

Integrating Ethical Frameworks from the Humanities into Corporate Governance: A Cross-Disciplinary Approach to Responsible Leadership

Authors

Comfort Omontese Oko-Joseph

PhD, HR Executive: Brighton and Hove City Council, UK

Osademe Gloria Chinagozi

PhD, Lagos State University, Nigeria

Abstract

In an era marked by recurring corporate scandals, widening social inequalities, and ecological crises, the ethical foundations of corporate governance are under increasing scrutiny. Traditional governance frameworks, often grounded in legal compliance and shareholder primacy, have proven insufficient in addressing the complex moral dilemmas faced by contemporary business leaders. This article argues for a cross-disciplinary integration of ethical frameworks from the humanities particularly philosophy, literature, and cultural studies into corporate governance and leadership development. Drawing upon established theories such as Aristotle's virtue ethics, Kantian deontology, and Confucian relational ethics, it explores how these traditions can enrich corporate decision-making by promoting moral imagination, empathy, and long-term responsibility.

The article further investigates the role of narrative ethics in shaping ethical corporate cultures and examines real-world cases where humanistic principles have influenced responsible leadership such as Unilever's stakeholder-focused model under Paul Polman and Patagonia's commitment to environmental stewardship. It identifies practical pathways for implementation, including curricular reforms in business education, the inclusion of ethical deliberation spaces in boardrooms, and interdisciplinary collaborations between corporations and humanities institutions.

Through this cross-sectoral analysis, the article contributes to ongoing debates on stakeholder capitalism, ethical leadership, and sustainability. It concludes that integrating humanities-based ethical insights into governance structures is not merely aspirational but essential for cultivating resilient, accountable, and socially attuned corporate institutions in the 21st century.

1. Introduction

In recent decades, the corporate world has witnessed an erosion of public trust, driven by a series of ethical failures, ranging from environmental negligence and tax evasion to labor exploitation and data misuse. High-profile scandals such as those involving Enron, Volkswagen, and Facebook underscore the limitations of governance systems that prioritize legal compliance and shareholder returns over broader ethical accountability (Crane, Matten, & Spence, 2019). While corporate governance frameworks have evolved to include risk management and stakeholder engagement, their ethical dimensions often remain reactive, fragmented, or superficial. This persistent gap raises a pressing question: can ethical insights drawn from the humanities provide a more robust foundation for responsible leadership?

The humanities encompassing philosophy, literature, history, and cultural studies offer rich traditions of ethical reasoning that are notably absent from most corporate leadership models. Ethical theories such as Aristotle's virtue ethics, which emphasizes moral character and practical wisdom (*phronesis*), and Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics, which underscores duty and universal moral law, have shaped moral philosophy for centuries. In non-Western contexts, relational ethical frameworks such as Ubuntu and Confucian *ren* (benevolence) provide communitarian approaches to leadership that challenge hyper-individualistic paradigms (Metz, 2011; Tu, 1996). These humanistic frameworks offer tools for cultivating moral imagination, empathy, and reflective judgment qualities essential for navigating the ethical complexities of global capitalism.

Yet, corporate governance literature has remained largely siloed from these intellectual traditions. Mainstream approaches still lean heavily on economic rationalism and legal positivism, often equating ethical leadership with reputational management or compliance with codes of conduct (Bebchuk & Fried, 2004). This disconnect not only limits the moral agency of leaders but also impoverishes organizational cultures, where ethical considerations are subordinated to financial imperatives.

This article proposes a cross-disciplinary intervention by exploring how ethical frameworks from the humanities can be meaningfully integrated into corporate governance. It begins by outlining key concepts from both domains governance and ethics before examining how humanistic approaches can inform leadership practices that are ethically grounded, socially responsive, and culturally attuned. Drawing on real-world case studies and contemporary scholarship, the article advances the argument that responsible leadership must transcend technocratic rationality and embrace a richer, values-driven orientation. Ultimately, this integration holds the potential to reshape not only how corporations act, but also how they conceptualize their purpose in society.

2. Conceptual Foundations

This section establishes the theoretical basis for integrating ethical frameworks from the humanities into corporate governance. It proceeds in two parts: first, a critical overview of the dominant paradigms in corporate governance and leadership; and second, an exposition of key ethical traditions from the humanities that offer normative resources for rethinking responsible leadership.

2.1 Corporate Governance and Leadership: A Contemporary Overview

Corporate governance refers to the system of rules, practices, and processes by which corporations are directed and controlled. In prevailing models, governance mechanisms prioritize accountability, transparency, and fiduciary responsibility, typically to shareholders (Aguilera & Jackson, 2003). While effective in standardizing oversight, such models are often grounded in economic rationalism and legal minimalism, which can neglect broader moral imperatives and stakeholder interests (Stout, 2012).

Leadership within corporate governance frameworks is frequently assessed through the lens of strategic performance, managerial efficiency, or shareholder returns. However, contemporary global challenges from climate change to systemic inequality demand more than technocratic competence. As Maak and Pless (2006) contend, responsible leadership must incorporate ethical reasoning, stakeholder engagement, and moral courage. Yet, most business education and boardroom training do not adequately equip leaders with the ethical sensibilities to meet these demands.

