporations should initiate policies and programs that will minimize the adverse side effects of their present or future activities before such side effects assume crisis proportions and become catalysts for another wave of protest against business” (1975: 63). The difference here is that while legitimacy can be derived from the social structure at present time, there are no guarantees that the present state of things will last, or that other social groups will not turn against corporations that did not anticipate future scandal. The trick is therefore to be more active in the construction of legitimacy. Since there is no beforehand-determined legitimacy, the corporation as social actor will benefit from being involved in the process in order to set the agenda. “[M]erely being a law-abiding corporate citizen is something less than social responsibility.” Instead, being responsible means being proactive and anticipative, in order to “influence the public reaction.” (Dalton & Cosier 1982: 27). The reason for this is the laggard nature of law, which usually tend to regulate itself after the conduct has been crystalized in societal interaction among different actors (1982: 20ff). Another potential conundrum with the law is its prohibitive logic (Foucault 2007: 46-47). It can only tell you what not to do; it is “imaginary” in its negativity. Legitimacy CSR discourse instead seeks the

affirmative, the proactive, and the prescriptive, rendering law a rather unattractive alternative. Thus, Legitimacy CSR discourse articulates its identity through negation of the law, and through reference to the law's increasing impotence.

With this development, legitimacy is closely linked to the social structure – like the public interest was in Autonomy CSR – but the form of this legitimacy is easier to mold and manipulate, “to make it more receptive to corporate activities” (Sethi 1975: 60). In Legitimacy CSR discourse the social structure still determines the corporation as subject, but does so through legitimization. But this legitimization is on its own subject to manipulation from corporations, which means that corporations can at least partially determine their own legitimacy. The goal, Sethi argues, is to manage the ‘legitimacy gap’, i.e. the discrepancy between business performance and societal expectation (Sethi 1979: 64-65). This stands in contrast to Autonomy CSR discourse – where the role of the corporation as subject was to maintain its autonomy in the social structure, which was governed by the public interest, wherein there is no gap, but instead a relation of reference with a prime principal. With Legitimacy CSR discourse a new strategy emerges that spells legitimization. It will aim at a non-questioning of corporate behavior, and it will try to justify the autonomy won. The paradox being that the autonomous corporations' very being creates the legitimacy crisis, *and* the efforts to legitimize the autonomy.

For Woods (1991: 695-696) legitimacy is already embedded in the social structure, it is what defines the framework for corporate activities. It first and foremost works with a conductive logic, it “[d]efines the institutional relationship between business and society and specifies what is expected of any business,” and it “applies equally to all companies, regardless of their particular circumstances.” Legitimacy is thus concerned with order, with the relationship between different social actors. With this notion Woods' definition of legitimacy differs from Sethi's earlier definition. As Woods puts it: “According to the principle of legitimacy, society has the right to establish and enforce a balance of power among its institutions and to define their legitimate functions” (1991: 699). Here legitimacy originates exclusively from society as an ethico-political entity. But in Legitimacy CSR discourse this ethico-political environment is increasingly portrayed as complex, dispersed, and ephemeral. As we move through Legitimacy CSR discourse, the relationship between prohibitive law and legitimacy will be

increasingly detached. The law will, in the logic of Legitimacy CSR discourse, expose its impotence when facing post-modern predicaments like ‘pluralization’ and ‘globalization’.

2.2.2 Ethics as a Tool for Division

With Freeman and Liedtka (1991: 95) the relationship between business and society takes the form of interplay. And the tendency is that “the values of business are increasingly becoming the values of America.” But, they argue further, there should still be a clear line of division between government and business activities: “The business community must, indeed, have its separate conversation, but the fundamental values that determine the nature of that conversation are irrevocably shared with the society in which business functions.” Freeman and Liedtka do not explicitly theorize over legitimacy, but they do propose an order for which business and society should be posed. This order takes the form of “conversation” over “corporate life” in society (1991: 96). The order consists of three metaphors that are supposed to be opposed to the, at that time (early 1990s), hegemonic story of the corporation. Namely, the order/conversation should be concerned with stakeholders (e.g. employees, consumers, suppliers, stockholders) instead of solely with owners. It should further consider corporations as caring institutions, as “places where both individual human beings and human communities engage in caring activities that are aimed at mutual support and unparalleled human achievement.” Finally the conversation should be pragmatic as to the function of corporations:

