https://doi.org/10.37708/ezs.swu.bg.v24i3.15

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE-BASED ETHICS WITH DERRIDA

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ABSTRACT: The speed and precision of AI may weaken subjects' capacity for reflective decision-making. Intensified personalization raises concerns about preference manipulation and diminished individual autonomy, as well as privacy risks. Studies in AI and its market indicate that ethical principles are frequently abandoned in favor of financial outcomes. Given the prevalence of empirical applications of AI that bypass deeper normative reflection, a theoretical investigation of its ethical impacts in marketing, business and the corporate world becomes essential. A central but underexplored challenge concerns the temporal limits of ethical reflection within an increasingly accelerated AI-based corporate ecosystem. As speed is crucial to market novelty and competitive advantage, examining how ethics can keep pace or develop its own "ethical velocity" is increasingly urgent. This theoretical essay undertakes a conceptual analysis of AI ethics in the corporate world literature and, drawing on Jacques Derrida, reflects on the possibility of an AI-based ethics capable of ethical timing. Derrida has been used to think about ethics, though not at the intersection of business, ethics, and AI. Our contribution is to use Derrida's ethical argumentation to generate a new ethics through AI, rather than merely applying established ethical frameworks to AI that run the risk of becoming outdated with new technological changes or justifying existing political and economic dangers of such technologies in the corporate world. A "Derridean algorithm" for a non-deterministic ethical AI decision-making would require: (1) decisions that remain genuinely difficult, and (2) decisions highly improbable for agents who typically benefit from unethical outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Artificial Intelligence, Ethics, Business, Management, Derrida

Introduction

The recent introduction of generative AI technologies, with their creative capabilities grounded in the ability to reproduce and produce novelty based on the generation of statistical connections of data in a recursive manner capable of auto-correction – not merely pre-programmed but emerging processually through their connections over time – and their capacity to generate data with little or even no archived content, originating from unprecedented prompts (Kamath et al., 2024; Flasiński, 2016), has led to a growing number of investigations into the role of these technologies in one of the fields where novelty often serves as a necessary element for increasing the value of objects and discourses: marketing and business. It is necessary to ethically reflect on AI's effects on the ways of making markets and business as activities that are central to communal living and may distort this commonality. A growing intersection between AI, marketing and

business compels us to recognize that the way AI produces novelty might have ethical implications that existing frameworks for marketing and business ethics, established before the era of generative AI, cannot adequately address. A search in the *Web of Science* database, on April 7th, 2026, reveals that a query for "artificial intelligence" and "marketing" yields 11,579 results, "artificial intelligence" and "business", 9,986 results, and "management" and "AI" 42,664 results, while the same terms combined with "ethics" yield only 456, 552 and 1093 results respectively. This comparison highlights that the ethical consideration of AI in marketing, business and management is, at least quantitatively, underrepresented relative to studies on AI applications. AI is applied more frequently than its ethical dimensions are examined. This, in itself, is an alarming finding. Given the harmful impacts that the corporate world can have in creating unstainable needs that lead to destructive ways of life – economically, politically, ethically, and environmentally – and in light of the dominance of empirical work applying AI technologies without engaging in deep ethical reflection, it is necessary to understand, at a theoretical level, the ethical impacts of AI.

The problem that emerges is related to the question of time, specifically the delay of ethics in relation to the emergence and application of AI technologies in marketing and business. Considering that, in these fields, speed is crucial for the establishment of novelty – due to the effects of being a pioneer or presenting something unprecedented in the valorization of products – it becomes urgent to investigate how ethics can keep pace with this speed, not only to halt it when necessary, but also to acquire an ethical velocity of its own. That is, not to stop merely as a prudent reaction to the unknown, given that these technologies may bring unexpected advantages precisely because they venture into the unknown, but also due to the need for an ethics that employs technology to its own advantage, and not merely judges it from the outside. In this way, ethics may better understand, from within, the promises and ethical dangers of such technologies. Therefore, an ethics that is neither technophilic nor technophobic. To achieve this objective, this theoretical essay conducts a conceptual analysis of the current literature on AI ethics in the corporate world and, drawing on the contributions of the philosopher Jacques Derrida, seeks to reflect on the foundations for an AI-based ethics capable of possessing ethical timing.

Uncritical Multiplication of Ethical Theories

The literature focusses mainly on ethical principles, namely, on deontological approaches to AI: "for AI systems to be safe and effective in industry, (…) such systems requires defining and implementing several features, including transparency, responsibility, explainability, and accountability" (Tlili et al., 2024). These principles tend to proliferate in the literature, yet there is little discussion on how to resolve potential conflicts arising from their application. It is often assumed that all principles can be harmoniously applied without ethical trade-offs, such as those between privacy and security: "… autonomy, privacy, balance of power, security, human dignity, non-maleficence and justice" (Tiron-