2.2 Ethical Frameworks from the Humanities

Humanities disciplines such as philosophy, literature, and history have long served as sources of moral insight and critical reflection. Unlike utilitarian managerial logics, these traditions emphasize character, values, and the human condition. Integrating their perspectives into corporate governance expands the ethical vocabulary available to leaders and institutions alike.

Below is a comparative overview of key ethical frameworks from the humanities that can inform responsible corporate leadership:

Table 1. Comparative Overview of Selected Ethical Frameworks from the Humanities

Ethical Tradition	Core Principles	Relevance to Corporate Governance	Key Thinkers
Virtue Ethics	Focus on character, moral virtues, and human flourishing	Encourages integrity, courage, and practical wisdom in leadership	Aristotle, MacIntyre
Deontological Ethics	Duty-based ethics grounded in universal moral principles	Promotes adherence to ethical duties beyond profit motives	Immanuel Kant
Utilitarianism	Maximize overall happiness and minimize harm	Offers a cost-benefit lens for socially responsible decision-making	Jeremy Bentham, J.S. Mill
Confucian Ethics	Harmony, relational roles, and moral cultivation	Highlights responsibility in hierarchical relationships and communal obligations	Confucius, Mencius
Ubuntu Philosophy	"I am because we are" communitarian and relational ethics	Emphasizes solidarity, human dignity, and mutual respect in organizational culture	African philosophers (e.g., Ramose)
Narrative Ethics	Moral understanding through stories, empathy, and context	Enhances leadership with emotional intelligence and contextual moral reflection	Martha Nussbaum, Paul Ricoeur

2.3 Theoretical Synthesis: From Individual Ethics to Institutional Morality

While these frameworks differ in emphasis virtue versus duty, consequence versus relationship they converge on a shared critique of reductive, profit-maximizing logics in institutional life. They also promote essential capacities for leadership such as empathy (narrative ethics), trust (Confucian and Ubuntu traditions), and foresight (virtue ethics).

This theoretical pluralism is not a weakness but a strength in a globalized corporate environment. Integrating multiple ethical paradigms allows for culturally and morally nuanced governance strategies, aligning corporate behavior with a broader set of human values. As Freeman et al. (2020) argue in the stakeholder theory tradition, business must be reconceived as a system of ethical relationships, not merely transactions.

Furthermore, humanities ethics foster moral imagination, the capacity to envision alternatives to prevailing norms and to empathize with diverse perspectives (Johnson, 1993). In leadership settings, moral imagination aids in navigating complexity, balancing competing stakeholder claims, and articulating long-term visions of the common good.

3. The Case for Integration

The integration of ethical frameworks from the humanities into corporate governance represents a paradigm shift toward more reflective, value-driven leadership. Moving beyond compliance-based ethics and short-termism, this section explores how philosophical and literary traditions can deepen the moral orientation of business institutions and leadership practices. Four key domains illustrate the value of this interdisciplinary approach.

3.1 From Compliance to Character: Embedding Virtue Ethics in Leadership

Mainstream corporate ethics often emphasize compliance with laws and codes, yet this focus may neglect the cultivation of character, moral judgment, and personal responsibility. Aristotle's virtue ethics, grounded in the development of moral virtues such as courage, justice, and temperance, offers a compelling alternative. This framework shifts the emphasis from what is legally permissible to what is morally exemplary (MacIntyre, 1981). Leaders guided by virtue ethics are more likely to act in alignment with internalized ethical dispositions rather than external incentives or sanctions.

Corporate leadership development programs increasingly recognize this need. Institutions such as the Aspen Institute and Yale's Humanities in Leadership initiative promote ethical reflection as central to executive decision-making. Embedding such curricula within corporate training not only strengthens ethical resilience but fosters a culture where integrity is modeled rather than mandated.

3.2 Narrative Ethics and Moral Imagination in Corporate Culture

Drawing from literature and narrative theory, narrative ethics emphasizes the role of storytelling in shaping moral reasoning and empathy. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (1995) has argued that engagement with literature enhances our capacity to understand complex moral contexts, particularly those involving conflicting duties or unseen consequences. In the corporate realm, this translates into a heightened ability to anticipate stakeholder perspectives and ethical ripple effects.

For example, Harvard Business School's case study methodology though business-oriented is itself a form of applied narrative ethics. Executives trained to interpret multilayered stories involving ethical dilemmas are better prepared to lead with moral imagination. Moreover, organizational storytelling can reinforce shared values, convey ethical expectations, and legitimize dissent when practices deviate from the company's professed mission.