We must see corporations [...] as places in which we can be fully unrestrained human beings, places of ‘jouissance’ rather than grey flannel, places of liberation and achievement rather than oppression and denial, places where we can have real and relevant conversations about our differing visions of the good life.

(Freeman & Liedtka 1991: 97)

As a social institution then, the corporation is to be yet another channel for will formation besides other public actors such as governments. They are to be

amplifiers of both individual and common needs and dreams, tools for achievement rather than of repression. To be fair, Freeman and Liedtka poses their ‘conversation’-order as opposed to CSR in general, as an order based on possibilities instead of responsibilities. But the function of such an order certainly tend to look rather tangential with CSR discourse elements, where there is a sliding of signification from corporations being the representatives of the private to corporations being the representative for whomever sees it fit. What make Freeman and Liedtka fit the discourse of Legitimacy CSR is their imperative “we must”, which is directed at the social structure, rather than management and business in itself. The intention is not to restrict or alter the institution of the corporation as such, but to alter the attitudes towards it.

Is the power logic found here not centrifugal? The drive is to incorporate ever-wider activities under the corporate umbrella. Actors in proximity to the institution are to be unrestrained and liberated, there should be no alienation in relation to the subjecting corporation. We as a society have to be disciplined in accepting the corporation as institution, and to believe in its potential for providing us with private and common prosperity. The problem is not the conduct of business, but the lack of understanding among the public for the virtues of free enterprise.

What Freeman, almost two decades later, provides is another similar appeal to focus on dialogue, in order to “remoralize our conversation.” This imperative will be a crucial part of Legitimacy CSR discourse, following the logic of many of its scholars. The guiding principle being: “Anybody who doesn’t want dialogue, I consider part of the problem rather than the solution” (Freeman 2010: 6). This illustrates well the logic of how one has to define a them, for it to be an us. Legitimacy CSR discourse, in its attempts to construct a chain of equivalence between e.g. civil society and business, constructs moral counterparts as the group that has to be excluded. This constitutive outside, the other that defines the limit of the discourse, is necessary for any kind of identity to take shape (cf. Laclau & Mouffe 2001; Mouffe 2000; 2005, 2013). As Mouffe (2005) shows, this reference to moral actors and their fundamentalist counterparts are common in modernist, rationalist discourses. As legitimization denotes the process of non-questioning, Legitimacy CSR discourse will focus on how to circumvent the critics of the corporate legitimacy consensus.

2.2.3 Waning Government and Domestication Through Deliberation

In legitimacy CSR discourse, civil society increasingly becomes the principal of legitimacy principles, i.e. the other who judges the corporation as social actor. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) serve as agents, often by amplifying civil society's discontent. NGOs' mission is to make corporations into representatives of civil society's will. Business – with multinational enterprises (MNEs) as its most potent part – search for this legitimacy in order to avoid critique or a backlash in regulation. Business has to navigate a more complex, and simultaneously a more heterogeneous and individualized global social structure, where the legitimization process has to navigate through multiple institutional layers (Kostova & Zaheer 1999).

A tendency of Legitimacy CSR discourse that runs throughout its development is thus to argue like a Marxist without the class analysis. The loss of the legitimizing superstructure once provided by the state has to be filled by someone else, preferably a morally oriented entity such as civil society. Sure you may find superstructures there to guide your conduct, but they are weak, differentiated, and individualized compared to their modernist precursors. What business seems to need is thus the *other supposed to believe* (Žižek 1989). The issue is not whether business believes in the system or not, what is desired is the belief of the other.

