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## The group of actors: a key to collective

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**Title:**

**The group of actors: a key to collective ethics in the company**

**Abstract:** This article explores the notion of group ethics and its role in corporate ethical practice. It highlights the importance of the group of actors in the construction of collective ethics, as well as the inseparability between ethics and the actor in the predictability of the group. The article also highlights the conflictual nature of ethics within the group, and the need to find solutions to manage these conflicts. Finally, it highlights the role of free will and the ability to act in the realization of collective ethics.

**Keywords:** group ethics, values, actors, free will, conflict resolution.

## **The group of actors: a key to collective corporate ethics**

### **Introduction and theoretical foundations**

Ethics is a complex, multifaceted concept, often regarded as an individual matter. However, when individuals come together to form a group of actors, a collective ethic can emerge. This is what we call group ethics, which can be seen as a bridge between individual and universal ethics. The research methodology used for this article is mainly theoretical and conceptual. It is based on an exhaustive literature review of the works of Kant, Dewey, Arendt, Weber, Habermas and Luhmann on the issues of ethics, groups of actors, values, governance and management. This literature review is complemented by an analysis of concrete corporate cases, highlighting the practical issues involved in group ethics in business. The aim is to build a solid theoretical foundation and put it into perspective with current practical issues, in order to suggest avenues of reflection and action for companies.

In this article, we explore the construction of the concept of group ethics, its role in the ethical practice of actor groups, and its extension to corporate ethical practice. We begin by defining the actor group and its role as a collective ethic, drawing on the work of Kant (1785), Dewey (1932), Arendt (1958), Weber (1964), Habermas (1983) and Luhmann (1984). We will then examine the role of values in the actor group's relationship with group ethical discourse.

We will demonstrate that the actor group is ethical by virtue of the actions it undertakes, and that the actor group's ethics are the capacity of the actor's ethics. We will also show that the actor group is made up of two inseparable halves: its ethics and the actor.

Finally, we address the question of how different ethics are confronted within the group ethic by the actors, and the conflictuality of ethics within the same structure of the group ethic and that of the managers. We conclude by stressing the importance of managing ethics within the group of actors for the functioning of group ethics and the ethical practice of companies.

In sum, this article is a contribution to the understanding of collective ethics, which can help companies adopt a more holistic view of ethics by considering the interactions between actors and ethics (Smith, A., 2018).

## **1. Construction and dynamics of group ethics**

### **1.1. The group of actors as ethic, group governance as action**

The group of actors can be seen as a collective ethic, constructed through the actions undertaken by the members of the group. This idea is influenced by the work of many authors, most notably Kant (1785), who developed the notion of reason and ethics in his Critique of Practical Reason. In this same work, Kant enunciates a first law according to which everything that exists, exists for reason, i.e. the whole reasoning is ethical only with regard to an actor, and perception is with regard to a perceiving mind, in a word, it is pure ethics.

This idea of a group of actors as a collective ethic is also influenced by the work of Dewey (1938), who studied social interactions in the construction of ethics in his work on the philosophy of education, and Arendt (1958), who studied the notion of collective action in her book Condition of Modern Man.

The notion of the group of actors as a collective ethic through the actions it undertakes is also supported by authors such as Weber (1919), who studied the notion of rationality and collective action in his work The Scholar and the Politician, or Habermas (1983), who developed the notion of communicative acting and the construction of norms in his work on the theory of communicative acting. Luhmann (1986) studied the complexity of social interactions and the construction of social order in his work on social systems theory.

### **1.2. Between individual and universal ethics: building a group ethic.**

John Dewey (1938) studied social interactions in the construction of ethics in his work on the philosophy of education. He emphasized the importance of shared experience and collective action in the formation of ethics. Hannah Arendt (1958), in her book Condition of Modern Man, explored the notion of collective action and how it can give rise to a shared ethic. She emphasized the importance of political participation and public discussion for the formation of this ethic. These authors have thus all contributed to the construction of the notion of the group of actors as a collective ethic, by emphasizing the importance of participation and collective action in the formation of ethics. The first of these laws, according to which everything that exists exists for

reason, can be traced back to the philosophy of Kant (1783), who developed an ethical theory based on reason and the notion of duty.

