

Journal of Business Ethics

Call for papers for the Special Issue on:

Fostering Dialogue Among Moral Traditions in Business Ethics: Perspectives on Theory, Research, and Practice

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Guest Editors

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Introduction to the Special Issue

Moral traditions encompass specific rules, customs, institutions, and patterns of moral reasoning that develop, through shared histories, within distinct cultures, and communities (Nyiri & Smith, 1988). Examples of such traditions, such as Buddhism, Quakerism, and Confucianism (e.g., Burton & Vu, 2021; Chu & Vu, 2021; Vu, 2021), can inform a much-needed humanistic approach for businesses that facilitates a shared connection with others and the recognition of the 'Other' as a political and ethical act in its own right (De la Cadena & Blaser, 2018). This approach is imperative given the persistence of the various global conflicts, such as the impact of intergovernmental politics/conflicts on stakeholder engagement (Esper, Barin-Cruz, & Gond, 2023), industrialization on land-based communities (Banerjee, 2018), or the divide between the Global North and South (Böhm et al., 2022). By attempting to understand specific moral traditions, we become more attuned to the diverse cultural and social values that shape an understanding of the actions of organizations and their members. Such an approach enhances our awareness of opportunities for dialogue, mutual understanding, and subsequent moral development—opportunities that promise to be particularly valuable given the need for collaboration in addressing contemporary challenges.

Despite the growing recognition of the need to understand business ethics through the lens of moral tradition, fostering dialogue among traditions (Sinnicks, 2022) is critically underexplored and yet holds intellectual significance for advancing business ethics. Rather than simply diversifying scholarship or juxtaposing different perspectives, a dialogue between moral traditions in business would facilitate a more profound recognition and understanding of underexplored voices. Dialogues among and between moral traditions can extend and transcend the limitations of existing philosophical and societal paradigms (Yu & Bunnin, 2001), as each tradition may provide insights and alternative perspectives about specific challenges facing society (Ivanhoe, 2017; Lloyd, 1996; Wong, 2020). Dialogue involves taking up the dual challenges of appealing to those initially sceptical adherents of rival traditions and endeavouring to gain insights from traditions that may

initially provoke scepticism. Scholars may consider how different expressions of specific religious traditions (e.g. Islam or Catholicism) give rise to distinct approaches influencing beliefs, practices, and ethical perspectives within their respective communities. Such dialogue may also inform various ethical perspectives that have already been influential within business ethics, such as neo-Aristotelian virtue ethics, classical liberalism, or Habermasian discourse ethics (Bernacchio, 2023). Dialogues between care ethics and Confucianism, the Ubuntu tradition, Quakerism, or Buddhism (Bell & Metz, 2011; Benner, 1997; Vu & Burton, 2022) might help us to better understand the relational qualities, skills of openness and responsiveness, and critical capacities that can both challenge and contribute to moral contextualism and moral relativism (Brogaard, 2008). Likewise, dialogues between Aristotelian and Confucian ethical accounts can provide insights into the distinct roles of families, the variations between Confucian and Aristotelian virtue ethics (such as a harmonious workplace, rituals, ethical stance, corporation as a nursery of virtues, and leadership), while also promoting cultural awareness of what may be regarded as virtuous business practices (Koehn, 2020; Sison, Ferrero, & Redín, 2020).

This special issue aims to further explore this line of inquiry by encouraging dialogue within and between moral traditions. These traditions can be religious, spiritual, ethnic, national, philosophical, or ethical in nature, with the goal of advancing business ethics theory and practice. Dialogues can take the form of inter- and intra-tradition debate, inter-philosophical and inter-faith dialogue, or highlighting surprising affinities between contrasting traditions. We seek dialogues that transcend the acceptance of relativism or irrationalism, as these perspectives may compromise the quest for a robust foundation for advancing business ethics. Instead, we encourage scholars to delve into an embedded and intersubjective rationality (McCloskey, 1998; O'Neill, 1997) to attain a more comprehensive and context-sensitive understanding of ethical challenges that have important consequences for the business world. This can be achieved not only through the synthesis of traditions in transition, i.e. those moral traditions that exist in contexts which are undergoing a period of significant change, but also through intra-tradition dialogues aimed at bolstering moral traditions by allowing them to demonstrate that they can withstand scrutiny. We welcome dialogues that can contribute to the theoretical development of the cultural construction of ethicality (Lutz, 2009) and the ethical management of cultural differences (Böhm et al., 2022), providing guidance for emic representations within traditions to be transferrable across cultures, and advancing business ethics from an anthropocentric perspective.

It is our aim in this special issue to give voice to traditions that are partly excluded or made peripheral in the field of business ethics (Böhm et al., 2022; Khan & Naguib, 2019). Critical engagement between and within traditions requires, according to Alasdair MacIntyre, “a cooperative form of dialogue, which fails insofar as it becomes too adversarial” (2016, p.205), even when disagreements are profound. In this spirit, we seek contributions that pursue new insights and challenge existing assumptions.

Research questions and themes related to this Special Issue include, but are not limited to:

Concrete ethical implications of moral traditions

- What are the consequences of moral traditions in transition (e.g., intergenerational conflict)? How can businesses assess and adapt their ethical practices to align with the shifting values and expectations of stakeholders?
- (How) can divergent moral traditions be synthesised or disaggregated to advance the field of business ethics?
- What ethical issues in business and the workplace arise when one moral tradition displaces another?

Debates between different moral traditions

- Comparative studies of specific moral traditions and their contributions to the field of business ethics, e.g., Pope Francis's reinterpretation of Catholic Social Teaching (Bernacchio, 2019).
- Debates between traditions that encompass topics such as business responsibilities, the role of business in society, the ethical nature of work, and the utilization of technology.
- To what extent do differences between traditions pose ethical problems and challenges in managing or working in places where different norms and values clash?

Debates between rival factions of moral traditions

- Intra-tradition dialogues to advance business ethics, for instance between liberal and conservative wings of various religious traditions and their implications for business ethics.
- Intra-tradition dialogues that encompass a geographic dimension where different communities in different social and cultural contexts dispute the central tenets of the tradition and how such disagreements impact business ethics.
- How do rival factions within moral traditions approach ethical decision-making, and what criteria do they prioritize when faced with moral dilemmas? This can be related to, for example, environmental ethics (ecocentrism vs. anthropocentrism), political corporate social responsibility (CSR) (paradigmatic position vs. normative stance), etc.

Submission Instructions

Submission to this Special Issue must be made through Editorial Manager by 1 February 2025, and authors must indicate that their submission is for this Special Issue of the Journal of Business Ethics. The online submission system will start accepting submissions 60 days before the call for papers submission deadline. We strongly encourage authors to refer to the JBE's submission guidelines for detailed instructions. Any questions regarding this Special Issue, please address to Mai Vu at mai.c.vu@northumbria.ac.uk.

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