With civil society as the principal of legitimacy principles, Legitimacy CSR discourse needs a way for business to interact with the values of civil society. The aim is procedural in its logic, as communication becomes the proposed method to reach legitimacy: “While theories of organizational legitimacy normally refer to the compliance with some taken-for-granted societal background rules, we argue that the idea of public acceptance can no longer be decoupled from public discourse. Instead moral legitimacy results from communication.” By participating in public deliberations, corporations can reach legitimacy by “providing good reasons and accepting better reasons” (Palazzo & Scherer 2006: 79). The need for these kind of public procedures is justified through reference to postmodern ‘pluralization of societies’ – through “individualization, the devaluation of tradition, and the globalization of society.” Or as Castelló & Lozano (2011: 14) argues: “Society's greater individualization and the importance of stakeholder pressure at the local level are eroding social consensus on general

moral norms and, thus, institutional legitimacy. What was taken for granted before is now subject to debate.” Morality becomes the means for corporations to “maintain and reproduce legitimacy”, in order to protect “the corporate licence to operate” (Palazzo & Scherer 2006: 73). Is this not a clear example of securitized power? The emphasis is on the non-confrontational conversation between subjects, with no central actor able to enforce prohibition and discipline. The global economic and political scene is portrayed as split, dispersed and unruly, and the solution is centrifugal in its function: to work with the elements of the discourse in order to nullify, to use soft, ephemeral institutions to potentially deflect emerging antagonisms. The question that remain unanswered is what these proposed conversations will actually mean for power relations and distribution of economic and political resources. What overlooked is the inability of moral articulations to account for antagonistic relationships, or rather to secure the peaceful mutuality of the relationship between a ‘we’ and a ‘them’.

The proposed solution to this dilemma is as mentioned above found in dialogue: “If normative conflicts can no longer be solved by referring to a shared background of values and tradition, communication becomes the sole source of peaceful interaction and mutual recognition” (2006: 79). The goal is to ‘re-embed’ corporations in “processes of democratic will formation”, and civil society plays a crucial role as driver of this process, in which the public tries to “establish a democratic control on the public use of corporate power” (Scherer & Palazzo 2007: 1109). Scherer and Palazzo confess that it is up to corporations “willingness and capacity” for participation in public deliberations whether or not the communicative approach will be successful. Voluntarism is the principle; society is to look for corporations to assume their responsibilities, and to participate in dialogue, albeit without coercion. Legitimacy CSR discourse is therefore to be seen as securitized in its power articulation: the elements within the discourse are not to be altered, just coordinated with the aim of neutralizing potential harms. Is not dialogue a technique for making the subjects within the discourse to work with each other, a “specific arrangement” (Foucault 2007: 47)? The object in tying the discourse together being potentially that kernel of enjoyment searched for in mutated-philanthropic activities? Dialogue is to be the grease in the machinery, potential antagonisms turned into peaceful coexistence and mutual understanding.

Legitimacy CSR discourse is furthermore integrative in its approach, particularly through its attempts to question the “division of moral labor” (Mäkinen & Kourula 2012: 3ff) between political-, economic-, and civil spheres of societies. Instead of reacting or even acting proactive with regards to other social actors, corporations are compelled to be acting in forming the very conduct of action, i.e. being subjecting alongside being subject, as well as assuming responsibilities that once was reserved for public actors (cf. Matten & Crane 2005; Moon et al. 2011; Néron & Norman 2008). This is to be realized through peaceful communication, ideally resulting in rational outcomes. The thesis is that what will follow is a politicization of corporations, since corporations will increasingly be subject of legitimacy demands (Palazzo & Scherer 2006: 75). This ‘political’ concept of CSR would also be more prone to ideological functions in contrast to more “instrumental” theories CSR (Scherer & Palazzo 2007: 1100). For business to leave moral considerations to government, government must be powerful enough to regulate social activities, which Scherer and Palazzo argue that it is not: “In modern societies [...], because of the complexity and variability of conditions, law and the state apparatus are insufficient means for the integration of business activities with societal concerns” (2007: 1100-1101).

