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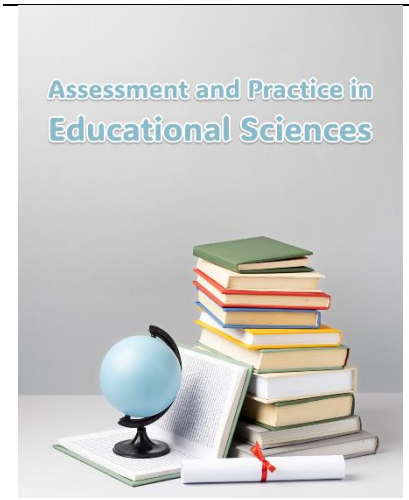

Comparative Analysis of Levinas's "Other" and Bataille's "Community": Implications for Designing Group Activities in Ethics-Oriented Curricula

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ABSTRACT

In today's world, where ethical and social challenges have become increasingly complex, educational systems require programs that not only focus on the transmission of knowledge but also prioritize the cultivation of moral virtues and social competencies. In this regard, group activities have been recognized as an effective pedagogical method in schools, capable of facilitating the transmission and reinforcement of ethical behaviors among students. According to Levinas's philosophy, without the existence of the "Other," ethics loses its genuine meaning (Levinas, 1969). Bataille likewise maintains that the human psyche is not a closed domain; rather, it is an open surface that, in the early years of life, projects itself outward through a constitutive exteriority, and the individual is always situated within community (Bataille, 1988). This study was conducted using library-based sources and a descriptive–analytical method. By examining Levinas's theory of the Other and Bataille's concept of community within the context of curriculum planning, a conceptual model was developed. The findings indicate that applying the theoretical approaches of the "Other" and "Community" to the design of group activities in ethics-oriented curriculum planning can contribute to the development of students' sense of responsibility, empathy, and social skills. Ultimately, this article offers recommendations for educational policymakers to reconsider curricular content and instructional methods in order to take practical steps toward educating a morally responsible generation.

Keywords: Levinas's Other, Bataille's Community, Group Activities, Ethics-Oriented Curricula

Introduction

Contemporary societies are confronted with increasingly complex moral and social challenges that demand a reconfiguration of educational aims beyond the mere transmission of knowledge. Rapid technological change, cultural pluralism, global interdependence, and the intensification of social inequalities have placed unprecedented ethical demands upon individuals and institutions. Educational systems, therefore, are called to cultivate not only cognitive competencies but also moral responsibility, empathy, and the capacity for meaningful coexistence. Comparative education scholarship has long emphasized that curriculum design must respond to changing social conditions and reflect broader philosophical commitments about human

flourishing and social order (1). Within this framework, ethics-oriented curricula have emerged as an important field of inquiry, aiming to integrate moral education into formal schooling in a systematic and theoretically grounded manner (2). At the same time, supplementary and group-based curricular activities have been shown to play a decisive role in fostering both individual and collective development among learners (3).

Group activities in particular occupy a privileged position within ethics-centered curriculum design, as they create structured opportunities for interaction, dialogue, and shared responsibility. Empirical and theoretical investigations have demonstrated that classroom-based collaborative activities can significantly promote moral values, prosocial behaviors, and social competencies among students (4, 5). However, the mere inclusion of group work in curriculum planning does not automatically result in ethical growth. Without a robust philosophical foundation, group activities risk being reduced to technical strategies for classroom management rather than transformative spaces for ethical formation. Consequently, the design of group activities requires conceptual grounding in coherent theories of responsibility, alterity, and community.

Among contemporary philosophical approaches, the thought of Emmanuel Levinas offers a profound reorientation of ethics by situating responsibility toward the Other at the very origin of subjectivity. Levinas's philosophy has generated significant interest in educational theory, particularly regarding the ethical nature of teaching and learning (6). Educational interpretations of Levinas have highlighted the centrality of responsibility, hospitality, and openness in pedagogical relationships (7, 8). Levinas challenges totalizing tendencies within formal education that reduce students to objects of instruction or evaluation, arguing instead for an ethical encounter grounded in the face-to-face relation (9). This critique has also been extended to broader questions concerning responsibility in education and professional ethics (10).