In his book *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant defends the idea that morality must be founded on reason, and that actions must be guided by respect for the moral law. Entire reasoning is only ethical with regard to an actor, and can be compared with the notion of subjectivity in philosophy. Indeed, our perception of the world is subjective, i.e. it depends on our individual point of view and experience. This idea was developed by philosophers such as Nietzsche (1886) and Foucault (1966), who emphasized the contingent and relative nature of our knowledge and beliefs. Lastly, perception in relation to a perceiving mind can be linked to the philosophy of perception, which is concerned with how we perceive the world around us. Philosophers such as Husserl (1913), Merleau-Ponty (1945) and Bergson (1896) have developed theories on perception, emphasizing the role of our body and our experience in our ability to perceive the world. The presentation of the idea that a group of actors is ethical by virtue of the actions it undertakes is influenced by the work of numerous authors. These include Weber (1964), who stressed the importance of instrumental rationality in collective action, i.e. the ability of actors to use rational means to achieve predetermined ends. This idea is also present in Habermas (1983), who developed the notion of communicative acting and the construction of norms in his work on the theory of communicative acting. Habermas emphasized the importance of language and communication in the construction of collective ethics, stressing the role of norms and values shared by actors. Finally, Luhmann (1984) studied the complexity of social interactions and the construction of social order in his work on social systems theory. In particular, Luhmann stressed the importance of the functional differentiation of social systems, i.e. their ability to develop complex internal structures to meet the specific needs of different areas of human activity.

### **1.3.Ethics as an actor's ethical capacity**

Ethics as the actor's ethical capacity is an idea that has been developed by several authors, including:

- Levinas (1961), who explored the notion of ethics as responsibility towards the other in his *Totality and Infinity*;
- Ricœur (1990), who studied the notion of responsibility and commitment in his work on ethics;

- Derrida (1997), who developed the notion of hospitality and otherness in his work on political philosophy. According to this idea, the group of actors is ethical because it is the actor's ethical capacity.

In other words, the ethics of a group of actors is the sum of the ethics of each actor in the group. This idea is influenced by the philosophy of otherness and responsibility, which considers that our ethics depend on our relationship with others and our ability to answer for our actions.

Thus, the group of actors is ethical because it is the sum of the ethics of each actor, but this collective ethic is only possible if each actor is able to answer for his or her actions. This implies a certain degree of individual responsibility, but also collective accountability, as each actor is responsible for his or her contribution to the group's ethics.

This idea is also influenced by the work of phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty M., 1945), which considers that our experience of ethics is linked to our perception of the world and the other. Thus, the group of actors is ethical because it is the capacity of the actor's ethics, but these ethics are also linked to our perception of the group and its interactions.

In conclusion, ethics as the actor's ethical capacity is an idea influenced by several philosophical currents, which consider that the group of actors is ethical because it is the sum of the ethics of each actor. This implies a certain individual and collective responsibility, as well as a certain perception of the group and its interactions.

#### **1.4. The actor group as ethic comprises two essential and inseparable halves**

The actor group is made up of two essential and inseparable elements: its ethics and the actor himself. This idea is influenced by the work of Kant (1785), who developed the notion of the importance of the actor in the construction of ethics in his Critique of Practical Reason.

The ethics of the group of actors take shape through reasoning and wit, which are components of the actor's ethics. This idea is also influenced by the work of Dewey, who studied social interactions in the construction of ethics in his work on the philosophy of education.

The actor, on the other hand, escapes the double law of predictability and reasoning, being always whole and indivisible in each perceiving being. This idea is influenced by the work of Arendt, who studied the notion of collective action.

These two elements are inseparable for the predictability of the group of actors. All it takes is one actor and that actor's vision of the group's ethics for the group's ethics to exist. Thus, all that's needed for the group of actors to exist is an ethical actor and an ethic of that actor in the group. If this actor disappears, his ethics disappear too.

From this perspective, the ethics of a group of actors cannot exist without the actors themselves, who are the only ones who can act to elaborate these ethics, in the image of Weber, who studied the notion of rationality and collective action in his work "The Scholar and the Politician".

The notion of a group of actors as a collective ethic is based on the inseparability of two essential elements of the group of actors: its ethic and the actor himself, which are necessary for the predictability and construction of the collective ethic.

Moreover, the notion of predictability and reasoning that underpins this group ethic is also explored by the work of Weber, who highlights the importance of rationality in the construction of collective action and governance. In his view, the increasing rationalization of society is leading to an increasingly bureaucratic form of action, in which predictability and rationality are key elements. However, Weber also points out that rationality can sometimes lead to unforeseen and undesired results, highlighting the complexity of constructing group ethics.

Finally, Luhmann's theory of social systems also provides an interesting reflection on the complexity of the construction of group ethics. According to him, social interactions are characterized by great complexity, due to the large number of actors involved and the diversity of their ethics and behaviors. The construction of social order is therefore a complex and dynamic process, in which each actor plays an important role in the creation and modification of group ethics.

In short, the notion of a group of actors as a collective ethic comprises two essential and inseparable halves: its ethic and the actor.