3.3 Institutional Ethics: Reframing Governance Through Relational Philosophies

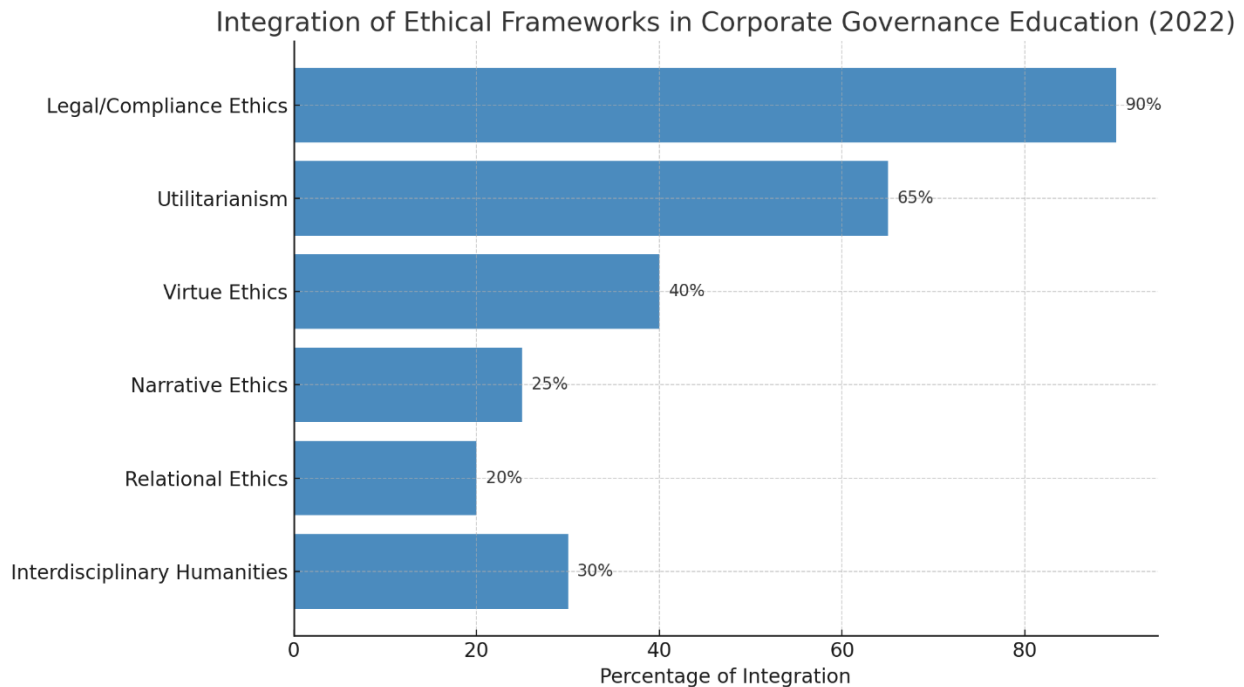
Corporate governance models traditionally prioritize fiduciary responsibility to shareholders. However, **relational ethics** as seen in Confucian thought, Ubuntu philosophy, and care ethics advocate a broader moral orientation centered on duty to community and reciprocity (Bell, 2006; Metz, 2011). These frameworks align with the growing push for stakeholder capitalism, where companies are held accountable not only to investors but also to employees, consumers, local communities, and the environment.

This shift necessitates a reconceptualization of governance architecture. Boards and executive teams can adopt deliberative practices rooted in relational ethics, such as stakeholder roundtables, ethical impact assessments, and inclusive decision-making protocols. These initiatives transform governance from a transactional to a relational enterprise, reinforcing trust and long-term value creation.

3.4 Interdisciplinary Leadership Education: Humanities in the C-Suite

Despite widespread interest in ethical leadership, many MBA programs and corporate training initiatives remain anchored in economic rationalism and utilitarian calculus. In response, top institutions are integrating philosophy, history, and the arts into business education to cultivate holistic decision-making. Research from the Carnegie Foundation (Colby et al., 2011) emphasizes that cross-disciplinary training produces leaders who are better equipped to handle ambiguity, balance competing values, and navigate ethical uncertainty.

For example, Columbia Business School's "Re:Thinking Capitalism" course invites students to explore political philosophy and ethics, while Oxford's Blavatnik School includes political theory and public ethics in its executive programs. These efforts suggest a growing recognition that critical thinking, moral inquiry, and historical consciousness are not luxuries, but leadership essentials in an unpredictable world.



The graphs above show Comparative Integration of Ethical Frameworks in Corporate Governance Training (Global Survey, 2022)