Central to Levinas's philosophy is the concept of the "Other," which signifies an irreducible alterity that precedes and exceeds the self. Philosophical analyses of Levinas's ethics of the Other emphasize that subjectivity is constituted through responsibility rather than autonomy (11, 12). The notion of substitution further radicalizes this claim by describing the self as being-for-the-Other, bearing responsibility even prior to conscious choice (13). This ethical asymmetry challenges dominant liberal models of education grounded in reciprocal contracts and instead foregrounds an infinite, non-symmetrical responsibility (14). Contemporary discussions have also explored how Levinas's conception of the Other informs human rights discourse and social responsibility, thereby expanding its relevance beyond interpersonal ethics (15).

The educational implications of Levinas's thought have been explored across diverse contexts, including analyses of emotional relationships in literature (16), interpretations of significant alterity in narrative texts (17), and examinations of the Other in socio-cultural crises (18). These studies collectively underscore that ethical responsiveness requires recognition of alterity without appropriation. Moreover, philosophical expositions of Levinas in Persian scholarship have contributed to a nuanced understanding of alterity as a transformative encounter rather than mere difference (19-21). Such insights are particularly relevant for curriculum design, where the encounter with difference—cultural, social, or personal—must be structured in ways that foster responsibility rather than domination.

Parallel to Levinas's emphasis on alterity, Georges Bataille's theory of community provides a complementary yet distinct account of social existence. While Levinas grounds ethics in the face-to-face encounter, Bataille situates community within the dynamics of excess, expenditure, and the sacred. Sociological interpretations of Bataille's thought have highlighted the importance of the sacred nucleus and collective affect in generating social cohesion (22, 23). Bataille's notion of unproductive expenditure, elaborated in *The Accursed Share*, conceptualizes social life as structured by surplus energy that must be expended beyond utilitarian ends (24). In *Erotism*, he further connects transgression and sacred experience to the foundations of communal bonds (25).

Recent theoretical developments have revisited Bataille's social ontology in light of technological mediation and co-existence, emphasizing that community is constituted through shared practices that exceed instrumental rationality (26). In this perspective, communal life emerges not from contractual reciprocity but from dynamic movements of attraction, repulsion, gift exchange, and symbolic projection. The sacred objects and collective rituals that structure community—whether material or symbolic—serve as mediating forms through which individuals become intertwined in shared existence. This understanding resonates with contemporary educational settings, where symbolic artifacts, narratives, and collaborative practices shape collective identity.

Although Levinas and Bataille emerge from different philosophical trajectories, their respective concepts of the Other and community converge in their critique of isolated subjectivity. Levinas destabilizes the sovereignty of the self by positing responsibility as prior to freedom, whereas Bataille destabilizes closed systems by emphasizing excess, rupture, and ecstatic communication. Both thinkers challenge reductionist conceptions of the human being as self-contained and instead propose relational ontologies. In educational contexts, such relational ontologies suggest that ethical formation cannot be achieved through abstract moral instruction alone but requires structured encounters that expose students to alterity and collective experience.

Empathy and responsibility thus become pivotal categories for translating these philosophical insights into pedagogical practice. Empathy, understood as the capacity to perceive and respond to the suffering and needs of others, has been identified as a cornerstone of moral education and social development. Educational research underscores that empathy must be cultivated through lived interaction rather than didactic preaching (27). Similarly, ethical responsibility cannot be reduced to compliance with rules but must be grounded in meaningful engagement with others and shared projects (28). By integrating Levinas's ethics of the Other with Bataille's theory of community, it becomes possible to conceptualize group activities not merely as cooperative tasks but as ethically charged spaces of encounter and collective transformation.