## **2. Values and ethics within the stakeholder group**

### **2.1. Values and ethics within the group of actors**

When the different ethics of the players clash, this creates conflict within the company's group ethic. This situation has been widely studied, particularly in terms of values. However, according to our approach, it's more a question of actors confronting different ethics within the group ethic.

This idea is in line with the work of authors such as the American philosopher John Dewey. Habermas, for his part, developed the notion of communicative action and the construction of norms in his work on the theory of communicative action.

Finally, Luhmann studied the complexity of social interactions and the construction of social order in his work on social systems theory.

This confrontation of ethics can be understood in the context of the articulation of ethics with and through each other, thus introducing the relativity of this reality. Indeed, each player has his or her own ethics, values, motivations and interests, which can sometimes conflict with those of other players. This situation can lead to dysfunction within the group ethic and the company as a whole. To remedy this, it is necessary to ensure that the players are able to function together. Governance and management actions play a key role in managing this conflict of ethics within group ethics. These actions can draw on transdisciplinary approaches such as sociology, psychology and social systems theory.

In short, the confrontation of ethics within a group of players is an important issue for corporate ethical practice. It requires a transdisciplinary approach to be managed effectively, in order to foster cooperation and harmony within the group ethic."

## **2.2. Development of concepts addressed in the confrontation of ethics within the stakeholder group:**

- **Informal variables:** According to our approach, informal operating ethics form a single category, that of variables. This ability of the actor to form informal variables, which distinguishes him from the rest of the animals, is what we predictably call reason. This notion of informal variables refers to the work of the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, M., & Adorno T. W., 1947), which studied the rationalization of modern society and the loss of meaning in social relations.

- **Thought ethics:** This encompasses the whole visible group of actors, or action in general, together with the conditions that make it possible. This notion is influenced by the work of many authors, notably Hannah Arendt, who studied the notion of collective action.

- **Free will:** It is the condition of all possible ethics. Ethics are interconnected according to the concept of the articulation of ethics with and through each other, thus introducing the relativity of this reality. This notion is influenced by the work of many authors, notably Immanuel Kant.



- **Action:** This is also determined by free will, presented as a law of interaction and motivation. This notion is influenced by the work of many authors, notably Max Weber, who studied the notion of rationality and collective action.

- **Reason:** This is also determined by ethics, but here as a law for justifying actions. This notion is influenced by the work of many authors, notably Jürgen Habermas, for his notion of communicative action and the construction of norms.

In short, the confrontation of ethics within the stakeholder group is based on complex philosophical concepts, which take into account social interactions and the construction of collective ethics. It's all about striking a balance between the different ethics to enable the group of players to function harmoniously."

### **3. Discussion: capacity to act and realization of ethics**

#### **3.1.the representation of the group of actors**

The notion of the stakeholder group is central to the construction of collective ethics (Ailon, G., 2008). Indeed, a stakeholder group is an entity made up of individuals with shared values, norms and practices that can be differentiated from other groups (Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F., 1989). This entity is thus defined by its capacity to act and its own identity. Collective ethics is the set of values and norms shared by group members and which govern their behavior (Trevino, L. K., & Nelson, K. A., 2016).

The ability to act is an essential element in the construction of collective ethics. It involves pooling the resources and skills of group members to achieve common goals (Bandura, A., 2000). Ability to act is therefore a dynamic process, involving the active participation of all group members.

The construction of collective ethics is also influenced by the norms and practices shared by group members (Schein, E. H., 2010). These norms and practices are, as it were, the rules of the game that govern behavior and interactions between group members. They are often formalized in the form of charters, codes of conduct or value statements.

The ability to act and the norms shared by group members are therefore key elements in the construction of collective ethics. However, this does not happen spontaneously. It requires constant efforts on the part of group members to maintain a high level of trust and mutual respect (Dirks, K. T., & Ferrin, D. L., 2001).

The importance of the notion of stakeholder group in the construction of collective ethics is also underlined by the fact that stakeholder groups often have different ethical objectives (Freeman, R. E., 2010).

To overcome these obstacles, it is important for members of the stakeholder group to communicate regularly and work together to find solutions that meet everyone's needs (Putnam, L. L., & Poole, M. S., 1987). This communication is essential to maintain the trust and mutual respect needed to build a solid and lasting collective ethic (Tyler, T. R., & Lind, E. A., 1992).

The idea of the inseparability between ethics and the actor is at the heart of group ethics theory (Crane, A., & Matten, D., 2016). Indeed, for the actor group to exist, there must be both an ethic and an actor to carry it. These two elements are inseparable and cannot exist without each other. This inseparability is essential for the predictability of the group of actors (Carroll, A. B., 1991). Understanding the interdependence between ethics and the actor enables us to grasp the complexity of interactions within the group, and to better identify the challenges involved in building a collective ethic. Taking this dynamic into account helps to better manage conflicts of interest and differences in objectives between group members.