Basically, corporations in the globalized era, can “choose among various legal systems”, in order to find the ultimate social, political, and economic environment that suits their needs. Corporations are here the de-territorialized actor par excellence, leaving the now surely impotent government behind. But this particular freedom of choice poses new questions for business of how to uphold legitimacy, as the heterogeneous nature of this de-territorialization tends to produce more scenarios of possible predicaments. Do we not stumble upon here the post-modern colonization without the nation-states? In the imperialist era of European nations colonizing vast portions of the rest of the world, the corporations reaping the benefits of the exploitation depended upon their nations to provide the infrastructure necessary to do business. In late Capitalism, this relationship becomes increasingly redundant, wherein the “global company” has become the “colonizing power” (Žižek 1999: 257-258). Legitimacy CSR discourse’s way out of this is the injunction of business to benevolently participate in some form of public will-formation. But questions remain over how this is to

be institutionalized, and whether it will balance distribution of power in any way, shape or form.

2.2.4 Complexities and their Siblings

Legitimacy CSR discourse emphasizes throughout the complexity of management of business when the corporation no longer has only one omnipresent power (national government) to be subjected to (cf. Kostova & Zaheer 1999; Palazzo & Scherer 2006; Palazzo & Scherer 2008; Scherer & Palazzo 2007; Scherer et al. 2013). MNEs face legitimacy problems when ‘going abroad,’ doing business in developing countries where the regime can offer low wages, more lax working legislation, and so on, while the MNEs look for their domestic governments to insure their investments. NGOs on their part, aim to hold the MNEs accountable for their actions, making ‘the gap’ between societal expectation and business performance visible (Sethi 2002: 21-22). This gap is, as mentioned above, crucial to keep as small as possible in order to uphold legitimacy.

MNEs in particular, supposedly face re-territorializing attempts from institutions that operate domestically, and who each possesses their “own set of regulatory, cognitive, and normative domains” (Kostova & Zaheer 1999: 70-71). Further, local customs are seen as interfering with “global trends towards homogenization” of functions of the economic and social system (Scherer et al. 2013: 265). Connections are thus drawn between a multiplicity (of systems), a complexity (of cultures, norms, values, etc.), and legitimacy (as the prevention of critique/ questioning) of corporate activities, combined with the conforming force of economic and social globalization. But is this assumption not counterintuitive to the universal character of today’s global capitalism? As Žižek (cf. 1999, 2009, 2011) argues over and over again, has not capitalism proved throughout to be exceptionally unbothered considering ethnical and geographical boundaries, being more than willing to accept any number of ‘divergent’ customs as long as there is profit to be made? The discourse of Legitimacy CSR fails to explain when and how global capitalism started having problems implementing its logics in non-western societies.

The race for legitimacy is justified through the articulation of tolerance and understanding of multiplicity and complexity; they are seen as a means for managing social idiosyncrasies, while MNEs are the prime actor of the homogenizing global economy. Simultaneously, governments (national and international alike) increasingly see “CSR as an opportunity to encourage business responsibility across borders and to participate in improving global governance” (Moon et al. 2011: 213). Legitimacy CSR discourse is therefore where CSR becomes a model for societies rather than a model for business itself, it becomes a governing principle, built on mutual understandings of how procedures should unfold. The ultimate goal is to reach a politics for business and a business for politics. This development is reflected e.g. in almost every government in the European Union, as well as in the union itself, employing CSR strategies (Eberhard-Harribey 2006; EC 2001, 2011; Steen Knudsen et al. 2015).

The politicization of the corporation is, according to Palazzo and Scherer (2006: 76), an “unavoidable result of the changing interplay of economy, government and civil society in a globalizing world.” Activities that were once private increasingly become subject to public scrutiny, often in the rhetoric of responsibility, which is intimately connected to legitimacy claims. Especially globalization is seen, as undermining prior legitimacy strategies such as pro-market ideologies and different forms of manipulations, and therefore, what Palazzo and Scherer call “moral legitimacy” has become the “core source of societal acceptance.” What makes this kind of legitimacy ‘moral’ is that it stems from communication rather than bargaining or threat/ pressure. It is about “participating in public discourse” (2006:78), wherein “participants are ready to change their opinions” (2006: 80), i.e. accepting the other’s arguments.