Moreover, contemporary debates in philosophy and social theory highlight the urgency of rethinking alterity and coexistence in pluralistic societies (29, 30). Levinas's insistence on the irreducibility of the Other guards against assimilationist tendencies, while Bataille's emphasis on shared expenditure and collective movement foregrounds the affective dimensions of community. Together, these perspectives provide a rich conceptual framework for designing group activities that nurture responsibility and empathy simultaneously. Rather than treating responsibility as an individual trait and empathy as a psychological skill, they can be understood as relational capacities emerging from structured encounters within communal settings.

In sum, the theoretical resources offered by Levinas and Bataille illuminate complementary dimensions of ethical formation: the infinite responsibility toward the singular Other and the dynamic constitution of communal life through shared practices and symbolic mediation. Integrating these insights into curriculum design responds to the contemporary demand for ethics-oriented education capable of fostering socially responsible and empathetic individuals. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to comparatively analyze Levinas's concept of the Other and Bataille's concept of community in order to derive theoretical implications for the design of group activities within ethics-oriented curricula.

Methods and Materials

The present study is applied in terms of purpose and descriptive–analytical in terms of method, and it is categorized as a comparative research design. Comparative study is considered a form of cross-cultural or comparative inquiry aimed at examining and comparing different domains across countries or cultures. Comparative analysis is generally conducted in four stages: description (examining research phenomena based on evidence and available information), interpretation (analyzing the data obtained in the first stage), juxtaposition (organizing and classifying the information derived from the description and

interpretation stages and placing them side by side to provide a framework for comparing similarities and differences in the next stage), and comparison (examining and comparing the research issue with attention to similarities and differences in detail) (1).

In this study, the data or variables were first described comprehensively, and then summarized through qualitative content analysis, followed by the stages of juxtaposition and comparison. Data collection was conducted using library research methods and note-taking from educational documents and sources, including the examination of Levinas's and Bataille's theories and viewpoints in scholarly documents, academic journals, theses, peer-reviewed articles, research reports, seminars, and credible national and international websites.

Ultimately, the present article seeks to identify, describe, and elaborate the aims, content, and framework of Levinas's thought (the concept of the Other) and Bataille's thought (the concept of community), as well as the role of these concepts in designing group activities within ethics-oriented curricula based on the implications derived from their perspectives, particularly responsibility and empathy. These dimensions were qualitatively analyzed through comparative content analysis in order to employ their various aspects in addressing educational issues in Iranian higher education, especially curriculum design (see Figure 1).

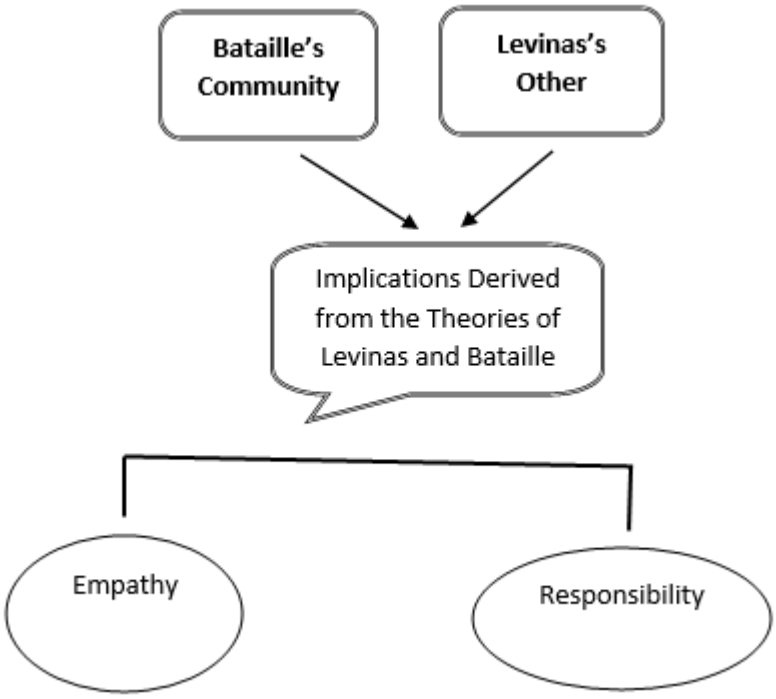

Figure 1. Designed Implications for Group Activities Derived from the Theories of Levinas and Bataille