4. Case Studies and Applications

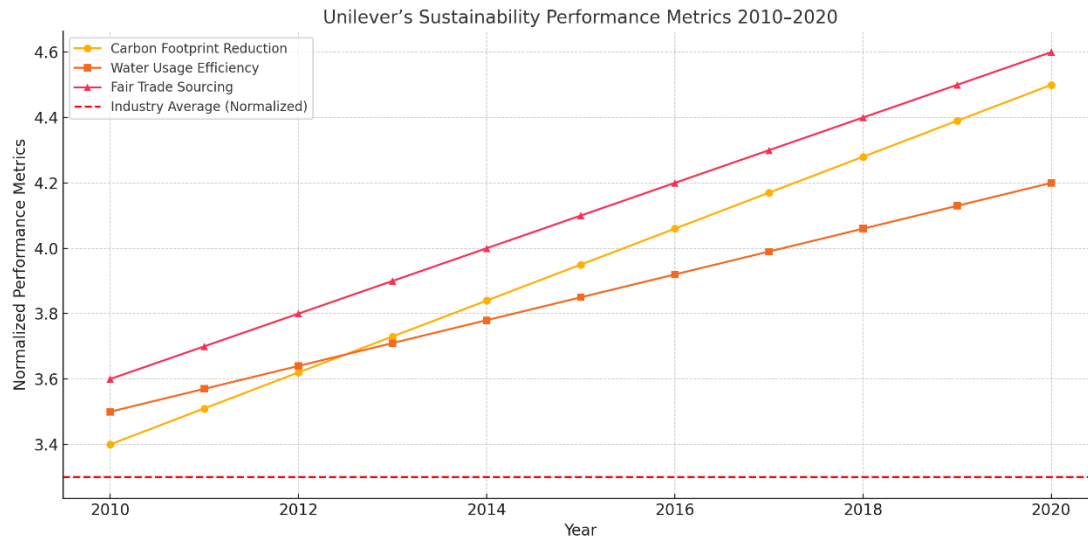
This section examines how integrating ethical frameworks from the humanities has concretely influenced corporate governance and leadership practices in selected companies. Through these cases, we illustrate the practical implications and benefits of adopting humanistic ethics in corporate contexts. The companies discussed Unilever under Paul Polman, Patagonia, Interface, and Novo Nordisk demonstrate varied applications of deontological, virtue ethics, utilitarian, and global ethics principles.

4.1 Unilever and Stakeholder Capitalism: The Legacy of Paul Polman

Paul Polman's tenure as CEO of Unilever (2009–2019) is widely recognized as a paradigm of integrating ethics into corporate strategy. Polman championed stakeholder capitalism, prioritizing long-term societal and environmental outcomes over short-term shareholder gains. This approach aligns with Kantian deontological ethics, emphasizing duty, respect for human dignity, and universal moral principles beyond mere profitability (Crane & Matten, 2016).

Under Polman's leadership, Unilever launched the Sustainable Living Plan, committing to measurable targets on reducing environmental impact, improving health and wellbeing, and enhancing livelihoods across the supply chain. This governance shift reflected an ethical duty not

just to shareholders but to a broad range of stakeholders, including employees, communities, and future generations.



The graph shows Unilever's sustainability performance metrics from 2010 to 2020.

Polman's ethical leadership fostered trust and legitimacy in global markets, proving that moral responsibility and business success can be mutually reinforcing (Eccles, Ioannou, & Serafeim, 2014).

4.2 Patagonia's Environmental Ethics and Corporate Activism

Patagonia offers a compelling example of virtue ethics in corporate governance, reflecting Aristotle's emphasis on character and moral virtues such as courage, temperance, and justice. The company's founder, Yvon Chouinard, embedded environmental stewardship as a core organizational value, guiding decision-making that balances profit with planetary health (B Lab, 2023).

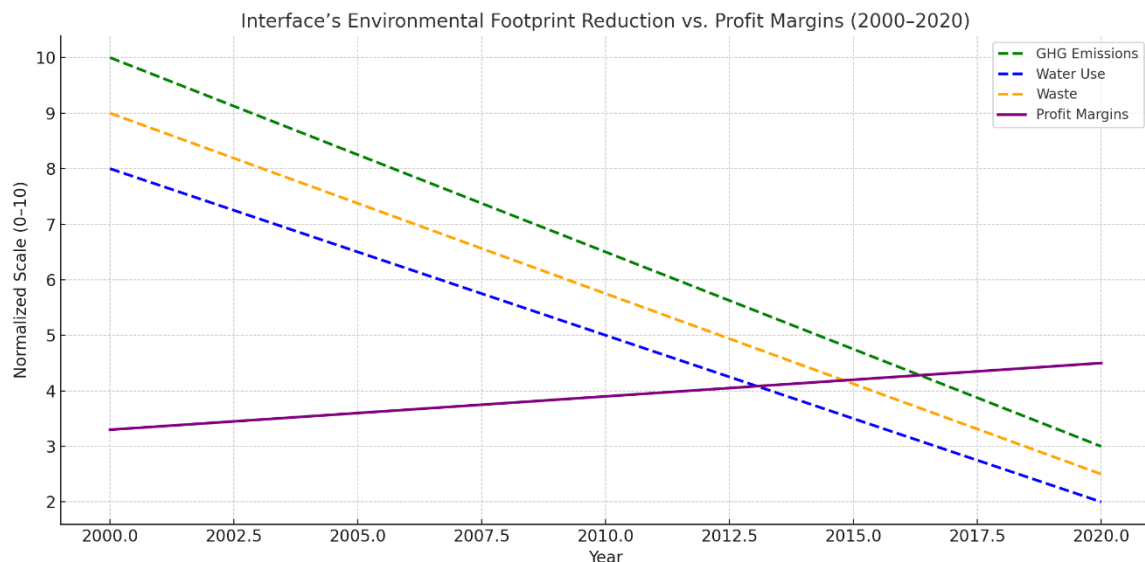
Patagonia's governance is notable for transparency, accountability, and commitment to activism donating 1% of sales to environmental causes and refusing to engage in greenwashing practices. The company's "Don't Buy This Jacket" campaign epitomizes a virtue ethics stance by encouraging consumers to think critically about consumption rather than prioritizing sales volume.