Civil society as a social actor will function through its attempt to “domesticate market forces” and its responsibility in Legitimacy CSR discourse is “to question, to criticize and to publicize whenever the consequences of market behavior appear to be problematic” (2006: 82). Therefore in the world order of dispersed interests, of globalization without decent resistance, of multiculturalist historicism (Žižek 2011: 60) – i.e. of global economic logic contra/ cooperative particular ethnical/ cultural ethics – the only way to counterbalance corporate hegemony is through the prudence in dialogical argumentation. This is an order in which every

resistance is individualized. The rejection of ‘bargaining’ makes collective action pathological.

In a convenient circulation of functions, as states increasingly lose power on the global arena, civil society, who has been the gatekeeper of morality for a while now, is portrayed as an authority to counteract the power of business. NGOs, being the agents of civil society, come to “serve as the mediating forces between the market and morality”, and this is then seen as the “politicization of civil society itself,” (Palazzo & Scherer 2006:81) where we come to find morality as basically equivalent to politics. Simultaneously, globalization has increased the autonomy and power of corporations in relation to nation-states, which has resulted in claims for corporations to step in where government is weak (Matten & Crane 2005). Through a rather curious reversal, where governments compete for providing the best conditions for multinational corporations, the same cared-for corporations are called for protecting social rights where government will not (2005: 173).

Powerful corporations are then in Legitimacy CSR discourse both the cause of government underperformance when it comes to responsibility over social issues, and the possible solution to this lack. We find ourselves all of a sudden back in the responsibility – authority logic but with a major twist: corporations are able to step in and make claims for them both. This has been described by Matten and Crane (2005) as Corporate Citizenship (CC), wherein corporations take responsibilities over – foremost social rights – issues in the place of government. That this will have consequences for e.g. public accountability seems like a fair guess (2005:175-176). Scherer et al. (2009) argues further that corporations are political actors, regardless of our likings as a society. This is due to, especially MNEs, participating in policy-making processes and deliberations, although the question of why they do this (out of rational profit seeking, altruism, isomorphism etc.) remains unanswered (2009:328-30).

The development of Legitimacy CSR discourse can thus be described as a parallel process of further responsibility in the hands of corporations, and institutions for dialogue as a governance solution. CC is the direct articulation of the redistribution of power from government to corporation, a peaceful hostile take-over if you so wish.

2.2.5 The Affluence of Business – The Poverty of Government

This collapse of the division of labor between politics and business is a matter worth enquiring. What remains rather implicit in Legitimacy CSR discourse is the articulation that we may call the affluence of business – the poverty of government. To be sure, business, globally, has been booming the last several decades. This process has been highly political, i.e. through conscious deregulation and taxation strategies, in order to strengthen capital in relation to government and labor (Piketty 2014). Further, the growing debt of both labor and governments has increased capital's bargaining power in political processes (Lazzarato 2012).

This development is reflected in Legitimacy CSR discourse as well, but in a more implicit way: “corporations increasingly share the roles and responsibilities of governments in relation to human citizens [...]. This includes regulation of the workplace, often reflecting government retreat” (Moon et al. 2013: 208). The notion of “government retreat” is not theorized further. Potential meanings of this retreat are either voluntary exit, executed via political power, or impotence to regulate due to lack of resources. Matten and Crane (2005: 172), regarding Corporate Citizenship (CC), states that corporations can overtake the responsibility of government when government “ceases to administer citizenship rights.” Beyond this, they can take responsibility over citizenship where government never has, or where responsibility may be “beyond reach” of nation-states. However, they do not theorize over how this takeover is executed, except through reference to globalization as necessarily creating ‘regulatory vacuums.’ Thus CSR as a political phenomenon is usually described as a “*consequence* of ‘globalization’; as a *consequence* of the increased ‘bargaining clout’ that MNCs [Multinational Corporations] are posited to possess ‘vis á vis national governments’” (Whelan 2012: 713, emphasis in original).⁵

CC is the most poignant example for illustrating this migration of power, responsibility and resources from public to private institutions and actors. But of

⁵ Whelan himself criticizes this description.

course the CSR discipline illustrates this as well with its articulations of corporations as new masters of the global arena.