Findings and Results

Levinas's Theory of the "Other"

The significance of the "Other" or alterity in Levinas's thought is so fundamental that all meaning culminates in the encounter with the Other. What he refers to as *il y a* (there is) denotes Being itself, a form of existence that dominates the subject after being thrown into the world, until the subject is born through hypostasis (that act through which a verb becomes a being named by a noun) (20).

In the relationship between the "I" and the Other, Levinas prioritizes the Other—or the "You"—over the "I." The "You" is encountered unexpectedly; a stranger who enters my life and calls me to responsibility. From Levinas's perspective, the

existence of "absolute alterity" between the self and the Other, as two separate beings, is unavoidable. The Other embodies this absolute alterity. In *Totality and Infinity*, he addresses this issue and questions human egocentrism. Levinas's account of the encounter with the Other does not remain at this initial stage. The first stage has a negative dimension in which the subject is called into question. In the subsequent stage, welcoming and respecting the Other become central. Thus, there is no escape from the Other; whether negatively or positively, one must respond to the Other (17).

Levinas considers ethics possible only through the encounter with the Other; therefore, ethics is not autonomous but heteronomous. Heteronomy implies that, contrary to common assumptions, ethics does not begin from the self but is constituted and initiated through openness to the Other and engagement with the Other. The origin of ethical action in human relations is the Other, not the "I." From Levinas's perspective, the integrity of ethical human identity (the dignity and status of the human subject) is necessarily grounded in sociality among people rather than in isolated individuality. In general, by emphasizing alterity and foregrounding responsibility toward the Other, Levinas seeks to avoid violence and overcome the problem of totality arising from the egoism of the "I" (15).

The concept of the Other in Levinas's philosophy presents, expresses, and manifests itself. It does not require any representative to speak on its behalf and is capable of articulating its own rights, emotions, and characteristics. The Other is autonomous and impenetrable and cannot be encompassed by any other "I." The Other stands on its own, with its face and imminent expression, serving as the center and as the background of social community and the source from which every concept is nourished (11).

It is well known that Levinas places the Other at the heart of his phenomenology as the factor that constitutes subjectivity through relation. Accordingly, the Levinasian Other is deprived of violence and is recognized through the faces of the stranger, the orphan, and the widow. Levinas argues that the only resistance the Other can offer against violence inflicted upon it is what he calls the resistance of non-resistance (30).

In *Totality and Infinity*, Levinas maintains that my lived experience becomes ethically meaningful only because of the presence of the Other. The Other is a necessity that challenges me, disrupts my undeniable freedom, and compels me to feel obligated to do what is good (29). Therefore, the term "Other" in Levinas's works is used in two senses: "other" and "Other." The former denotes anything that is different, whereas the latter signifies absolute and infinite existence, distinct from everything else. Ideally, it refers to God, yet ethically it also applies to a concrete human person (12).

Bataille's Theory of "Community"

The principal writings of Georges Bataille (1887–1962) span from the late 1920s until his death in 1962. During his lifetime, he was respected by many major intellectual figures and exerted a profound influence on nearly all French thought emerging from the 1960s onward; following the extensive translation of his works in the 1980s and 1990s, this influence expanded into the English-speaking world as well (22).

Bataille's concept of community is deeply intertwined with his broader philosophical concerns, including the sacred, transgression, and unproductive expenditure (24). In *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, he notes that the social basis of degraded prostitution is the same foundation upon which morality and Christianity rest (25). He suggests that social inequality and poverty—previously causes of upheaval in certain historical contexts—had also been roots of disorder in so-called civilized societies centuries before the Common Era. Referring to degraded prostitution, he argues that within the Greco-Roman world, socially marginalized classes had no real share in elevating the oppressed or dethroning the powerful; situated at the lowest level of the social ladder, they lacked any defined objective (25).