Tudor, Rodgers & Deliu, 2024). In these kinds of deontological proposals, there is a call for "… businesses and policymakers to embrace Responsible AI principles like fairness, reliability, and accountability" (Shankar, 2024). In another example, six principles are proposed for business AI ethics: "Be transparent," "Respect privacy and intellectual property," "Act to avoid bias," "Incorporate human oversight into AI workflows," "Take responsibility," and "Create rules and play by them" (Sands et al., 2024). It is worth noting the danger of "creating rules and play by them" because those rules, even if ethically questionable, are deemed acceptable as long as they are followed. This implies that the ethicality of creating principles would depend solely on their adherence, which could render a dictatorial regime automatically ethical, provided it complies with the rules it establishes. In terms of utilitarian/consequentialist ethics, various studies can be categorized as adhering to this ethical theory, even when they do not explicitly reference it. For example: "Harmonization of the pursuit of efficiency and optimization through AI with ethical considerations becomes imperative to prevent unintended consequences" (Singh, Chatterjee & Mariani, 2024). Another example states: "Moral intensity refers to the number of humans potentially affected by AI-supported decisions" (Toth & Blut, 2024). Lastly: "Avoid delegating the overall responsibility for (negative) consequences to those developing or implementing AI" (Schulte-Derne & Gnewuch, 2024). This proliferation of ethical terms applied to AI in corporate contexts points to a "… maelstrom of guidance, none of which is compulsory, [and which] serves to confuse, as opposed to guide" (Elliott et al., 2021), with "… [s]uch lists may raise scepticism and appear to be the case of stating the obvious" (Elliott & Copilah, 2024). These proposals often seem to assume that the mere inclusion of an ethical theory acts as a guarantee of automatically producing good outcomes. However, an ethical theory is not merely a guide for action but a collection of challenges that necessitate the creation of the theory itself to justify why certain difficult decisions are made.

It is surprising to find studies where the reconciliation of such different ethical principles and consequences is portrayed as straightforward, often within the limited scope of a single article. For example: "An action is judged to be ethical only to the extent that it does not breach any of the five moral principles" and "integrating the five perspectives into a comprehensive framework eliminates conflict and increases consensus about what is ethical" (Manroop, Malik & Milner, 2024). And what are these principles? They are none other than the major contemporary ethical schools: utilitarianism, rights ethics, distributive justice, care ethics, and virtue ethics. This eclecticism of ethics fails to address potential conflicts and implicitly reveals a "meta-utilitarian" principle: more ethical perspectives equal better ethics. On the contrary, a multiplicity of ethical approaches often leads to disorientation in conduct, the amplification of paradoxes, unnecessary complexity, and an inability to critically examine the assumptions underlying each of these ethical theories. The contradiction is overlooked that virtue ethics, for instance, is not an ethics of principles like

deontology or "rights ethics" but rather an exercise in character virtues. These virtues might even require breaking universal principles and even the best utilitarian consequences if the circumstances demand it. The confusion among ethical theories, stemming from a lack of clarification regarding the ethical schools being referenced, results in unnoticed ethical contradictions. For example, a study simultaneously adopts a consequentialist position, stating, "Harmonization of the pursuit of efficiency and optimization through AI with ethical considerations becomes imperative to prevent unintended consequences," while also taking a deontological stance: "… [t]o make sure that GenAI projects follow ethical standards, organizations should put openness, fairness, and responsibility at the top of their lists. This is the best way to deal with the problems that come up when there are ethical dilemmas" (Singh, Chatterjee & Mariani, 2024). The study does not acknowledge the difficulty of reconciling consequentialist and deontological positions without sliding into ethical relativism, where anything goes.

Even when ethical difficulties are made explicit, there is no clear and productive approach to addressing them due to the confusion between virtuous, deontological, and consequentialist positions. This lack of theoretical clarification results in the poor formulation of ethical problems:

> Ethical theories demonstrate how our perceptions of moral intensity affect individual decision-making. For instance, a bank manager following certain ethical standards might refuse to facilitate money laundering activities that would prevent a children's hospital from receiving its annual funding from a major funding body. In contrast, AI is not influenced by such perceptions unless it is programmed to account for moral intensity. On the other hand, AI would most likely avoid bribery and blackmail if programmed accordingly due to its lack of emotions, including temptation and fear (Toth & Blut, 2024).

From a utilitarian/consequentialist ethical perspective, the bank manager faces no difficulty: they should prioritize the action that promotes the best outcome for the greatest number, which, in this case, would mean helping the children's hospital by facilitating money laundering. Conversely, from a deontological standpoint, there is also no paradox. The manager must adhere to a universal maxim that prohibits deceiving others, regardless of any positive consequences that might result. Therefore, in this case, money laundering should be rejected. However, AI does not resolve the question of choosing between deontological or consequentialist positions. This is a meta-ethical decision that must be programmed into an algorithm. When the challenge of clarifying ethical principles at stake is explicitly undertaken, the principles are often criticized for being abstract and lacking practical applicability:

> Research has shown that while there are differences in wording, a global consensus is emerging on the importance of five common AI ethics principles: responsibility, justice and fairness, transparency, non-maleficence and privacy. Though these principles were

identified through a considered and comprehensive approach, they tend to be formulated at a high level of abstraction, which makes them difficult to put into action. As a result, a gap exists between high-level AI ethics principles and practical support for leaders to help them address the AI-related ethical challenges that their organizations face (Schulte-Derne & Gnewuch, 2024).

However, the lack of theoretical reflection on ethical theories demonstrates that adapting theory to practice cannot succeed under such circumstances. It is unsurprising that attempts to apply these ethical principles—deontological by nature and thus inherently abstract – lead to an unjustified transformation of these principles into consequentialist decisions. For instance, the operationalization of the principle of "responsibility" is transformed into a consequentialist criterion: "Avoid delegating the overall responsibility for (negative) consequences to those developing or implementing AI" (Schulte-Derne & Gnewuch, 2024). Similarly, the principle of "fairness" becomes "Strive for a fair distribution of AI's benefits and costs among all employees" (Schulte-Derne & Gnewuch, 2024), another consequentialist interpretation that leaves bosses outside of the equation.