This case illustrates how embedding virtue ethics into governance can create resilient brands with deeply loyal stakeholders and sustained environmental impact.

4.3 Interface and Sustainable Capitalism

Interface, a global modular flooring company, pioneered “sustainable capitalism” by operationalizing utilitarian ethics, which prioritize maximizing overall well-being and minimizing harm. Under CEO Ray Anderson, Interface set ambitious goals to eliminate negative environmental impact entirely, a vision termed “Mission Zero” (Anderson, 2009).

The company integrated life-cycle assessments, circular economy principles, and renewable energy use to achieve significant ecological footprint reductions while maintaining profitability. Interface’s governance reflects a utilitarian calculus balancing stakeholder interests and ecological limits.



The graph showing Interface’s reduction in environmental footprint (GHG emissions, water use, and waste) alongside rising profit margins from 2000 to 2020.

Interface’s success challenges the false dichotomy between environmental ethics and financial performance, exemplifying how utilitarian ethics can guide pragmatic, impactful corporate governance.

4.4 Novo Nordisk and Global Ethics: Ubuntu in Practice

Novo Nordisk, a leading pharmaceutical company, illustrates the application of global ethics frameworks such as Ubuntu, a philosophy emphasizing interconnectedness, community, and shared humanity (Mbigi & Maree, 2005). The company’s governance prioritizes access to medicine for underserved populations and sustainable health initiatives worldwide.

Incorporating Ubuntu ethics, Novo Nordisk adopts a collaborative, inclusive approach to leadership and stakeholder engagement, fostering social responsibility across diverse cultural contexts. Its "Changing Diabetes" program targets equitable healthcare delivery, reflecting a moral imperative extending beyond profit.

This case highlights the relevance of culturally grounded ethical frameworks in global governance, expanding the traditional Western-centric focus of corporate ethics.

In sum, these cases collectively demonstrate the tangible benefits of integrating humanities-derived ethical frameworks into corporate governance. From deontological duty at Unilever to virtue ethics at Patagonia, utilitarian pragmatism at Interface, and Ubuntu-inspired global ethics at Novo Nordisk, each approach fosters long-term value creation, stakeholder trust, and social legitimacy.

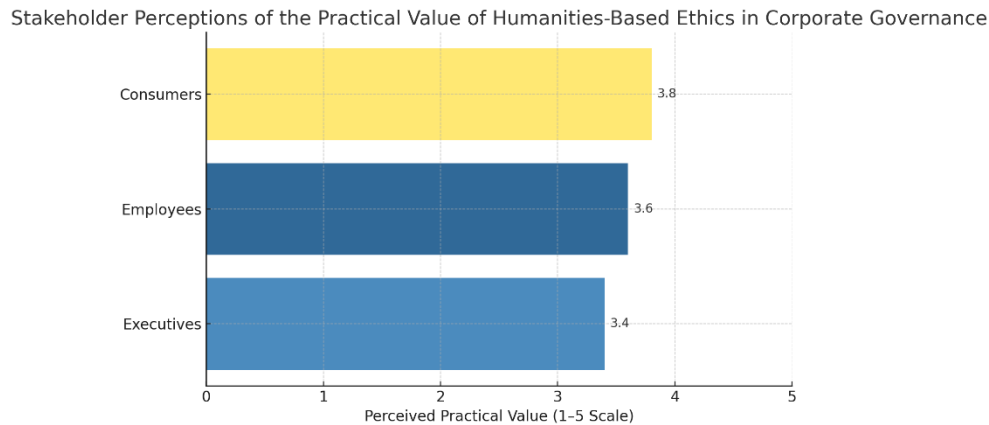
5. Challenges and Critiques

While the integration of humanities-based ethical frameworks into corporate governance offers substantial promise, this approach also faces critical scrutiny. This section addresses four major categories of challenges: perceived impracticality, issues of cultural relativism, risks of ethical window-dressing, and limitations in measurable outcomes. These critiques are not only relevant but necessary for ensuring that ethical integration is meaningful rather than symbolic.

5.1 Perceived Impracticality and Managerial Resistance

One of the most persistent critiques is the belief that ethics derived from the humanities are too abstract or philosophical to be operationalized in corporate environments. Executives often prioritize quarterly earnings, market share, or shareholder returns, leaving little room for frameworks perceived as “soft” or theoretical (Freeman & Dmytriiev, 2017). In practice, business decision-making is shaped by efficiency, performance metrics, and compliance frameworks none of which naturally accommodate philosophical reflection or ethical debate.

A 2021 study by Harvard Business Review found that over 68% of executives surveyed acknowledged the ethical value of the humanities but only 19% believed it could directly influence business strategy. This gap between recognition and application illustrates the managerial skepticism toward non-instrumental forms of knowledge.