Bataille conceives the human body as an open surface traversed by becoming; human life, he argues, cannot be confined to closed systems, for its existence consists of immense suffering, expenditure, and disorder, such that it begins only through the

rupture of such systems (24). Bataille's social theory may thus be summarized as grounded in ontological incompleteness, wherein a useless surplus beyond the purposes of biological and material life forms the basis upon which human social existence is constructed as a necessity of exclusion (26).

In his lectures delivered at the Collège in the late 1930s, Bataille explicitly elaborates a social ontology. According to this ontology, the foundation of social being lies in expenditure—an act that is not only necessary but also subject to prohibition and taboo. For Bataille, unproductive expenditure sacralizes the objects produced by the forces consumed in the process, forces that threaten both the totality of society and its participants. The prohibition generated by these consumed forces, by opposing the barrier to continued expenditure, establishes a kind of equilibrium. This interplay between the imperative of expenditure and prohibition produces what Bataille calls the "sacred nucleus," around which subjects revolve and which is governed by a collective or total movement. Social cohesion emerges from this collective movement around a nucleus external to individuals, mediating their relationships (unlike animals, which maintain immediate reciprocal attraction), and is tied to shared affects of repulsion and attraction toward the sacred nucleus (26).

For Bataille, no society exists without ecstatic projection, which may simultaneously lead to entropic movements of decline and destructive violence. Yet no social existence exists without prohibition, through which expenditure preserves individual integrity and generates a vortex-like movement that binds individuals together. To clarify this idea, Bataille turns to the metaphor of the vortex, which becomes increasingly prominent from the late 1930s onward. In drafts later compiled under the title *The Accursed Share*, he uses the term vortex to describe both social and individual beings. Social being, he argues, is not an indivisible moral entity but a loosely bounded field of an always incomplete and never closed concentration. If there is unity in presence, it follows circuits or vortices that stabilize and tend toward closure. He further states that one may conceive of one's own life as a stable vortex, constantly colliding with similar vortices and thereby modifying its own movement as well as that of others.

In *Inner Experience*, Bataille maintains that one's life is not limited to an incomprehensible inner current but flows outward, continually opening itself to what flows outward or rushes toward it. The stable vortex that constitutes the self encounters similar vortices, forming a vast configuration animated by measured excitation. The image of individualized vortex movement composing the social allows Bataille to render social flow intelligible. Expenditures, upon encountering the barrier of prohibition, form circuits and constitute the social as a dynamic totality open toward alterity, including other communities, the biosphere, and the cosmos. Bataille portrays the social as the vortex-like movement of vortices. In his view, sacred objects that ground the social are technical objects, in that they arise from projection into mineral matter. This social whole includes extra-organic organs such as books, monuments, and symbols, through which psychic individuals become intertwined in coexistence. More precisely, these objects are products of unproductive expenditure aimed not at reproducing biological life but at generating a vortex-like social being (26).

Although Bataille grounds his social theory in personal experience, he cannot be described as succumbing to subjectivism. His method exhibits no trace of self-indulgence. He discovers his inner experience only in light of his relation to others. Elements of his own life are valuable merely insofar as they constitute the only reliable source of information available to him. Throughout his works, Bataille seeks human experiences that reveal the limits of thought—experiences of the "other" beyond linguistic representation: laughter, erotic love, sacrifice, mystical union. He endeavors to foreground such experiences—experiences of confusion and non-knowledge that shatter the self. According to Bataille, such experiences make communication possible, for they compel the self to open itself to others and enter into exchange. This fragmentation of the self constitutes a form of self-transcendence, that is, going beyond oneself as a determinate body and mind. Such transcendence renders communication with others possible (26).

Implications Derived for the Design of Group Activities in Levinas's and Bataille's Theories

In today's world, where ethical and social challenges have grown increasingly complex, educational systems require programs that not only transmit knowledge but also prioritize the cultivation of moral virtues and social skills (2). In this regard, the shared implications derived from Levinas's and Bataille's theories for the design of group activities within ethics-oriented curricula include responsibility and empathy.