Ethics as another name for economics and power

To be ethical, it is necessary to recognize that the resource investment required to do so can come at a significant cost, and this is the fundamental question of Corporate Digital Responsibility (CDR): "How can organizations balance the trade-off of ethical norms and moral obligations with pressures to increase efficiency and profit by creating new systems and data?" (Lobschat et al., 2021). This ethical-economic trade-off shows that ethics is not easily compatible with economic objectives: "Complying with CDR norms is not only about ethical behavior, but also about securing the future of the firm in an increasingly AI-driven world" (Hartley, Kunz & Tarbit, 2024). Ethics becomes an economic value that can be sold, becoming an economic factor in itself, i.e., "… generation of increased profits through higher brand reputation" (Hartley, Kunz & Tarbit, 2024). The calculation of the relationship between profit and ethics is done quantitatively, reflecting a utilitarian view of ethics, in which ethics is seen as a simple "trade-off." It is the competition for reputation that leads to the adoption of ethical digital practices: "Digital compliance is seen as desirable, likely due to reasons such as avoiding competitive disadvantages, reducing uncertainty, gaining legitimacy" (Schroedter & Weissenberger, 2024). Managers are thus obviously encouraged to "… exploit the profitability of integrating ethical AI" (Oduro, Haylemariam & Umar, 2024). From the moment ethics is sought for its reputational and economic value, one fails to recognize the problem inherent in any presentation of ethical character: the extensional gap between virtuous acts and being virtuous. A non-virtuous agent can perform virtuous acts, but this does not necessarily make them virtuous, and a virtuous agent may not perform virtuous acts in certain circumstances without ceasing to be virtuous over time (Sreenivasan, 2002; Adams, 2006).

This extensional gap between intention, character and ethical act becomes problematic when CDR is merely another term for reputation as a means of creating economic value: "… machinewashing, in an attempt to empower engagement processes in the stakeholders' network and satisfy stakeholder expectations with regard to the ethical implications of the use of artificial intelligence, has, in the final instance, the prevailing purpose of achieving better levels of corporate performance and reputation" (Bernini et al., 2024). Proposals for public engagement can help private sector organizations move beyond "'ethics-washing' or tokenistic efforts at CDR to meaningfully address public concerns" (Aitken et al., 2021). The introduction of greater public participation opens CDR to a type of accountability that involves the governance of collective ways of life, including political proposals. In this sense, ethics as an economic factor intertwines with issues of power at the moment when the market does not find in ethics a competitive value at stake, the political system must then produce ethics – a value in dispute through regulations and laws – artificially in relation to the "natural" behavior of the market's indifference toward ethics: "Policymakers are therefore urged to promote soft-law regimes and policies on CDR to motivate companies to leverage it as a competitive tool" (Oduro, Haylemariam & Umar, 2024). In the same line of thought "… the underlying causes of CDR issues are trade-offs between good CDR practices and organizational objectives (e.g., profit opportunities versus CDR risks)," and "regulation will need to step in when a firm's CDR calculus becomes so negative that good CDR is unlikely" (Wirtz et al., 2023). It is political power that underpins the constitution of ethics as an economic value, which says nothing about the type of ethics that power aims to promote. In an extreme argument, one could then claim that if racism brings votes, it will be politically imposed by neo-Nazi governments as a normative position on hierarchical racial differences that businesses will have to incorporate into CDR when made into economic competition law. AI ethics in the corporate context must, therefore, be critically analyzed in relation to its economic objectives, but also in relation to power factors. Due to the dangers associated with the intersection of economy and politics, it has already been proposed that CDR should also emphasize the:

> … indirect, yet significant effects of digital technologies on various societal domains such as economic, social, and political spheres. It underscores the importance of addressing passive stakeholder groups and societal institutions that do not have a direct relationship with businesses but are nevertheless impacted by digitalization (Doerr & Lautermann, 2024).

Due to the fact that CDR is subject to utilitarian economic analyses that reduce ethics to reputation and profitability, rather than to an ethical exercise for its own sake, studies consider that CDR is a limited ethical framework:

> Viewing data responsibility as a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or CDR policy shifts the focus from centering data responsibility in the processes, design, and

implementation of corporate practices, to a secondary, or worse, an afterthought that is completed to complement the business operations of a company (…). Data responsibility and CSR/CDR must grapple and consider issues with issues linked to data exploitation, data justice, and data colonialism. Data responsibility also must reckon with the growing digital divide and how the rush toward a digital transformation that is not equitable will leave hundreds of millions of people behind and outside the economic system (van der Merwe & Al Achkar, 2022).