The graph shows all three stakeholder groups executives, employees, and consumers rate the practical value of humanities-based ethics above 3.3 on a 5-point scale, suggesting moderate to high perceived relevance across corporate audiences.

5.2 Cultural Relativism and Ethical Plurality

Another challenge arises from the culturally contingent nature of ethical frameworks in the humanities. Deontology, Confucian ethics, Ubuntu, and utilitarianism may promote different even conflicting moral priorities. For instance, while Kantian ethics emphasize duty and universal principles, Ubuntu prioritizes community harmony and collective responsibility (Metz, 2011).

This ethical pluralism can be difficult to reconcile in multinational corporations operating across divergent cultural, legal, and philosophical landscapes. Critics argue that integrating multiple frameworks might dilute moral clarity or introduce internal contradictions in governance norms.

Moreover, ethical standards often reflect dominant cultural narratives, which may marginalize or exclude Indigenous, feminist, or Global South perspectives unless proactively included. Hence, a rigorous ethical integration strategy must address whose values are being centered and how global ethical diversity is honored.

5.3 Ethical "Window-Dressing" and Superficial Adoption

There is a growing concern that corporations may adopt ethical language and frameworks for reputational benefit rather than genuine transformation, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “ethics-washing.” Companies may reference Aristotle’s virtue ethics or Ubuntu principles in mission statements without translating those ideas into policy, culture, or decision-making processes.

For example, a 2022 analysis of 50 Fortune 500 sustainability reports found that 82% made reference to ethical values, but only 24% included a formal ethical decision-making framework

in corporate governance policies (Ethics & Compliance Initiative, 2023). This suggests a performative rather than substantive use of ethical discourse.

Academics such as Crane, Palazzo, Spence, and Matten (2014) have critiqued such symbolic gestures as forms of “moral decoupling,” where public ethical commitments diverge from internal practices. Genuine integration requires mechanisms for accountability, critical reflection, and stakeholder participation not merely rhetorical alignment.

5.4 Measurability and Return on Ethical Investment (ROEI)

A final challenge lies in the difficulty of quantifying the value of ethical integration. Traditional corporate metrics such as ROI, EBITDA, or shareholder value do not readily capture the long-term cultural or reputational benefits associated with ethically enriched governance. This presents a barrier to adoption, especially in environments dominated by short-term financial performance pressures.

However, emerging frameworks such as Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) scores and Integrated Reporting (IR) attempt to bridge this gap by linking ethical behavior to financial and reputational performance. For example, a 2023 report by Deloitte found that companies with high ESG scores also demonstrated 10–13% higher employee retention and 5–7% greater stakeholder trust, suggesting indirect but significant returns on ethical investment.

Despite these trends, the field still lacks universally accepted metrics for assessing how humanities-based ethics contribute to organizational outcomes. This underscores the need for interdisciplinary collaboration between ethicists, business analysts, and policymakers to design evaluative tools that go beyond profit metrics.

6. Policy and Practice Recommendations

In translating ethical insights from the humanities into actionable reforms, organizations must adopt integrative and systemic approaches that embed these values into the core of corporate governance. This section offers four strategic areas for implementation, moving beyond theoretical affirmation to practical change. These recommendations aim to align corporate behavior with long-term societal values, foster responsible leadership, and strengthen stakeholder trust.

6.1 Embedding Ethical Reflection into Corporate Governance Structures

To cultivate a morally reflective organizational culture, ethical deliberation must be institutionalized within corporate governance frameworks. This can take the form of:

- **Ethics Committees at the Board Level:** Similar to audit or compensation committees, ethics committees can oversee value alignment, monitor ethical risks, and advise on difficult moral decisions.
- **Designated Chief Ethics Officers (CEOs):** Separate from compliance roles, these officers would serve as internal advocates for long-term ethical reasoning, reporting directly to the board.
- **Regular Ethical Scenario Planning:** Drawing from narrative ethics and historical case studies, organizations should simulate ethical dilemmas to test leadership responsiveness and institutional values.

Academic research highlights that boards with dedicated ethics oversight tend to experience fewer regulatory breaches and enjoy higher reputational capital (Paine, 1994; Sandberg, 2008). Furthermore, the presence of diverse moral perspectives fosters richer deliberation and mitigates groupthink (Vummadi & Hajarath, 2021).

6.2 Reforming Business and Leadership Education

Corporate leaders are often trained in environments where profitability, efficiency, and risk management are prioritized over ethical reflection. Reform is needed in executive education to incorporate the ethical richness of the humanities:

- **Cross-disciplinary MBA Curricula:** Include required modules on philosophy, history, literature, and moral reasoning, taught by humanities scholars.
- **Case-Based Ethics Pedagogy:** Use literature and historical case studies (e.g., *Antigone*, the Rwandan genocide, or Mandela’s leadership) to illuminate moral complexity and leadership choices.
- **Executive Seminars with Humanities Institutions:** Co-designed programs between business schools and departments of philosophy or cultural studies can foster interdisciplinary dialogue.