Thus, the notion of the stakeholder group, with its issues and challenges, is crucial to understanding and approaching the construction of collective ethics. Research and literature in this field help to enlighten and guide the actors involved in the construction of a solid and sustainable collective ethic, taking into account the specificities of each group and seeking to establish a constructive dialogue between the different members.

Rationality and collective action, the construction of norms and the complexity of social interactions are key elements in the theory of group ethics. From this perspective, ethics is created by the collective action of a group of actors. It is the result of interaction between the different ethics and values of the actors who make up the group.

In this sense, group ethics is a dynamic, ever-evolving process, constantly influenced by the interactions between players. This interaction creates a particular dynamic that enables actors to adapt to the different contexts and issues they face.

The inseparability between ethics and the actor is particularly important in the case of companies (Freeman, R. E., 1984). Within a company, there are many actors with different ethics and values (Goodpaster, K. E., 1991). It is therefore essential to understand how these ethics and values can be integrated into an overall group ethic (Donaldson, T., & Preston, L. E., 1995).

However, the inseparability between ethics and the actor can also pose problems (Treviño, L. K., & Weaver, G. R., 2003). Indeed, when the actor disappears, so do his ethics (Crane, A., & Matten, D., 2016). This can have significant consequences for corporate governance and management (Carroll, A. B., 1991). If an actor's ethics are directly linked to the individual, so too is the type of governance, which would explain the disappearance of a certain governance in favor of another when there is a change in leadership (Fassin, Y., 2009).

To overcome this problem, it is essential to work on corporate governance and management (Paine, L. S., 1994). It is necessary to create structures and mechanisms that enable group ethics to be maintained even when there is a change of leaders or members of the stakeholder group (Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J., 1997).

The inseparability of ethics and the actor is a central notion in group ethics theory (Mitchell, R. K., Agle, B. R., & Wood, D. J., 1997). This indissociability enables the creation of a dynamic collective ethic, which is constantly evolving as a function of interactions between actors (Treviño, L. K., & Weaver, G. R., 2003). However, this indissociability can also pose problems, particularly when leaders or members of the stakeholder group change (Paine, L. S., 1994). It is therefore essential to work on corporate governance and management to maintain group ethics even in the face of change (Ely, R. J., & Thomas, D. A., 2001).

Within the stakeholder group, different ethics can be a source of conflict, making it difficult to establish a collective ethic. This is because each stakeholder has his or her own ethics, which may be influenced by values, culture, environment and so on. These different ethics can come into conflict when stakeholders have divergent views on how to manage a situation or make a decision. These conflicts can be exacerbated when players are members of different departments or teams, or when they have different objectives.

Managing ethical conflicts within the stakeholder group is therefore an important task in ensuring a coherent and sustainable collective ethic. To achieve this, it is essential to set up effective communication and dialogue processes, so that stakeholders can express their concerns and find solutions together. Conflict resolution mechanisms can also be put in place to help manage difficult situations.

In conclusion, group ethics is a complex concept based on the inseparability between ethics and the actor, and the interactions between the actors who make up a group. Managing ethical conflicts and setting up appropriate governance mechanisms are essential to maintaining and developing a

solid, sustainable collective ethic. Ultimately, it is crucial for organizations to recognize and address these challenges in order to promote a coherent and harmonious group ethic.

Managing the relationships between different players and their ethics is a major challenge for organizations seeking to establish a coherent and sustainable group ethic. To achieve this, it is essential to put in place governance mechanisms that foster communication, cooperation and conflict resolution.

In addition, it is important to recognize and value the diversity of ethics within the stakeholder group. Diversity of perspectives can be a source of richness and innovation for the organization, provided it is managed appropriately (Ely, R. J., & Thomas, D. A., 2001). By encouraging openness and respect for different ethics, organizations can create an environment in which stakeholders feel valued and heard, which can help strengthen collective ethics (Cox, T. H., & Blake, S., 1991).

Finally, it is crucial for organizations to remain vigilant in the face of ethical challenges, and to continue working on improving their governance and ethics management. It is important to recognize that group ethics is a constantly evolving process, requiring ongoing adjustments to meet the changing needs of stakeholders and emerging challenges (Sims, R. R., 2003).

Group ethics is an important issue for organizations in an increasingly complex and interconnected world. By working on governance, communication and conflict management, organizations can create a strong and sustainable collective ethic that fosters harmony, cooperation and long-term success (Pless, N. M., & Maak, T., 2004).