AI introduces new ethical problems for which the limited scope of CDR in the context of private companies and the application and consumption of AI is not sufficient to guarantee its ethics: “Current approaches generally overlook upstream collective and societal harms associated with the development of systems, such as resource extraction and processing, exploitative labour practices and energy intensive model training” (Thomas et al., 2024). Another study shows how the relationships between ethics (in this case between deontology and utilitarianism), AI, and the corporate world cannot be considered without the factor of power (Yan et al., 2024). This research investigates the ethical considerations of algorithmic decision-making in corporate human resources from a consumer perspective. Findings indicate that this adoption leads to unfavorable consumer ethical evaluations of the firm due to a breach of “deontological principles” concerning employee respect through the use of a “calculative”, data-driven decision-making process (Yan et al., 2024). Here is one of the few studies that show an ethical incompatibility between deontology and utilitarianism, between decisions based on principles or based on results, consequences, or utility of the decisions. More interestingly, the study shows that this effect was attenuated when consumers had “high (vs. low) power distance beliefs.” What does this mean? It means that deontological or utilitarian positions are not theoretical constructs hovering above power relations, but that they make sense within those relations:

When consumers have high (vs. low) power distance beliefs, they tend to be more tolerant of companies' practices that take employees as means to their ends. In turn, consumers would no longer perceive algorithm-based HR decision-making as disrespectful, they show a lower level of empathy for victims and a lower intention to condemn the company. The rationale is that consumers with those are more inclined to think that the low power should defer to the high power (Yan et al., 2024).

Considering that certain ethical values are the result of imposition, whether subtle or violent, through education or manipulation, by dominant groups in a society – not only consumers but also employers or political decision-makers – it means that certain ethical standards of CDR may not be the most ethical possible, but only those that have become more widespread due to certain power structures (Nietzsche, 2007).

Two problems: artificial marketing and artificial ethics

Even if it is possible to produce ethical theories applied to AI in the corporate world that are coherent in terms of virtues, deontology and consequences, the problem of having an ethics that can accompany the drastic and frequent transformations of AI in terms of economics and power of the corporate world would still be intact. The speed and precision of AI technologies may make consumers vulnerable to an inability to reflect on their decisions: "… the digitization of customer experience has given rise to unprecedented ethical concerns related to the prospect of 'programming' these experiences" through the "… shrinking temporal and spatial distance between stimuli, customer action, data footprint, and tracking" (Velasco et al., 2024). This increasingly fine-tuned personalization of targeting consumer needs raises ethical questions about the manipulation of preferences and control over individuals (Naz & Kashif, 2024), as well as issues related to privacy (Toti & Steils, 2024) stemming from lucrative practices such as cross-device tracking, data-driven technologies, personalized social media content or ads, behavioral analytics, real-time tracking, the Internet of Things, geotargeting, in-store surveillance, point-of-purchase prompting, and micro-moment messaging (Saura, Skare & Dosen, 2024; Brooks et al., 2022). Studies indicate that ethical practices are often abandoned in favor of "financial benefits from the collection and use of consumer data, (…) through AI-driven customization and personalization, cost reduction through service automation" (Kunz & Wirtz, 2024). This abandonment of ethical principles can reinforce bias and discrimination in AI-based marketing when such practices prove profitable (Monteiro, 2023; Kumar, Ashraf & Nadeem, 2024). This means that the personalization enabled by AI in marketing might not only adjust supply to meet real demand but also create biased market needs that define consumers based on the biases and discrimination embedded in algorithms. This situation may lead to a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Merton, 1948), where bias ceases to be merely bias and instead reshapes the preferences of consumers whose behaviors are transformed by the constant imposition of that bias. It becomes a form of consumer *re-education* through increasingly constant and personalized manipulation, transforming prejudices into ways of being, existing, relating, and living – via the discriminatory products and ideas directed at them. This is not simply a case where "consumers could be subject to nearly constant manipulation (or as marketers would likely frame it, 'nudging') toward certain decisions, because AI-designed, perfectly timed stimuli prime their unique insecurities, dreams, or hopes" (Grewal, Guha & Becker, 2024), but the creation from scratch of insecurities, dreams, and hopes that are profitable. This is an ethical issue that has not been adequately discussed in the literature on marketing, AI, and ethics, which is unjustifiable given the dangers of creating preferences, lifestyles, and forms of subjectivity *from scratch*.

It is necessary to frame this ethical challenge more clearly than it has been addressed in the current literature on marketing, AI, and ethics. One relevant challenge that has gone largely undiscussed concerns the limits of time for ethical

reflection in a world increasingly accelerated by AI-based marketing and business. The long-standing ethical problem of corporations creating superfluous and manipulative needs (Dierksmeier, 2014; Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002) – which leads vulnerable individuals to waste money and create unnecessary dependencies, thereby destroying their lives and contributing to an unsustainable world through economies of waste – becomes exacerbated with the combination of three essential features of AI-based marketing: 1) speed, 2) quantity, and 3) precision. These characteristics amplify the way marketing traditionally generated market needs by accelerating the overwhelming proliferation of products and employing increasingly effective and highly personalized forms of persuasion tailored to each consumer. This process exploits consumer vulnerabilities with unprecedented power, creating desires for consumption and consumer lifestyles that are constructed by AI with such speed, massiveness, and accuracy that the consumer no longer needs to decide. They are instead introduced into a world of constant novelty – things they didn't know they needed, because no human can know, with the speed, quantity, and precision of AI, what a human being needs. Thus, AI-based marketing sells not necessities but possibilities: the new, the different, the potential for the next purchase, the unimaginable. It is when

> … everything is superfluous, that demand cannot be assigned and becomes open to possibilities that are less and less predictable. It is only in a regime of surplus consumption that the subject (the client who chooses) does not know his own desire, and that supply (founded on still unknown, still unimagined technological and aesthetic possibilities) must necessarily precede demand. The distinction is no longer between the necessary and the superfluous, but between several as yet unimagined possibilities. This is why seduction, the aesthetization of merchandise, plays a primordial role. It is vital for this supply economy to deny the naturalness of needs (Goux, 1990).

