Editorial 3/2018

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This issue of *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* is, in many respects, quite unusual for an academic journal. It includes papers from a vast array of topics; it contains a couple of papers that together form a special section; it has very densely focused and specialised papers, as well as submissions with a general and broad perspective. At the same time, this particular issue is not unusual in relation to other issues we have published – there is nothing particularly special about it. Accordingly, it might be the journal itself that might be deemed to be unusual.

Our journal's mission is very much driven by the combination of the two notions in the title: Ethical theory and moral practice. Ethics, of course, is always a theoretical endeavour, in that it theorises morality. But there are multiple layers to such an endeavour. For instance, philosophers can discuss the very status of their theoretical tools, say, when they consider the use of the language of duties, as opposed to other imperatives. Discussions about the elements we use in ethical theorising tend to be categorised as meta-ethics. These meta-ethical discussions often seem to be detached from the reality of morality and to be exercises in the relevant subdisciplines of philosophy, such as philosophy of language, epistemology or metaphysics, only that the subject of analysis is drawn from morality.

But there are numerous ways in which meta-ethics and moral practice connect. Consider, for instance, another important question, which is tackled in these pages by Andrew Forcehimes and Luke Semrau: how to draw the very boundaries of morality, as opposed to other areas of human life. Do moral reasons differ from non-moral normative reasons? Such a question, which on first sight seems fully remote from actual moral practice, shows that there is a strong connection with the second strand of our journal's title. We can rephrase the problem of drawing the boundaries of morality thus: Is morality a practice of its own kind? We will then have to consider the actual reality of human beings and their behaviour.

Another way that ethical theory and moral practice link in these pages is in virtue of discussions about the psyche and social circumstances of moral agents. How we “tick” and the way other people impact on our deliberation and behaviour are problems that can be studied scientifically, by disciplines such as psychology and sociology. In that way, ethical theory can be informed by findings about moral practice. Work in philosophical moral psychology, these days, is often steered in this way by actual phenomena. Lisa Bortolotti, for instance, in her

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contribution considers the impact of optimistic beliefs, even where they are epistemically faulty, on goal attainment and the success of agency. I believe this is a good example as to how the use of empirical literature helps us to improve our self-understanding. There is still ethical theorising required, of course, but it will be connected to moral practice.

Per-Eric Milam ponders the problem of a clash between our practice of forgiveness being elective but also done for reasons. The latter, i.e. reasons for forgiveness, seem to generate requirements which might undermine its being discretionary. Marc Cohen, in yet another paper that falls within the area of philosophical moral psychology, deals with the psychological phenomena of regret and their common outcomes: apologies. Apologies allow human beings a kind of self-repair of a moral injury, which they have suffered. Cohen makes very good use of the clinical literature on moral injury for his theoretical aims, so I would deem it again another good example of the intersection of ethical theory and moral practice. In a similar vein, Sofia Jeppsson considers a specific form of practical irrationality and its implications for our understanding of moral responsibility. Agents might exclude options from their practical deliberation, despite their obvious feasibility, which would actually be a much better option for them than the one they pursue. Jeppsson illustrates her case with a reference to the infamous Milgram experiment.

It should be clear that connecting ethical theory and moral practice as such does not require the use of real-life cases or empirical findings. However, it commits one to be open to the actual phenomena. Take Dale Miller's paper in this issue, for example: He critically discusses Stephen Darwall's theory of second-personal morality, mainly on grounds of overlooking an important aspect of our moral life. Compunction is a kind of internal reservation, which we often feel when considering particular actions. It is a different phenomenon than the internal sanctions such as pangs of guilt, which are more often theorised in moral philosophy. In other words, enhancing the philosophical perspective on moral practice will lead to improved ethical theory.

Altogether, I believe this issue of *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* bears evidence of the specific aims and focus of this journal. It is hence not an unusual issue, but perhaps nevertheless special within the domain of philosophy journals.

It should also be mentioned that our journal reaches out to contribute both to the enhancement of ethical theory and moral practice. In terms of the former, we have just opened access to a paper, which was published in our pages, to be discussed by peers on the website of "PEA Soup" (Philosophy, Ethics, Academia). This is the second time we collaborate with this fantastic discussion forum, maintained by committed colleagues.

In terms of contributions to the improvement of moral practice it seems to me that our publications can actually show the potential value of philosophy to real life. Take the two papers from this issue, by Dietmar Hübner with Lucy White and Johannes Himmelreich, on the ethics of autonomous vehicles. This is obviously a topical problem and the interest of the general public and policy makers in this debate is huge. The two contributions show the specific value philosophy can bring to such issues. They are not attempting to solve these practical problems themselves, but to sort out and improve our thinking about them. The contributions particularly consider the value of using so-called trolley cases when deliberating about the possible algorithms for autonomous cars. The papers are therefore examples how ethical theory can help improve moral practice.