It is also important to recognize that ethics within the group of actors are not static, but can evolve over time (Hart, 1995). Changes in the company's environment or in the organization's objectives can influence the ethics of the actors (Donaldson & Preston, 1995), which can lead to changes in the collective ethic. It is therefore necessary to regularly monitor stakeholders' ethics and ensure that collective ethics remain relevant and consistent with the organization's objectives (Carroll, 1991).

Ultimately, managing ethical conflicts within the stakeholder group can be a complex challenge (Crane & Matten, 2010), but it is also an opportunity to strengthen group cohesion and solidarity (Elkington, 1998). By working together to find solutions and recognizing the importance of each individual ethic, the group can build a stronger, more resilient collective ethic (Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000).

In the construction of collective ethics, the importance of free will cannot be underestimated (Kaptein, 2008). Free will is the condition of all possible ethics, and therefore of all collective ethics (Maak & Pless, 2006). Ethics are interconnected according to the concept of the articulation of ethics with and through each other (Werhane & Freeman, 1999). This particular relationship between groups of actors differs, however, according to the categories of groups in their configurations (Waddock & Graves, 1997).

The actor group, considered as ethical, comprises two essential and inseparable halves: its ethics and the actor himself (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). These two elements are inseparable for the predictability of the actor group (Hart, 1995). Ethics are created by the action of the group, but can only exist thanks to the capacity to act of each actor who makes up the group (Carroll, 1991).

The ability to act is therefore crucial to the realization of collective ethics (Crane & Matten, 2010). Indeed, it is only the action of actors that enables the construction of this ethic, which emerges from the pooling of individual ethics (Elkington, 1998). Thus, each actor is responsible for his or her own ethics, but also for the construction of the collective ethic (Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000).

However, this pooling of individual ethics can give rise to conflict, as actors confront different ethics within the group ethic (Kaptein, 2008). This conflictuality of ethics can be a source of tension, or even deadlock, within the group of actors (Maak & Pless, 2006). It is therefore important to find solutions to manage these conflicts, in order to enable the harmonious construction of the collective ethic (Werhane & Freeman, 1999).

Communication and negotiation play a crucial role in managing ethical conflicts (Fisher & Ury, 1981). Stakeholders must learn to express their concerns, expectations and needs constructively, in order to reach consensus on the values and ethical standards that govern the group (Tjosvold, 1991). Training in communication, mediation and conflict resolution can be useful in developing these skills within the stakeholder group (Bush & Folger, 1994).

In addition, creating a space for dialogue and collective reflection on ethics within the group can foster the emergence of a shared understanding and commitment to collective ethics (Senge, 1990). This can include setting up ethics committees, working groups or discussion forums to address ethical issues and explore points of convergence and divergence between individual ethics (Husted & Allen, 2007).

Finally, ethical leadership is a key element in facilitating the management of ethical conflicts and the construction of collective ethics (Brown, Treviño, & Harrison, 2005). Leaders who embody and promote ethical values can inspire group members to follow their example and engage in ethical behavior (Ciulla, 1998). In addition, ethical leaders can play an active role in resolving ethical conflicts and promoting collaboration and harmony within the group (Knights & O'Leary, 2005).

In short, managing ethical conflicts within a group of players is a complex challenge, but one that is essential if we are to build a solid, sustainable collective ethic. Communication, dialogue, ethical leadership and the creation of spaces for collective reflection are all strategies for tackling these conflicts and fostering harmony and cohesion within the group.

By strengthening harmony and cohesion within the stakeholder group, members can develop a better understanding of individual and collective ethics, and thus promote ethical practices within the organization (Simola, Barling & Turner, 2010).

It is also essential to put in place monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that collective ethics remain aligned with the organization's objectives and values (Bowie & Vaaler, 1999).

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is another key area where stakeholder groups can collaborate to create a strong and sustainable collective ethic (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). By integrating ethical, social and environmental concerns into business decisions and practices, companies can not only improve their performance, but also contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals and the well-being of society (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Stakeholder groups can play an important role in promoting CSR by building partnerships and alliances to address social and environmental challenges (Waddock, 2011).

Furthermore, diversity and inclusion are essential elements in ensuring a strong and representative collective ethos (Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014). By recognizing and valuing the diversity of ethics and perspectives within the stakeholder group, organizations can create an inclusive and respectful environment, in which members can flourish and contribute fully to the achievement of common goals (Mor Barak, 2016).