In this process, it is AI that determines the future of the human market, creating *need for needs*, that is, producing pure consumers who do not just consume to satisfy certain needs created by the market but consume simply because they have a need for what is merely different: an *artificial marketing*. The creation of market needs by AI – through its speed, quantity, and precision – will render obsolete the ethical distinction between what constitutes a real or artificial need. This is because there will no longer be the capacity to evaluate the rapid infinity of personalized consumer needs created from scratch for each individual, that can transform bias into modes of being through constant re-education of the consumer. This situation is problematic, as AI recommendation algorithms may be the most effective but not necessarily the most ethical (Schuster & Lazar, 2024), given that ethics can be an obstacle to achieving the most efficient outcomes.

In this new form of artificializing market creation through AI, characterized by its speed, scale, and precision, it becomes increasingly difficult to develop ethical theories and decisions that keep pace with this new state of affairs. If ethics is considered a moment of deliberation, reflection, a slowing down of the world

to assess whether it is on a good or bad path, the time spent in ethical reflection paradoxically allows the wrongdoings of the world to persist – now at an accelerated pace and on a larger scale due to AI. This implies that the very necessity of ethical reflection, because of its inherently slow deliberate nature, contributes to the proliferation of harm in the world, as that harm grows over time. However, not having time to think ethically can lead to decisions that are not ethical, as not all the potential problems stemming from those decisions are carefully considered. On the one hand, ethics risks perpetually *lagging behind* technological innovations in AI. Its slow response allows harm to persist, and by the time it becomes aware of these issues, new technologies with their own associated dangers have already emerged, requiring ethical deliberation anew, often at a delay. On the other hand, an ethics that merely justifies the status quo – an ethics incapable of halting the proliferation of technologies and their associated dangers, instead defending their presence by pointing to unexpected ethical benefits despite their problems—is a passive ethics. Such an ethics, devoid of genuine ethical decision-making, risks becoming an *artificial ethics*, one that operates at the pace of the world's harm rather than proposing a better world. In this better world, current technologies might need to be radically altered or even dismantled entirely.

AI-based Ethics

In light of the need for timely ethics for AI, an ethics that responds to wrongdoing as it emerges, and an ethics that preserves the good that new technologies bring (see Hermann, 2022), it is necessary to harness the power of AI that generate new, unimaginable consumer needs that surpass human limitations, in order to create an ethics that transcends the current ethics proposed by humans. Just as AI accelerates the speed, quantity, and precision of creating new consumer needs, it should also be used to create a new 'market of ethics' – one that is increasingly rapid in its response, with a greater number of answers, and with ever-increasing precision in addressing the world's problems: an AI-based ethics. Unexpected ethical needs created with the assistance of AI. Just as AI is used to create artificial marketing that opens up to the new, to desiring the new, the unimaginable, so too can the machine assist in creating this unimaginable ethics – an ethics that does not simply follow technological innovations but demands technologies that do not yet exist in order to create a good that has not yet existed or been imagined because it surpasses the limits of human imagination. In this sense, the machine can provide an ethics that is more-than-human, an ethics that is not confined solely to what humans can imagine as the greatest possible good in the world – an *ethics of the new*.

Of course, the conditions of this AI-based ethics are immediately called into question. Considering that current AI technologies are owned by companies whose primary goal is not to do good but to do good insofar as it does not obstruct the generation of profit, there is always the risk that this AI will generate ethics that justify the current state of affairs, rather than questioning it and proposing

future ethics that are not constrained by the mere creation of more superfluous market needs. They are, therefore, biased. However, the ability of AI to generate, at an increasing speed, in greater quantity, and with more precision, consumer needs would not have emerged if companies had not sought to dominate markets and convince consumers of certain needs. An AI-based ethics thus benefits from this type of technology focused on the creation of markets. Without *market-ing*, new technologies of *ethic-ing* would not emerge – i.e., technologies for creating new ethical needs, for creating new needs for good actions, increasingly rapid, in greater quantity, and with greater precision, beyond the good that humans are capable of thinking and executing.

The close relationship between technology, market and ethics simply means that economics and ethics of AI cannot be thought of separately. There is an economy of ethics (and not just an ethics of economy). For instance, beyond the economic conditions that make an ethical act feasible, there is also the need to trade certain decisions for others, to create a hierarchy of ethical values and virtues, that makes ethics a space of decision-making – a space that forces us to choose certain things at the expense of others. The urgency to help others with scare resources exposes us to unexpected ethical failures, caused in a non-reflective manner by the pressure of time, and this makes ethics difficult in the context of economy of time, how to spend it ethically. Therefore, it transforms the one who must decide ethically because such a decision always carries negative consequences, implying that, sometimes, equally good choices cannot be all selected simultaneously. It is because we are divided that a decision, understood as a cut (borrowed from Latin *dēcīsiō*, *dēcīsio*, *dēcīdere*: "to cut off, cut out") or separation, must occur. In this cutting off/out, in this sharing and partaking ethics and economy are tightly intertwined. If, economically, everything were possible without negative consequences and without cuts that both exclude and include, that give and take, there would be no need for ethics. Moreover, ethics, as it will be seen in the next section, can be what makes non-economical decisions possible, that is, decisions questioning the economy of ethics, of what is possible or impossible to do with limited resources.