Do we not find here traces of the dynamics of surplus-value and surplus-enjoyment? (Cf. Žižek 1989: 50-55) Corporations' increasingly develops the ability to do what the government will no longer be able to master. surplus-value is the mechanism which drives the capitalist system, which enables capital accumulation. Is not the pursuit of benevolence and philanthropy via the claims for responsibility the pursuit of private enjoyment? Is not this drive the object-cause of desire? Further, it is tempting to categorize CSR as the luxury commodity *par excellence*, literally unattainable for the vast majority of ordinary actors. The why-questions of the motivation for business to involve itself in CSR practice can thus easily be answered with: the affluent will always buy what the *other* cannot. In a global system where every commodity is up for grabs, the affluent, be it MNEs or philanthropists, will consume CSR discourse in order to satisfy their desire. But since the object-cause of desire is per definition unattainable, the discourse of CSR will be a potentially eternal process. The legitimization searched for, desired, one can argue is as much meant for the actor as it is for society as such, if not even more.

2.2.6 The Construct of Legitimacy CSR Discourse

Let us assume that for every hegemonic order it is possible to distinguish between two particular contents: "the 'authentic' popular content and its 'distortion' by the relations of domination and exploitation" (Žižek 1999: 217). Legitimacy CSR discourse is no exception here. The 'authentic' content is its recognition of the corporation in its political being, i.e. as an institution irrevocably being part of the political,⁶ with all its potential antagonism (Mouffe 2005). The distorted articulation is on the other hand Legitimacy CSR discourse's translation/transference of the corporation from political being into a practice within politics; as a part of ontic construction.

⁶ Here we should also include the emphasis of government power in decline as 'authentic'.

The articulated solution of the communicative/ deliberative approach is not capable of reconciling the inherent antagonism in every political order proper. That Legitimacy CSR discourse counterbalance to economic inequality of power spelled ‘Moral legitimacy’ does therefore come as no surprise. This is simply a reflection of liberal ideology’s repeated failure to understand the political logic: “[T]here exists liberal policy of trade, church and education, but absolutely no liberal politics, only a liberal critique of politics. [...] In a very systematical fashion liberal thought evades or ignores state and politics and moves instead in a typical always recurring polarity of two heterogeneous spheres, namely ethics and economics” (Schmitt 2007: 70).

Legitimacy is the clear nodal point of later CSR discourse. In late capitalism, the autonomy of the corporation as social subject is thoroughly sediment. What the discourse of CSR tries to preempt is crises of legitimacy, and responsibility becomes linked to legitimacy in order to stabilize the discourse. The primary, other which is to guarantee the legitimacy of the discourse, is civil society in all its diffuse being. The governments on the global scene are to be integrated in the hegemony of global capitalism with institutions of deliberative procedures without the ability to enforce, nor the mandate to do so.

The power in Legitimacy CSR discourse functions centrifugal, it tries to work with the elements of the discourse in order to lessen the harm of the flow of economic capital and political power. It is articulated as internal to the real, a realist approach, and an irrefutable model for late capitalism.

Further, Legitimacy CSR discourse articulates the affluence of business and the poverty of government. It provides a space for the economically successful to take upon them the responsibility once exclusive to public agents. To be affluent provides the mere possibility to be responsible, and it is a desired possibility. Precisely as capitalism is the pursuit of surplus-value (the never ending process of capital accumulation), CSR in late capitalism is the pursuit of surplus-enjoyment in the form of legitimacy in front of society and one self.