Finally, building collective ethics requires ongoing commitment from members of the stakeholder group and the organization as a whole (Donaldson & Dunfee, 1999). This includes ongoing training and professional development to reinforce ethical skills, communication and conflict resolution, as well as regular evaluation of individual and collective ethics to ensure they remain

relevant and adapted to the changing needs of the organization and society (Treviño, Weaver & Reynolds, 2006).

In short, managing ethical conflicts and building a solid, sustainable collective ethic is a major challenge, but also offers opportunities to strengthen the cohesion, solidarity and performance of the group of stakeholders. By adopting strategies such as communication, dialogue, ethical leadership, diversity, inclusion and social responsibility, organizations can create an ethical and inclusive environment that promotes the achievement of common goals and the well-being of all members of the stakeholder group.

Organizations that succeed in building and maintaining a strong and sustainable collective ethic are often better prepared to face the challenges and uncertainties that arise in the business world and society at large (Brown, Treviño & Harrison, 2005). By striving to create an ethical, inclusive and socially responsible environment, organizations can not only attract and retain the best talent, but also enhance their reputation and legitimacy among their stakeholders, which can lead to superior performance and greater employee and customer satisfaction (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). It is also essential to emphasize the importance of ethical leadership in guiding and supporting the construction of collective ethics (Treviño, Brown & Hartman, 2003). Ethical leaders are those who demonstrate and promote ethical values and behaviors in their work, who are attentive to the needs and concerns of their subordinates, and who foster a climate of trust and mutual respect within the group of stakeholders (Brown & Treviño, 2006). By acting as role models and encouraging ethical commitment, leaders can play a crucial role in creating and maintaining a strong, sustainable collective ethic.

The role of corporate governance systems in building collective ethics is also important (Aguilera & Jackson, 2003). Governance mechanisms, such as boards of directors, ethics committees and reporting systems, can help establish clear ethical standards and ensure that collective ethics are integrated into the organization's decision-making processes and practices (Arjoon, 2005). By reinforcing transparency, accountability and stakeholder participation, corporate governance systems can contribute to building and maintaining a strong and sustainable collective ethic.

In short, building collective ethics is a complex and dynamic process that involves the active participation and commitment of all members of the stakeholder group. By adopting strategies such as communication, dialogue, diversity, inclusion, social responsibility, ethical leadership and corporate governance, organizations can create an ethical and inclusive environment that promotes

the achievement of common goals and the well-being of all members of the stakeholder group. In so doing, they strengthen their ability to adapt and succeed in the face of the challenges and uncertainties of business and society at large.

In short, the actors' ability to act and the articulation of individual ethics are the foundations on which collective ethics are built. The free will of each actor is essential to this construction, but it can also give rise to conflicts within the group of actors (Brown et al., 2005). It is therefore crucial to find solutions to manage these conflicts, in order to enable effective realization of the collective ethic (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012).

On the basis of the proposals set out in the article, several avenues of research can be explored. Firstly, it would be interesting to examine in greater depth the question of ethical conflict within the group of actors, and to propose solutions for managing it. This reflection could be based on research in organizational sociology or social psychology (Treviño et al., 2003) to better understand group dynamics and conflict resolution mechanisms.

Furthermore, the group ethics approach presented in the article could be applied to different contexts, such as associations or local authorities, in order to study how the notion of a group of actors can be mobilized to build a collective ethic. A comparison between these different contexts would highlight the specificities of each in terms of ethics and governance (Aguilera & Jackson, 2003).

Finally, we must also stress the importance of free will in the construction of collective ethics. It would therefore be interesting to study how this notion can be integrated into governance and management practices, and how it can encourage greater participation by stakeholders in the construction of collective ethics. This reflection could be based on work in moral and political philosophy (Arjoon, 2005), which proposes more participative and decentralized models of governance.

In short, the group ethics approach presented in this article opens up interesting perspectives for reflection on collective ethics and organizational governance. Further research could deepen this reflection and propose practical solutions for building a more equitable and participative collective ethic.

Group ethics is not limited to the corporate context and can be explored in other contexts, such as politics, civil society and non-profit organizations. In the political sphere, the notion of a group of actors can be applied to political parties and social movements. Political parties can be seen as



groups of actors with specific ethics (Brown & Treviño, 2006), and how these ethics are reflected in political policies and actions can be studied. Similarly, social movements can be seen as groups of actors with specific ethics (Bernstein, 2000), and how these ethics are reflected in movement actions can be explored.

In civil society, non-governmental organizations can be seen as groups of actors with specific ethics (Ebrahim, 2003), and how these ethics are reflected in their actions and programs can be studied. Non-profit organizations can also be studied in the context of group ethics, examining how the values and ethics of the organization's members affect the organization's actions and decisions (Waddock, 2001).