Derridean-Algorithm

Given the impossibility of conceiving an AI technology for generating new ethics that is completely ethically pure, free from the dangerous influences of marketing and business – whose purity would contradict the necessity of an ethical decision, because ethics must engage with the impure, selecting how to deal with wrongdoing when it is not entirely eliminable, i.e., purifiable—it is proposed a philosophical basis for the conception of an algorithm that minimally ensures that the new ethical outcomes generated by AI are truly new, requiring an ethical decision, and not just a newness in which ethics disappears because there is no longer space for decision-making, as everything has already been decided. This algorithm is based on the ethical proposal of philosopher Jacques Derrida. It is not the first time that the works of this philosopher have been used in the field of

business studies (James, Cronin & Patterson, 2024), but they have never been used to explore the relationship between business, ethics, and AI. The proposal to transform ethical arguments into marketing algorithms is also not new (Rodgers & Nguyen, 2022; Ferrell & Ferrell, 2021), but what is new in our proposal is the use of such arguments to create new ethics through AI, rather than merely applying existing ethics to existing AI technologies, which argues for an ethical proposal where openness to the new, to the unexpected, is central.

According to Derrida, an act is only ethical if it confronts an impossibility. In other words, ethics must be a moment in which an ethical decision seems impossible to take place. However, if this impossibility is broken, then the act may be considered ethical (Derrida, 2003; 2001). The examples that Derrida gives of ethical impossibilities include: complete hospitality in our home to the other without asking who they are, what their intentions are, or identifying them in any way by sight, sound, or smell; that is, receiving the completely unknown other without reducing them to something identifiable in that reception. Another example is the forgiveness of the other, completely forgetting the harm suffered as if it had never existed and could never be remembered. Finally, a gift that does not create a debt, that is, an offering that expects nothing in return and does not create a relationship of dependency or lack, in other words, a gift that neither appropriates nor dispossesses, as if nothing had been given and nothing received (see Derrida, 2015; 1992). For instance, this is the way Derrida presents the impossibility of the gift:

> … the gift as gift is possible only where it appears impossible. The gift must not appear as such in order for it to take place. But we will never know whether it takes place. No one could ever say, according to a satisfactory criterion of knowledge, 'such and such a gift took place,' or 'I gave,' 'I received.' Thus, the gift, if there is one, if it is possible, must appear as impossible. And to give, consequently, is to do the impossible. The event of the gift must not be able to be spoken; as soon as it is spoken, it is destroyed. (…) The gift is impossible, and it can only be possible as impossible. There is no event more eventful than a gift that breaks with exchange, the course of history, the circle of the economy. There is no possibility of a gift that does not present itself as not presenting itself; this is the impossible itself" (Derrida, 2001, p. 93, *our translation*)[1].

[1] "… le don comme don n'est possible que là ou il paraît impossible. Il faut que le don n'apparaisse pas comme tel pour qu'il ait lieu. Mais on ne saura jamais s'il a lieu. Jamais personne ne pourrait dire, avec un critère de connaissance satisfaisant, «tel don a eu lieu», ou bien «j'ai donné», «j'ai reçu». Donc le don, s'il y en a, s'il est possible, doit apparaître comme impossible. Et donner par conséquent, c'est faire l'impossible. L'événement du don ne doit pas pouvoir être dit; dès qu'on le dit, on le détruit. (…) Le don est impossible, et il ne peut être possible que comme impossible. Il n'y a pas d'événement plus événementiel qu'un don qui rompt l'échange, le cours de l'histoire, le cercle de l' économie. Il n'y a pas de possibilité de don qui ne se présente comme ne se présentant pas, c'est l'impossible même" (Derrida, 2001, p. 93).

It is easy to see that these acts (hospitality of the unknown, gift without debt, forgiveness without memory) cannot happen – receiving the unknown other is already identifying them as unknown; forgiving someone involves remembering the wrongdoing to be able to forgive; and, finally, giving something always implies being deprived of something, and it is impossible to control whether the other feels indebted. With these examples, Derrida supports the surprising thesis: these acts are impossible, but if they happen—that is, if they break their condition of impossibility – then they will be ethical. The impossibility is the mark that registers an act as ethical. If an act is not impossible to carry out, it will not be ethical if it occurs. This an important difference from virtue ethics, deontology and consequentialism, given that these presuppose that they are *possible*. This Derridean 'impossible-ethics' is indeed a strange thesis, perhaps shocking, probably inoperable, and it makes the inoperable its ethical effectiveness. However, what motivates this inoperability is related with the most powerful objectives of this ethics: "… this impossible that there is remains ineffaceable. It is as irreducible as our exposure to what comes or happens. It is the exposure (the desire, the openness, but also the fear) that opens, that opens itself, that opens us to time, to what comes upon us, to what arrives or happens, to the event" (Derrida, 2003, p. 120). That is, an ethics opened to the other, to what escapes what is possible for us.