3 The Order

In this concluding chapter the thesis will be summarized, theoretical consequences will be dealt with, and questions for further research will be asked.

3.1 The Discourses and The Ideological Lay-of-the-Land

Ideology Matrix

	Symptom	Fetish
Identification	Liberalism	Fascism/ Populism
Distance	Critique of Ideology	Cynicism

Table 2, (Žižek 2009:62-63)

The contemporary hegemonic ideological scene is [...] split between [...] two modes of fetishism, the cynical and the fundamentalist, both impervious to ‘rational’ argumentative criticism.

(Žižek 2009: 63)

Table 2 provides a model of late capitalisms ideological field, in extremely broad strokes obviously. In order to make sense of, and to make useful the discourses of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that I have constructed in the analysis

above, this section will be dedicated to illustrate where the discourses can be fit within even broader fields of meaning.

The development of CSR discourse can be described as a movement from liberal identification to fetishist cynicism. The discourse of Autonomy CSR is a doctrine of belief, in the system for within its proponents operates, of the actors who inhabits said system, and in “taking seriously the arguments for their universal ideological claims” (Žižek 2009: 63). It is a symptom of its predicament, of the affluent also being fully responsible for their actions.

On the contrary, the posterior discourse of Legitimacy CSR follows the logic of distance to its subject matter – proposing/ enacting policy detached from its form. It is the ideological appearance that allows us to continue this flawed game, to hamper our bad conscience. Full, ruthless participation combined with a good dose of ideological cream. It is materially built in within the system itself, with corporations being more affluent than ever before, enabled to exercise self-indulgent charity, while the indebted, over-encumbered governments and peoples watch obediently on the sidelines.

This development is identifiable in the move from ‘public interest’ in Autonomy CSR discourse to ‘civil society’ in Legitimacy CSR discourse. Whereas the public interest was articulated as an active force, demanding representation, ‘civil society’ works as an external, almost spectral other, which is used as a stand in for the waning government when it comes to moral justifications. The cynical turn in Legitimacy CSR discourse stand for among other things this fantasy that civil society is strong enough to be a real threat to especially MNEs. The emancipatory potential in civil society as *the* watchdog against ethical collapse has still a long way to prove itself.

To continue, the leaving behind of the connection between responsibility and power with the emergence of Legitimacy CSR discourse also chimes well with the turn towards cynicism. The power dimensions are very much within Legitimacy CSR discourse. The logic is of the kind: ‘we know very well that we are super powerful, *but...* this does not mean that we want anyone to see the problem in this’. As mentioned above, the articulations of waning states and powerful corporations are very accurate, but the legitimization of this order can hardly be the solution to our problems, the symptom cannot solve itself so to speak.

What follows is that the two discourses fully avoid the remaining two positions of the ideological matrix, the distancing critique of ideology, and the fetishist fascism. Avoidance in this case means that there will be no truly critical distance, a distance with the aim of altering e.g. power relations. Neither can any two of the discourses be blamed for fascist articulations, the main determining factor here being their fundamental capitalist conviction, which has been shown time and time again as being dis-interested in contingencies of e.g. race or culture as long as there is profit to be made. What the discourses share in common is thus the efforts to promote the survival of the capitalist system, either via strategy or via institutionalization of the fetishist disavowal (i.e. ‘I know very well but...’).

That the two discourses slides on the axis between identification-symptom and distance-fetish results in a fundamental flaw – their inability to reach the not-yet-believers. The offer is either identification with a system, which is perceived as not representative of the disengaged repressed, alternatively a cynical distance only fit for the elites of the system. We thus find ourselves in a situation of preaching for the quire. The situation is in-itself symptomatic of liberalism and its different forms, with its ignorance of the radical left and right, who are perceived as “the same ‘totalitarian excess’” (Žižek 2009: 69). At least this notion should serve as a warning to both political formations on their respective side of ‘centrist liberalism’.