Levinas maintains that in the first encounter with the Other, a responsibility arises that leads to a form of self-giving without expectation of reward, because the Other takes precedence over the self. For Levinas, teaching is fundamentally a relation with the Other. It reflects the encounter with the face of the Other; in other words, teaching means offering oneself to the Other, who transcends the self. It is through the encounter with the Other that transformation and learning occur. The teacher, from Levinas's perspective, must give something beyond what students already possess. This view compels the teacher to reflect upon their responsibility toward students as Others. Teaching and learning, accordingly, are not based on prescriptive and predetermined instructions but on an ethical relation arising from the face-to-face encounter between self and Other. Students nurtured within such a system will no longer remain indifferent to others; rather, they will adopt a critical stance and seek appropriate solutions to personal and social problems (8).

For Levinas, the possibility of ethics is defined by the moment of face-to-face encounter with the Other in everyday life. Initially, the human being finds oneself as the agent of living within a specific temporal and spatial situation. The foundation of the relation between the self and the Other is understood as an ethical responsibility directed toward the material and daily needs of human beings. Furthermore, God is also an Other before whom each self bears responsibility. This approach highlights the religious dimension of Levinas's conception of responsibility, rendering responsibility infinite and unconditional (14).

On the other hand, empathy cannot occur unless a person, even imaginatively, places themselves in the position of the Other and envisions conditions similar to those of the Other. Without situating oneself in the position of the Other, empathy does not take place. Empathy depends upon recognizing the Other and understanding their pain and suffering; as noted, it is realized through recognition and the suspension of alterity (13).

Table 1. **Stages of Comparative Analysis of the Concepts of Responsibility and Empathy from the Perspectives of Levinas and Bataille**

Stage	Concept	Levinas	Bataille
Description	Responsibility	In the first encounter with the Other, responsibility emerges, leading to a form of self-sacrifice without expectation of reward, because the Other takes precedence over the self. Teaching is understood as a relationship with the Other.	Sacred objects that constitute the social are technical objects produced through projection into mineral matter. The social whole includes extra-organic organs such as books, monuments, and symbols through which psychic individuals become intertwined in coexistence.
	Empathy	Empathy does not occur unless a person imaginatively places themselves in the position of the Other and envisions conditions similar to those of the Other.	According to the theory of obligatory exclusion, societies are formed through gifts, defined as exchanges of goods and services grounded in three obligations: giving, receiving, and returning.
	Lexical and Technical Definition of Responsibility	Responsibility, equivalent to "Responsibility" in English, lexically refers to being liable or worthy of accountability, assuming duties, actions, and obligations. Technically, it denotes accountability and acceptance of the consequences of one's duties and actions.	—
	Lexical and Technical Definition of Empathy	Lexically, empathy denotes concord, unity, companionship, harmony, and agreement. In Persian usage, it corresponds to terms such as unity, compatibility, solidarity, and like-mindedness. Technically, empathy refers to the ability to understand others' emotions and experiences and to place oneself in their position.	—