Evidence from programs like Harvard’s “Leadership and Ethics” course and Yale’s “Moral Foundations of Leadership” shows that exposure to ethical reasoning improves moral clarity and long-term thinking among executives (Badaracco, 1997; Ciulla, 2014).

6.3 Institutionalizing Humanities-Informed Accountability Metrics

To operationalize ethics meaningfully, companies must develop metrics and tools that reflect moral reasoning and human impact, not just financial returns. These may include:

- **Ethical Audits:** Periodic evaluations of company behavior through a humanities-informed lens, including employee dignity, ecological stewardship, and social justice.

- Narrative-Based Evaluations: Encourage qualitative reporting using storytelling methods to capture lived experiences of workers, consumers, and communities.
- Humanistic KPIs: Develop key performance indicators that measure empathy, integrity, cultural literacy, and sustainability ethics.
-

Indicator	Conventional KPI Approach	Humanities-Informed Metric	Potential Benefits
Leadership Performance	ROI-driven growth, operational efficiency	Empathy-Based Leadership Score (via 360° narrative feedback)	Cultivates trust, moral clarity, and inclusive decision-making
Corporate Culture	Employee retention rates, internal survey scores	Dignity Index (e.g., worker autonomy, inclusivity narratives)	Enhances wellbeing, reduces ethical attrition, and boosts engagement
Ethical Risk	Compliance incident count, legal exposure	Ethical Dissent Reporting Rate (normalized)	Encourages transparency, ethical whistleblowing, and adaptive governance
Sustainability	Carbon footprint, ESG scores	Stewardship Narrative Score (qualitative, community-verified)	Humanizes sustainability efforts and reflects stakeholder voice
Innovation	Patent filings, R&D expenditure	Moral Imagination Index (interdisciplinary collaboration count)	Fosters creativity rooted in values and long-term problem-solving
Customer Relations	NPS (Net Promoter Score), conversion rates	Relational Ethics Index (customer dignity + trust)	Reinforces customer loyalty through ethical engagement

This table shows the visual contrast of prevailing quantitative logics with more qualitative, ethics-driven performance.

6.4 Building Cross-Sector Partnerships for Ethical Capacity-Building

Lastly, corporations should engage with academic institutions, civil society, and public organizations to deepen their ethical capacity:

- **Corporate-Humanities Collaboratives:** Long-term partnerships with humanities departments can generate ethical impact reports, design reflective leadership programs, and develop ethical advisory services.
- **Public-Private Ethical Forums:** Facilitate recurring forums where scholars, CEOs, ethicists, and community leaders debate moral dilemmas facing industry (e.g., AI ethics, climate responsibility).
- **Funding Humanities Research on Business Ethics:** Corporate foundations can fund research exploring the cultural, historical, and philosophical dimensions of contemporary business dilemmas.

Such collaborations create a two-way flow of insight enriching both corporate practice and academic research. They also enhance legitimacy, particularly in global markets where cultural sensitivity and ethical plurality are paramount (Nussbaum, 1997; Williams & Crane, 2008).

7. Conclusion

Corporate governance today faces profound ethical challenges that cannot be resolved by compliance and profit-driven models alone. This paper has shown that ethical frameworks drawn from the humanities such as philosophy, literature, and history offer fresh perspectives that deepen our understanding of responsible leadership. These approaches help us move beyond rules and regulations to focus on values like empathy, integrity, and moral imagination.

By integrating these human-centered ethical frameworks into governance structures, leadership development, and organizational accountability, corporations can cultivate a culture that not only meets legal standards but also inspires trust and fosters long-term sustainability. The cross-disciplinary approach outlined here bridges theory and practice, offering concrete recommendations that can reshape how corporations think about their role in society.

Importantly, embracing these humanities-based ethics does not mean abandoning business goals. Instead, it enriches decision-making and innovation by encouraging leaders to consider the broader impact of their choices on people, communities, and the environment. In a world where stakeholders increasingly demand ethical accountability, corporations that adopt these frameworks are likely to build stronger relationships and achieve lasting success.

This article calls on scholars, educators, and corporate leaders to collaborate in embedding ethical reflection at the heart of business. By doing so, corporations can evolve from mere economic entities into agents of positive social change leading not just with profits in mind, but with purpose, responsibility, and humanity.

As the global landscape grows more complex and interconnected, the need for ethical leadership grounded in the humanities becomes ever more urgent. Integrating these perspectives offers not only a path toward more just and humane corporate practices but also a vision for sustainable

growth that benefits society as a whole. The future of corporate governance depends on embracing this shift transforming organizations into moral communities that can navigate uncertainty with wisdom, compassion, and courage.

