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## PROJECT

### Why Groups Matter to You

The standard conception of agency assumes that we determine the normative contours of our self. As autonomous agents, we intend, plan, and decide what to do and how to live. Our values, commitments, and ways of acting constitute who we are in normative terms. As mindful agents, we critically reflect on our actions and the underlying commitments and principles – asking ourselves whether they withstand scrutiny from the rational and the moral point of view. *Why Groups Matter to You* focuses on a neglected aspect in this account of agency. The central assumption is that one's normative identity is also constituted by the groups to which one belongs (groups being understood in a broad sense to include both small-scale informal groups and structured group agents such as organizations). Qua their role and role-performance within the group, agents share the principles and commitments of the group. Although an agent might, on critical reflection, not endorse all the aims and practices of the group, they remain tied to it as long as they do not definitively leave the group. This opens up a new way of assessing agents morally. An agent's claim to moral integrity might be challenged, even undermined, by the aims and principles of the group with which they are affiliated. This approach broadens our perspective on agents' moral responsibility. Agents may fail morally by not recognizing the moral demands created by their group affiliations, but they also are accountable if they ignore a potential incoherence between their self-understanding and their group involvements. The project aims to develop these ideas within a relational conception of morality, i.e., an account that anchors morality in the normative significance of our social commitments and relations both to others and to our individual selves.

#### Recommended Reading

- Pauer-Studer, Herlinde. "A Community of Rational Beings'. Kant's Realm of Ends and the Distinction between Internal and External Freedom." *Kant-Studien* 107, no. 1 (2016): 125–159. <https://doi.org/10.1515/kant-2016-0007>.  
–. "Complicity and Conditions of Agency." *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 35, no. 4 (2018): 643–660. <https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12320>.  
–. *Justifying Injustice: Legal Theory in Nazi Germany*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020.