The reasons, inspired by Derrida, that lead us to introduce this philosopher's ethical proposal into an AI-based ethics algorithm are twofold: 1) An ethical act must be one that confronts the subject with what they are incapable of doing. If the subject is not placed in a situation where deciding for the good jeopardizes everything, including themselves, then the good for which they must decide is not the most transformative good; 2) The ethical act does not only come from someone who regularly does good, but also from someone who is not expected to do an ethical act because they regularly practice wrongdoing. The one who practices wrongdoing may have no reason to practice good, nor sees any advantage in doing so, unlike someone who always practices good. But if the one who regularly acts wrongfully decides, even once, to choose good, and that good goes against their advantages gained from wrongdoing, then that subject has performed an act that is as impossible as it is ethical, because they do not perform the ethical act for their own benefit or to maintain their (non-existant) regular good actions, becoming ethical because unexpected. This is in line with a Derridean ethics being an ethics that is characterized by an extreme *difficult* decision as a symptom that something impossible is being broken, and not just what is possible to do easily:

"Because I would say that, precisely, what I cannot do, that is, the impossible, what exceeds my capacity, my power, is precisely what I cannot will. (…) I am here at this moment when the experience of the event undoes my will. (…) A decision should tear

apart — that is what the word 'decision' means — and consequently should interrupt the fabric of the possible" (Derrida, 2001, pp. 101–102, *our translation*)[2].

The introduction of a 'Derridean algorithm' would therefore be something like this: For the ethical proposals formed by AI to be transformative decisions and to be unexpected and not predictable or deterministic, they must follow these rules: 1) *They must be difficult to decide*; 2) *They must be highly improbable to be chosen by someone who regularly benefits from wrongdoing*. From a logical perspective, one could semi-formalize, for example, the functioning of the algorithm in the following way: 1) "do x, if x, after considering all relevant variables z, is the most difficult to do in light of those variables z" and 2) "if you regularly perform x because you benefit from that x, and if that x is unethical, then, after considering all relevant variables z, decide y if that y does not benefit you in light of those variables z." These two rules of the Derridean algorithm ensure that the new ethics created by AI will at least have two premises that 1) will make this ethics something that demands a decision, something that forces the subject to submit to a difficulty that compels them to rethink their life, 2) and something that may come from the person least expected – opening space for an unexpected ethics from the other that regularly performs non-ethical acts.

How these two premises can be operationalized at a computational level lies beyond the conceptual scope of this philosophical proposal. However, two examples may render the proposal less abstract regarding the ways in which, for instance, a Derridean AI model could be trained. The user would input their sociodemographic characteristics, and based on these, the model would assess what would constitute a difficult ethical decision, as well as which unethical acts are most associated with those particular sociodemographic traits. For example, if the user were a CEO of an AI-focused tech company of a tech-oligopoly with a high salary, according to the Derridean algorithm, the impossible ethical act would be to equally share their salary with the remaining workers, or to perform the difficult act of developing AI models aimed at dismantling technological oligopolies. Impossibility would be the measure of ethics, and impossibilities would vary from case to case. In another example, if a mother has to decide whether to invest time and money in her own bedridden mother in the hospital – whom she has rarely visited and with whom she has never had a good relationship – or to invest those resources in her loved young daughter, the algorithm might propose that the impossible ethical act would be to invest the resources in her own mother. By measuring the force of ethics through its impossibility, Derrida proposes an ethical reflection rooted in the difficult, making ethics a moment of self-transformation rather than merely a handbook of moral prescriptions designed

[2] Parce que je dirais que, justement, ce que je ne peux pas, donc l'impossible, ce qui déborde ma capacité, mon pouvoir, c'est précisément ce que je ne peux pas vouloir. (…) Je suis ici ce moment où l'expérience de l'événement défait ma volonté. (…) Une décision devrait déchirer - c'est ce que veut dire le mot décision - par conséquent devrait interrompre la trame du possible" (Derrida, 2001, pp. 101-102).

to leave subjects with a clear conscience. These examples remain very “human,” that is, they are limited by the ethical imagination of the human brain—an imagination that new AI models can easily surpass due to the number of variables and scenarios of ethical impossibility they are capable of generating.

Future studies may further refine the two proposed premises of the Derridean algorithm and incorporate additional elements from Derrida’s philosophy, such as hospitality, the gift, or forgiveness. Drawing from the three main philosophical schools of ethics – consequentialism/utilitarianism, deontology, or virtue ethics – which are not always compatible, since the first focuses on achieving the greatest good for the greatest number, the second on following universalizable principles regardless of outcomes, and the third on what constitutes a virtuous individual who acts with wisdom to shape their character and make the most appropriate decision in each particular situation – it is evident that multiple impossible situations arise: a virtuous act may not always respect principles or consequences, a deontological act may have devastating consequences, and a consequentialist act may undermine the subject’s virtuous character. This means that future research into an ethical AI model based on Derrida’s ethics of the impossible could identify the impossible moments for a consequentialist, a deontologist, and a virtuous agent as ways of revealing when an ethical act may be transformative and capable of questioning the very ethical system it inhabits. In other words, the Derrida algorithm would serve as a kind of “meta-ethics” for the application of traditional ethical frameworks in AI.