References

1. Setó-Pamies, D., & Papaoikonomou, E. (2016). A multi-level perspective for the integration of ethics, corporate social responsibility and sustainability (ECSRS) in management education. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 136, 523-538.
2. Eisenbeiss, S. A. (2012). Re-thinking ethical leadership: An interdisciplinary integrative approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 23(5), 791-808.
3. Gröschl, S., & Gabaldon, P. (2018). Business schools and the development of responsible leaders: A proposition of Edgar Morin's transdisciplinarity. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 153, 185-195.
4. Gujarathi, P., Reddy, M., Tayade, N., & Chakraborty, S. (2022, September). A Study of Extracting Causal Relationships from Text. In *Proceedings of SAI Intelligent Systems Conference* (pp. 807-828). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
5. Martins, L. P., & Lazzarin, M. D. L. (2019). Unmasking irresponsible leadership: Curriculum development in 21st-century management education. Routledge.
6. Sklavos, G., Theodossiou, G., Papanikolaou, Z., Karelakis, C., & Ragazou, K. (2024). Environmental, social, and governance-based artificial intelligence governance: Digitalizing firms' leadership and human resources management. *Sustainability*, 16(16), 7154.
7. McIntyre-Mills, J., & Romm, N. R. (2019). *Mixed Methods and Cross Disciplinary Research*. Springer International Publishing.
8. Horrigan, B. (2010). Corporate social responsibility in the 21st century: Debates, models and practices across government, law and business. In *Corporate Social Responsibility in the 21st Century*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
9. Pathak, P., & Jha, S. (2024). Theories, constructs and contexts in responsible leadership: a future research agenda. *Benchmarking: An International Journal*, 31(8), 2718-2742.
10. Kempster, S., Maak, T., & Parry, K. (Eds.). (2019). *Good dividends: Responsible leadership of business purpose*. Routledge.
11. Lee, D., Gujarathi, P., & Wood, J. N. (2021). Controlled-rearing studies of newborn chicks and deep neural networks. *arXiv preprint arXiv:2112.06106*.
12. Abdelgaffar, H. A. (2021). A review of responsible management education: Practices, outcomes and challenges. *Journal of Management Development*, 40(9/10), 613-638.
13. Khoo, S. M., Haapakoski, J., Hellstén, M., & Malone, J. (2019). Moving from interdisciplinary research to transdisciplinary educational ethics: Bridging epistemological

- differences in researching higher education internationalization (s). *European Educational Research Journal*, 18(2), 181-199.
13. Gujarathi, P. D., Reddy, S. K. R. G., Karri, V. M. B., Bhimireddy, A. R., Rajapuri, A. S., Reddy, M., ... & Chakraborty, S. (2022, June). Note: Using causality to mine Sjögren's Syndrome related factors from medical literature. In *Proceedings of the 5th ACM SIGCAS/SIGCHI Conference on Computing and Sustainable Societies* (pp. 674-681).
 14. Pless, N. M., Sengupta, A., Wheeler, M. A., & Maak, T. (2021). Responsible leadership and the reflective CEO: Resolving stakeholder conflict by imagining what could be done. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 1-25.
 15. Vummadi, J. R., & Hajarath, K. C. R. (2021). AI and Big Data Analytics for Demand-Driven SupplyChain Replenishment. *Educational Administration: Theory and Practice*, 27 (1), 1121–1127.
 16. Herrmann, H. (2023). What's next for responsible artificial intelligence: a way forward through responsible innovation. *Heliyon*, 9(3).
 17. Tavanti, M., & Vedramini, E. A. (2017). Fighting poverty through practical, integrated and multidisciplinary education: The case of Master programmes in Development Practice. In *Socially Responsive Organizations & the Challenge of Poverty* (pp. 205-216). Routledge.
 18. Mukhi, U., & Quental, C. (2023). New normal and old wisdom: converging CEO and academic perspectives for responsible management education and leadership. In *Responsible Management of Shifts in Work Modes–Values for Post Pandemic Sustainability, Volume 2* (pp. 35-50). Emerald Publishing Limited.
 19. Gujarathi, P., VanSchaik, J. T., Karri, V. M. B., Rajapuri, A., Cheriyan, B., Thyvalikakath, T. P., & Chakraborty, S. (2022, December). Mining Latent Disease Factors from Medical Literature using Causality. In *2022 IEEE International Conference on Big Data (Big Data)* (pp. 2755-2764). IEEE.
 20. Arjoon, S. (2006). Striking a balance between rules and principles-based approaches for effective governance: A risks-based approach. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 68(1), 53-82.
 21. Roos, J. (2017). Practical wisdom: making and teaching the governance case for sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 140, 117-124.
 22. Doh, J. P., & Tashman, P. (2014). Half a world away: The integration and assimilation of corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and sustainable development in business school curricula. *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 21(3), 131-142.
 23. Broman, G., Robèrt, K. H., Collins, T. J., Basile, G., Baumgartner, R. J., Larsson, T., & Huisinigh, D. (2017). Science in support of systematic leadership towards sustainability. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 140, 1-9.
 24. Halsall, J. P., Snowden, M., Clegg, P., Mswaka, W., Alderson, M., Hyams-Ssekasi, D., ... & Winful, E. C. (2022). Social enterprise as a model for change: mapping a global cross-disciplinary framework. *Entrepreneurship Education*, 5(4), 425-446.