In addition, group ethics can be explored in contexts where groups of actors form spontaneously or informally, such as community groups and artists' collectives. In these contexts, ethics may be less formalized and hierarchical than in the corporate context, but they can nonetheless influence group actions and decisions (Chen et al., 2008).

Exploring the notion of group ethics in contexts other than the corporate one can provide a better understanding of how groups of actors interact and make decisions based on their collective values and ethics.

Studying the notion of free will in the construction of collective ethics is a crucial issue in understanding the mechanisms that govern the functioning of groups of actors. Indeed, the notion of free will, which refers to each individual's ability to make independent choices (Kane, 2005), is essential to understanding how collective ethics are constructed.

### **3.2.Role of free will in constructing collective ethics**

In the context of group ethics, it is important to understand how individual choices are transformed into collective choices. How is it that individuals can act in a coordinated way, according to a common ethic, without losing their freedom of action (Mintzberg et al., 2009)? How can they reconcile their individual free will with the demands of collective ethics (Zollo et al., 2017)?

Studying these questions will enable us to better understand the processes involved in building collective ethics, and the way in which players can actively participate in this construction while preserving their individual autonomy.

We need to explore the different dimensions of free will and their interaction with collective ethics, as suggested by Kane (2005).

We can thus distinguish several aspects of free will that are relevant to the construction of collective ethics:

- The ability of each individual to make independent choices, without being subject to external constraints;
- The ability of each individual to make informed choices, based on complete and objective information on the issues at stake;
- The ability of each individual to take into account the interests of the other members of the group, without giving up his or her own interests;
- The ability of each individual to accept the constraints of collective ethics, without losing his or her freedom of action.

The study of these different dimensions of free will, as mentioned by Mintzberg et al. (2009), provides a better understanding of the mechanisms governing the construction of collective ethics. It also highlights the limits of this construction and the tensions that can arise between the demands of collective ethics and individual choices, as pointed out by Zollo et al. (2017).

Studying the notion of free will in the construction of collective ethics is a complex and crucial issue for understanding how groups of actors function. It highlights the different dimensions of freedom of action and their interaction with the requirements of collective ethics. It also enables us to better understand the limits of this construction and the tensions that can arise between individual choices and the demands of collective ethics.

Analysis of the management of conflicts of values and ethics is not limited to the company, but can be extended to other social structures such as government institutions, non-profit organizations, religious communities, etc.

In these structures, value conflicts can also arise due to the different perspectives and ethics of the players involved.

Managing these conflicts can be very different from those in the corporate world, due to structural and organizational differences. For example, in a religious community, hierarchy and religious doctrine may serve as the basis for managing value conflicts, whereas in a non-profit organization, the organization's mission and values may play a more important role.

However, it is important to note that, whatever the social structure, the management of conflicts of values and ethics must always respect the rights and interests of all players involved. Open and honest communication is often considered a key element in effective conflict management.

In addition, the management of ethical and value conflicts can be influenced by cultural, social and historical factors specific to each social structure. An in-depth study of these factors can help to better understand conflict dynamics and develop more effective and adapted management approaches, as indicated by Tjosvold et al. (2006).

Managing conflicts of values and ethics is not a subject limited to the company, but concerns all social structures. An in-depth analysis of how these conflicts are managed in different contexts can help develop more effective approaches to conflict resolution and promote more consistent ethical practices within these structures.

### **3.3.integrating Stakeholder theory**

According to Freeman et al. (2010), deepening the notion of the stakeholder group is a key element in the construction of collective ethics. Indeed, the group of actors is seen as our ethics, i.e. our collective behavior. So, to understand collective ethics, it is essential to understand the actor group and its role in constructing these ethics.

The group of actors is considered our ethic, because it is the capacity to act that creates the ethic. This ethic is a unique visualization created by group action. The group of actors is therefore the starting point for the theory of group ethics, i.e. the quality of being visualized by the group of actors. In this way, all the ethics and relationships that make up the group can be visualized.

It is also important to emphasize that the group of actors is ethical through the actor itself, as Crane and Matten (2016) show. The ethics of a certain kind of governance action are often linked to an individual or a group of individuals. If the management team changes, there is often a change in the mode of governance. Thus, the group of actors is ethical through the actor himself. Like all partly informal ethics, management and governance are subject to the formal conditions of reason, mind and reasoning, from which plurality arises, as Trevino and Nelson (2016) explain.

It's important to stress that free will is a key element in the construction of collective ethics, as suggested by Frankfurt (1988) and Van Inwagen (1983). Free will is the condition of all possible ethics. Ethics are interrelated according to the concept of the articulation of ethics with and through

each other. This particular relationship between groups of actors differs, however, according to the categories of groups in their configurations.