3.1.1 First as Strategy, then as Farce (System)

In the analysis, the development of CSR discourse is posed as a movement of designation. CSR started as a strategy, while at least nowadays aspiring as system of world conquest ambition. Order is politically constructed, and the Legitimacy CSR discourse is already articulated, and will continue to be so until a real alternative is presented. What Legitimacy CSR discourse offers is a mental map of sorts, an easily acceptable explanation of the state of things: the inevitability of the power of the corporations; the decline of government potency; civil society as the noble subject of morality, the *other* who sees you.

The articulation of Legitimacy CSR is globalized capitalism prickled with voluntary deliberation over moral issues. As a system it may serve for comfort in relatively peaceful times: we all participate in the universal trade of commodities

while occasionally worrying about the environment, poverty, sexism and so on. But several questions remain unanswered in this system: How are we to manage e.g. massive inequalities of income and wealth? How can we enforce decisions stemmed from deliberations if participation is voluntary? And how are we to deal with deliberative democracy's inherent difficulties to handle potentially antagonistic confrontations (cf. Mouffe 2000, 2005)?

Late CSR discourse remains securitized in its logic of power. The objective is to let the untouchables remain untouched and to work *within* the coordinates of global capitalism in order to essentially try to uphold power-relations. While the law as power technique is increasingly harder to use, this does not mean that security as a technique should automatically be the alternative.

3.1.2 Surplus-Value, Surplus-Enjoyment

His aim is to produce not only use-value, but a commodity also; not only use-value, but value; not only value, but at the same time surplus-value.

(Marx 2013:127)

To dwell in CSR discourse is to search for the object cause of desire, through the means of surplus-value, in order to obtain surplus-enjoyment. The object cause of desire in CSR discourse is, as any other of its kind, an unattainable semblance. But at the same time it is the object that connects the subject of the enterprise with the other (will it be state, citizen, labor) and the big Other, it is the promise of enjoyment which stimulates claims for responsibility, which creates one sentimental add-campaign after the other.

Further, the surplus-enjoyment pursued/ attained in CSR discourse is only possible with the function of surplus-value generated within the capitalist system. CSR is a practice of the affluent; it is an investment in image and business, it is a game for the ones with resources enough to act benevolent. But since it is a product of surplus-value, its condition of possibility is the never-ending pursuit of lowering the cost of production of commodities. To be benevolent to the other is thus indirectly an act of relocating resources, either from capital itself in order to render enjoyment for the investor, or from labor or state and into projects of commoditized activities of philanthropy/ responsible investment.

As mentioned above, CSR can be defined as the supreme luxury commodity. It is the object of dreams for thousands and thousands of business administration students to do business and to do good at the same time, being both industrious and generous. Much like Foucault's entrepreneur of the self (2008: lecture IX) one is able to invest in one self by ways of investing in the *other*. There is also mutuality in the discourse, with us as consumers also being more than glad to participate and to show our support to the moral corporations out there. This function of CSR as a commodity designated at enjoyment, combined with the mutuality of our interest to relieve our bad conscience is part of what makes CSR 'work', we believe in it because it makes us feel good. There is an investment in the self through benevolence, but what the rate of return is remains unclear.

3.2 CSR as Symptom

What remains to be said? Needless to say there are doubts to whether CSR is the system that will eventually relieve us from uncomfortable things such as antagonism and unequal distribution of resources. The argument of this thesis is that CSR is to be seen as symptom of a malfunction in the global order rather than as an answer to our predicament. It should come as no surprise that there is enjoyment to be had from acting generous with your means. But does not the very notion that economical surplus can be used so extensively in the pursuit of enjoyment tell us that maybe we should long for a system where there would be much less of a need for the affluent to be benevolent?

The task going forward is thus to take the 'authentic' articulations of CSR discourse seriously: the impotence/ disillusion of government, the ever-growing power of the corporations, and to form alternative articulations over what e.g. globalization, government and corporations effectively are in the present world order.

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