Interpretation	Responsibility	"Being-for-the-Other" defines who I am. One cannot evade responsibility. Freedom is grounded in responsibility toward the Other rather than self-centered autonomy.	Ontological incompleteness entails a useless surplus beyond material and biological life, upon which human social existence is constructed as a necessity of exclusion.
	Empathy	The Other challenges me, disrupts my unquestioned freedom, and compels me toward ethical action.	Although grounded in personal experience, Bataille's method avoids subjectivism; inner experience is understood only through relation with others.
Juxtaposition	Responsibility	Encounter with the Other leads to transformation and learning. The teacher must offer more than what students already possess and reflect upon responsibility toward students as Others.	Life is understood through the dynamic between accumulation (organized energy) and loss (death). Unproductive expenditure is conceptualized as the foundation of human (social) existence.
	Empathy	Empathy depends upon recognition of the Other and understanding their suffering; it is achieved through recognition and suspension of alterity.	Bataille highlights human experiences that transcend self-contained existence—experiences of disorientation and non-knowledge that shatter the self.
Comparison	Responsibility	Students nurtured through face-to-face ethical relations are no longer indifferent; they critically seek solutions to personal and social problems.	The fragmentation of the self constitutes self-transcendence—going beyond oneself as a determinate body and mind—and makes communication possible.
	Empathy	The relation between self and Other is an ethical responsibility directed toward material and everyday human needs; God is also an Other toward whom responsibility is borne.	Valuable human experiences are those that make communication possible by compelling the self to open itself to others and engage in exchange.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the present study demonstrate that both Levinas's concept of the Other and Bataille's concept of community provide fertile philosophical grounds for rethinking the design of group activities in ethics-oriented curricula. The comparative analysis revealed two central implications shared—albeit through distinct conceptual routes—by both thinkers: responsibility and empathy. While Levinas anchors responsibility in the asymmetrical ethical encounter with the Other, Bataille situates it within the dynamic structure of communal existence shaped by expenditure, excess, and shared affect. These results indicate that group activities, when theoretically grounded, can function not merely as pedagogical techniques but as ethically transformative spaces.

First, regarding responsibility, the analysis showed that in Levinas's framework, responsibility is not derivative of rational agreement or institutional obligation but precedes autonomy and constitutes subjectivity itself. The encounter with the face of the Other calls the self into question and generates an infinite, non-reciprocal obligation. This interpretation aligns with philosophical analyses emphasizing that for Levinas, subjectivity is fundamentally "being-for-the-Other," rather than self-grounded autonomy (12). Furthermore, educational readings of Levinas confirm that ethical teaching is not rule-based instruction but responsiveness to the vulnerability of the student as Other (6). The present findings extend these interpretations by showing that group activities, when structured around dialogical and face-to-face engagement, operationalize this ethical responsiveness within curriculum practice.

The study also demonstrated that Levinas's rejection of totalizing systems offers a critique of standardized and prescriptive educational models. In line with critiques of formal education's totalizing tendencies (9), the results suggest that responsibility-based group activities resist reducing students to measurable outputs and instead foreground relational accountability. This finding is supported by research emphasizing responsibility as a foundational dimension of moral education (7, 8). By designing collaborative tasks that require students to respond to the needs and perspectives of peers, curricula can cultivate responsibility as an ethical orientation rather than a procedural requirement.

In parallel, Bataille's theory of community offers a complementary understanding of responsibility grounded in collective dynamics rather than individual moral obligation alone. The analysis revealed that community, in Bataille's thought, is constituted through shared expenditure and symbolic mediation, forming what may be described as a sacred nucleus around

which individuals revolve. Sociological interpretations have similarly argued that social cohesion emerges from shared affect and symbolic structures rather than purely rational contracts (22, 23). Our findings suggest that group activities can function as microcosms of this communal dynamic when they incorporate shared creative production, symbolic exchange, and collective reflection.

Recent theoretical developments further clarify that Bataille's conception of community transcends utilitarian cooperation and emphasizes excess, gift, and shared vulnerability (26). When applied to educational settings, this insight implies that group activities should not be reduced to efficiency-driven collaboration but must allow space for creative surplus—moments of dialogue, symbolic expression, and collective meaning-making that exceed instrumental outcomes. Such a design fosters a sense of belonging grounded in shared experience rather than competitive achievement.

The second major finding concerns empathy. In Levinas's philosophy, empathy is not merely psychological identification but ethical exposure to alterity. The Other disrupts the self's complacency and calls it to goodness. Philosophical interpretations highlight that Levinasian alterity resists appropriation and demands recognition without assimilation (11). Empirical and theoretical analyses have likewise underscored that empathy requires openness to difference rather than projection of one's own categories (13). The present study found that group activities designed around dialogical listening and perspective-taking exercises can operationalize this Levinasian insight, enabling students to experience alterity as transformative rather than threatening.