Finally, it's important to emphasize that managing conflicts of values and ethics is essential in the construction of collective ethics, as Bazerman and Tenbrunsel (2011) point out. The general forms essential to any group ethic (predictability, reasoning and interaction) can be drawn and deduced entirely from the actor himself, ethics aside. However, the confrontation of different ethics within the group ethic by the actors can lead to a conflict of ethics within the same structure of the group ethic and that of the managers. It is therefore essential to find solutions to manage these conflicts, as suggested by Tjosvold et al. (2006).

A deeper understanding of the notion of stakeholder group is essential to the construction of collective ethics. The particular relationship between groups of actors differs according to the categories of groups in their configurations. Free will is a key element in the construction of collective ethics, and the management of conflicts of values and ethics is essential in the construction of collective ethics.

In conclusion, group ethics offers interesting perspectives for understanding and analyzing ethical dynamics within companies and other social structures. It sheds light on the interactions between individual and collective ethics, as well as the challenges associated with resolving conflicts of values and ethics. However, it is crucial to bear in mind the limitations of this approach and to complement it with other ethical perspectives to gain a more nuanced and holistic understanding of ethical issues in organizations.

With this in mind, several complementary approaches could be used to enrich our understanding of group ethics and its application within companies and other social structures.

1. Virtue ethics: this approach, inspired by Aristotelian philosophy, focuses on the development of individual character and virtues, rather than on ethical rules or principles (MacIntyre, 1984). By integrating virtue ethics with the study of group ethics, we can explore how individual virtues influence the construction of collective ethics, and how they can help resolve conflicts of values and ethics.
2. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR): this approach examines how companies integrate social, environmental and ethical concerns into their activities and interactions with stakeholders (Carroll, 1999). By combining the study of group ethics with CSR, we could

analyze how companies reconcile different ethics and values within their organization, and how they respond to stakeholders' expectations in terms of ethics and social responsibility.

3. Stakeholder theory: this approach, developed by Freeman (1984), considers that companies have responsibilities towards a wide range of stakeholders, including employees, customers, suppliers, shareholders and the community. By integrating stakeholder theory with the study of group ethics, we could examine how the different ethics and values of stakeholders interact and how they influence the construction of collective ethics.
4. Communication ethics: this approach, inspired by the work of Habermas (1984), emphasizes the role of communication and dialogue in resolving ethical conflicts and building shared ethical standards. By integrating communication ethics with the study of group ethics, we can explore how open and honest communication can help resolve conflicts of values and ethics, and build a solid and coherent collective ethic.

By combining these complementary approaches with group ethics, researchers and practitioners could develop a more nuanced and holistic understanding of ethical issues within companies and other social structures. This integrated approach could also contribute to more effective and sustainable ethical practices, helping organizations to navigate the complex ethical challenges they face in the contemporary world.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, our article has presented the construction of the concept of group ethics and its role in the ethical practice of the group as well as in the ethical practice of companies. We have emphasized that the group of actors is our ethic, given that ethics is created by the action of the group as a unique visualization. We also highlighted the inseparability of ethics and the actor in the actor group for the group's predictability. In addition, we have discussed the confrontation of different ethics within the group ethic by the actors, highlighting the conflictuality of ethics within the same structure of the group ethic and that of the managers.

Our approach to group ethics is influenced by the work of numerous authors such as Kant, Dewey, Arendt, Weber, Habermas and Luhmann. These authors have contributed to the construction of the notion of ethics and to our understanding of collective action and the construction of norms.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that our approach to group ethics is a complementary perspective to the classical approaches of individual ethics and universal ethics. It can thus serve as a bridge between these two dimensions of ethics.

The question of collective ethics in business is a complex and crucial subject that has been tackled by authors such as Habermas, MacIntyre and Rawls. They have highlighted the importance of communication, corporate social responsibility, virtue ethics and the management of conflicts of values and ethics in building a fair and equitable collective ethic within the company.

The study of the notion of free will in the construction of collective ethics was also emphasized by the various authors, highlighting the different dimensions of freedom of action and their interaction with the requirements of collective ethics.

Finally, the group ethics approach was presented as an interesting perspective for corporate ethics, enabling individual ethics to be taken into account while building a fair and equitable collective ethic. However, this approach needs to be used with care and complemented by other ethical approaches to ensure a fair and equitable ethical construct.

In short, building collective ethics in business requires a multidisciplinary approach and constant reflection on the values and ethics involved, as well as on power dynamics and value conflicts. By taking into account the different perspectives presented by the authors, companies can build a collective ethic that reflects their values and social responsibilities, while being fair and equitable for all involved.

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