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**Review for the volume Practicing Relational Ethics in Organizations,
Authors: Gitte Haslebo, Maja Loua Haslebo, Taos Institute
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Review for the volume *Practicing Relational Ethics in Organizations*, Authors: Gitte Haslebo, Maja Loua Haslebo, Taos Institute Publications, ISBN 978-0-9819076-8-0

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Abstract

*The volume *Practicing Relational Ethics in Organizations* having as authors Gitte Haslebo and Maja Loua Haslebo issued by Taos Institute Publications Ohio USA, discusses relational ethics and ethical practice in the organization. The problem of ethical practice in the organization besides being a necessity for business it overlaps with aspects of organizational culture, personnel management, leadership. Within the organizational ethics, the authors select the issue of relational ethics from a social, constructionist and appreciative perspective. The authors (Haslebo and Haslebo, 2012) aim to inspire the readers through a complex approach of ethical relations within the organization that are fundamentally unpredictable and subject to continuous change.*

Keywords:

Practicing Relational Ethics in Organizations, Gitte Haslebo, Maja Loua Haslebo

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The volume *Practicing Relational Ethics in Organizations* having as authors Gitte Haslebo and Maja Loua Haslebo issued by Taos Institute Publications Ohio USA, discusses relational ethics and ethical practice in the organization. The problem of ethical practice in the organization besides being a necessity for business it overlaps with aspects of organizational culture, personnel management, leadership. Within the organizational ethics, the authors select the issue of relational ethics from a social, constructionist and appreciative perspective. The authors (Haslebo and Haslebo, 2012) aims to inspire the readers through a complex approach of ethical relations within the organization that are fundamentally unpredictable and subject to continuous change. The volume is based on nine case studies illustrating a series of moral dilemmas and their specific constructionist approach. The constructionist assumption of ethics is based on the understanding of the close link between theory and social practice. Social practice is based on a general and usually implicit view of the world. Constructionist epistemology was founded by Kenneth Gergen and Mary Gergen (2004) as a criticism of the dominant paradigms in social science such as positivism, empiricism and realism (Haslebo and Haslebo, 2012).

Social constructionism goes beyond the idea of objective science able to develop a description of objective reality (Haslebo and Haslebo, 2012). Gergen states that all we consider to be real is actually the result of a process of social construction. Reality is always culturally defined and accepted (Gergen and Gergen, 2004).

Constructionist epistemology generates a relational ethic based on the idea that language constructs reality. The way language is used generates different ethical practices within the organization. Language is not a passive mirror through which we express reality but an active instrument of its creation (Haslebo, 2012), therefore the way to achieve language has ethical value. The attention focused on the specific of language used in various situations is a true ethical challenge, thus the ethical value can be the co-creation of a better social world. Ethical and moral constructs are embedded in speech, language and narratives (Haslebo and Haslebo, 2012). Constructionist perspective alters the meaning of power relations from a quality someone possesses in the form of personality traits, motivation and resources, into the opportunity to define “reality” and to determine what is seen as true (Haslebo and

Haslebo, 2012). Meta-narratives become power tools when they are taken for granted by members of the Organization and function as a given within organizational culture. Appreciative inquiry is considered a tool for building ethical climate in the organization.

Context and social responsibility

In the context of communication from constructionist perspective any generative language has incorporated a moral sense (Haslebo and Haslebo, 2012). Understanding the language and the context of social construction of reality raises the question of social responsibility in the act of communication. Language is an instrument of power and therefore it needs attention on the impact that words have on other co-creators of social reality. Continuing the ideas of Wittgenstein, John Austin examines language as social action which has performative power. Language not only describes reality but also creates it. Gitte Haslebo and Maja Haslebo analyze the theory of Coordinated Management of Meaning, model that starts from the work of Pearce. According to this theory there is an inherent vision of communication underlying any communication act as a meta-theoretical foundation (Pearce, Kearney, 2004).

Positioning and Ethics

Positioning is a process of linguistic continuity of communication that places individuals in various positions of power. The positioning process takes place within the discourse frameworks (Haslebo, 2012). The construction of discourse defines positions such as: doctor, patient, researcher, storyteller etc. Each individual negotiates its discursive position. Positioning theory was founded by Davies and Harre (2003). Positioning is a defining customization of actors' ongoing communication process. At the same time, positioning is a relational concept, a position within which the individual interacts with other actors of communication. Positioning of individuals are related by mutual complementarity and are the result of ongoing negotiations of communication position (Haslebo and Haslebo, 2012).

In the context of communication Gitte Haslebo and Maja Haslebo propose appreciative inquiry as a foundation to build a communicational ethics. Appreciative inquiry in the manner expressed by David Cooperrider and Suresh Srivastva (1987) as focus on the positive can be such a model orienting the discourse towards generative elements. Through the term positive Haslebo and Haslebo understand something that exists, that is in a constructed manner. The second sense of the term positive concerns something that has a value in itself and is desirable. The author emphasizes the intellectual kinship between appreciative approach and recognition ethics founded by Axel Honneth (1995). Recognition is seen as a state of appreciation especially in terms of moral perspective.

The volume of the authors Gitte Haslebo and Maja Loua Haslebo creates an opening in the sense of using Appreciative Inquiry and social constructionism in order to create an appreciative ethics. Appreciative Ethics, beyond being a new moral philosophy, should contribute to organizational climate change starting from a number of principles including the social responsibility presented by the authors. We consider this volume as a brick in building an ethic of appreciation with impact in areas such as: business ethics, bioethics, eco-ethics and generally in all areas of applied ethics. Social constructionism and Appreciative Inquiry are theories that can generate a particular ethical view whose theoretical construction is not only desirable but necessary.

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