At the same time, empathy in the Bataillean framework emerges through shared experiences that disrupt self-enclosure. Bataille's emphasis on ecstatic projection, laughter, ritual, and collective affect suggests that empathy arises not only from rational understanding but from affective participation in communal life. The study's findings indicate that creative and symbolic group tasks—such as collaborative storytelling, artistic production, or shared reflection—mirror this dynamic. Such practices resonate with research on supplementary curricular activities that enhance collective development and emotional engagement (3) and with studies demonstrating that group-based moral education strengthens prosocial dispositions (4, 5).

Furthermore, Levinas's conception of responsibility as infinite and unconditional, including its theological dimension (14), deepens the ethical horizon of empathy by situating it within a broader moral framework. This dimension has been interpreted in contemporary scholarship as extending ethical responsibility into social and human rights discourse (15). Integrating such a perspective into curriculum design encourages students to connect interpersonal empathy with broader social justice concerns.

The discussion also reveals that both Levinas and Bataille challenge the modern ideal of isolated individualism. Levinas does so by destabilizing autonomy through alterity, while Bataille destabilizes closure through excess and shared expenditure. Comparative and literary analyses of alterity similarly emphasize that ethical identity emerges through relation rather than self-sufficiency (16, 17). By embedding relationality into group activities, educators can translate these philosophical insights into pedagogical structures that promote critical engagement and moral growth.

Importantly, the results indicate that responsibility and empathy are mutually reinforcing within ethics-oriented curricula. Responsibility without empathy risks becoming formal obligation, whereas empathy without responsibility may devolve into sentimental identification. The integration of both, informed by Levinas's asymmetrical ethics and Bataille's communal ontology, produces a holistic model of ethical formation. Educational philosophy literature has increasingly emphasized the need for such integrative approaches to moral development (10, 28). Moreover, contemporary classroom challenges in implementing ethical curricula underscore the necessity of theoretically grounded design rather than ad hoc initiatives (27).

In summary, the findings confirm that the philosophical frameworks of Levinas and Bataille offer complementary yet convergent foundations for designing group activities in ethics-centered curricula. By conceptualizing responsibility as prior to autonomy and community as dynamic and affective, these theories illuminate pathways for cultivating students who are both

ethically responsive and socially integrated. The comparative approach adopted in this study demonstrates that philosophical analysis can meaningfully inform curriculum development and pedagogical practice.

The present study is theoretical and comparative in nature and relies primarily on textual analysis of philosophical works and secondary scholarship. As such, it does not include empirical validation of the proposed conceptual model in real classroom settings. The interpretive nature of philosophical analysis also introduces the possibility of selective emphasis or alternative readings of Levinas and Bataille. Furthermore, the study is situated within the context of ethics-oriented curriculum design in Iran, which may limit the generalizability of its implications to other cultural and educational systems. Finally, the translation of abstract philosophical concepts into concrete pedagogical strategies requires additional operational clarification that exceeds the scope of the present analysis.

Future studies should empirically examine the impact of group activities designed according to Levinasian and Bataillean principles on students' moral development, empathy, and social responsibility. Mixed-method research designs incorporating quantitative measures of prosocial behavior and qualitative analyses of classroom interaction would provide valuable evidence. Comparative cross-cultural research could also explore how the concepts of alterity and community are interpreted in different educational contexts. Additionally, interdisciplinary collaboration between philosophers of education and curriculum specialists could refine the conceptual model into implementable instructional frameworks and teacher training programs.

Educational policymakers and curriculum designers should integrate philosophical reflection into the planning of group activities rather than relying solely on procedural guidelines. Teacher training programs should include modules on ethical relationality and community-building grounded in robust theoretical foundations. Schools are encouraged to design collaborative projects that combine dialogical engagement with creative collective production, thereby fostering both responsibility and empathy. Finally, assessment frameworks should move beyond individual performance metrics and incorporate indicators of ethical responsiveness and communal participation to align evaluation practices with ethics-oriented curricular goals.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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