It should be said that Derrida would hardly accept the algorithmization of his ethical proposal. It is not because something is impossible that is automatically ethical, wrongdoings can take a lot of effort. Notice that in our proposal for the rules of the algorithm, we speak of “difficulty” and “improbability” of decision. Derrida uses the stronger concept of “impossibility,” elevating the unexpected nature of the ethical act to infinite levels. And this “unexpectedness,” to be ethical, cannot be algorithmically determined; there is no rule that guides the moment of the ethical decision. The impossible ethical decision is, by definition, one that cannot have a rule because the rule already helps to guide the decision, reducing its impossible nature. A truly Derridean ethical algorithm should not even have these rules inspired by Derrida’s ethical proposal. It should be completely open to the unexpected, namely to the unexpectedness of AI-marketing or AI-business, without any ethical algorithm, generating itself an ethics of the impossible since this AI was not made to produce ethical results, but if it does, it would be ethical, according to Derrida. However, by trying to operationalize Derrida’s inoperable ethics, we are actually making that ethics of the impossible even more impossible, because we are expecting from imposing rules that something not-ruled can appear, that is, an impossibility, an ethical impossibility. And, therefore, we are contributing to the level of ethicality that can be produced by this algorithm. By being an ethically impure algorithm, it makes the appearance of a pure ethics impossible, i.e., an impossible ethics, thus contributing to its pure emergence, if it happens. This is in line with the need of articulating possibility and impossibility:

> Unconditional hospitality is transcendent with regard to the political, the juridical, perhaps even to the ethical. But-and here is the indissociability - I cannot open the door, I cannot expose myself to the coming of the other and offer him or her anything whatsoever without making this hospitality effective, without, in some concrete way, giving something determinate. This determination will thus have to re-inscribe the unconditional into certain conditions. (…) Political, juridical, and ethical responsibilities have their place, if they take place, only in this transaction-which is each time unique, like an event - between these two hospitalities, the unconditional and the conditional (Derrida, 2003, pp. 129-130).

The Derridean algorithm proposed is, then, impure, it is a condition made of rules for something that cannot have a rule, i.e., the unconditional ethics of the impossible. And this impurity is crucial for Derrida, because he does not decouple the event, unique, the impossible, from what is repeatable, calculable, possible, but is interested in finding the difference that binds them, "… [t]o give up neither the event nor the machine, to subordinate neither one to the other, neither to reduce one to the other" (Derrida, 2002, p. 74):

> Will we one day be able to, and in a single gesture, to join the thinking of the event to the thinking of the machine? Will we be able to think, what is called thinking, at one and the same time, both what is happening (we call that an event) and the calculable programming of an automatic repetition (we call that a machine). For that, it would be necessary in the future (but there will be no future except on this condition) to think both the event and the machine as two compatible or even in-dissociable concepts. Today they appear to us to be antinomic (Derrida, 2002, p. 72).

The proposed ethical algorithm impurifies Derrida's proposal, impurifies the ethics of the impossible, but this does not mean that it does not open space for the future of ethics, for an unimaginable ethics with the aid of AI. It is an algorithm, but it is not a closed algorithm, that always yields the same result, given that what is impossible to decide will change according to the situation and to what one *loses* by being ethical, it is, in a sense, an "aleatory-algorithm": "The gift and the event obey nothing, except perhaps principles of disorder, that is, principles without principles" (Derrida, 1992, pp. 122-123). It is an algorithm that makes ethics harder, not easier, closer to the impossible, not to what is possible. It simply ensures that the new ethics proposed by the machine will not simply bow to what already exists, what is possible, in terms of market, ethics, and technology, to merely accommodate it without criticism, nor will this ethics promote ways to remove difficulty from the ethical decision – i.e., ways to remove ethicality from the decision that calls for a transformation of the "ethos," of what we are, into a decision that implicates us and, after which, it is no longer possible to remain the same.

Conclusion

A conceptual analysis of the relationships between Artificial Intelligence, ethics, and the business world becomes urgent at a time when these technologies, created by companies aiming to stimulate consumption, has altered the way the demand and offer of products and ideas is created. From the moment a machine can shape markets, characterized by the production of an infinite number of consumption needs, with immediate speed and increasingly refined preferences personalization, an ethics within the context of AI must also consider whether this ethics might be also an "artificial ethics", i.e., an ethics tailored to justify artificial creation of consumption needs just because it cannot be stopped. An ethics that only justifies a state of affairs that already exists because it escapes comprehension and control runs the risk of being an ethics that merely justifies the wrongdoing that exists in the world, just because that state of affairs cannot be changed. In such cases, ethics becomes less about deciding what is good and more about a passive impotence in proposing ways to do good in a world where wrongdoing results from technological inevitability. It thus becomes necessary to conceptualize an ethics capable of keeping up with new technological times, a fast-paced ethics that can respond, adapt to, and even appropriate the speed of AI-based marketing or business realities, but one that does not merely justify what already exists, simply because it exists. It is proposed that an AI-based ethics, in which, for example, the statistical power of machine learning, Large Language Models, and big data can be used to generate new ethical scenarios, dilemmas, questions, and answers in response to the fast and multiple challenges posed by AI-marketing or AI-business. More specifically, to prevent AI from generating only ethical questions and answers that aim to uncritically justify AI and its market and business, the introduction of a "Derridean Algorithm" is proposed. This algorithm will ensure that the new AI-based ethics involve transformative decisions for the world and for oneself, and whose ethical nature is not limited only to what is possible and to those who always do good, thus opening space for the ethical act to come from the most unexpected sources.

Acknowledgements

This work is financed by Portuguese national funds through FCT - Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia, under the project UIDB/05422/2025 and FCT-TENURE — 1st Edition - Ref. 2023.11412.TENURE.001

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