

**XVI Philosophy of Management conference in Oxford,  
June 21-24, 2024 EM Normandie, Oxford, UK**

**Humanistic Business Ethics and the Complexity  
Paradigm: Rethinking *relation* and *identity* in social  
systems to understand the value co-creation process**

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**Abstract**

Two trends have emerged in the economics and management literature: on the one hand, a "systemic" approach, which, in line with the complexity paradigm, examines the interaction between subsystems, in particular between business, society and nature; and on the other hand, a "humanistic" paradigm, which places the person at the centre of business activity. While the first approach has the merit of overcoming the limitations of an individualistic approach, in its current interpretations in management theory it runs the risk of *naturalising* the person. On the other hand, the humanistic paradigm, especially in the person-centred perspective à la Melé, rescues the unique and multifaceted nature of the person in relation to business but, despite some attempts, has not yet developed a comprehensive study of the relationship with the natural environment. However, no attempt has been made to unify the two approaches, despite the enormous potential that could result from their interaction, especially with regard to stakeholder theory in management. We argue that integration should not consist in juxtaposing the two paradigms, but in exploring their philosophical underpinnings, in particular the conception of relation and identity that underpins both paradigms. By overcoming the static conception of the relation between subsystems, it is possible to let the dynamism of the person emerge as the starting point of the community of persons, which sees the environment, not as limit, but as an *awareness* of the limits of its enterprise and as a call to be authentically responsible for its mission, which is materialised in practice in the process of co-creating value.