Guest Editors' Introduction: Special Issue "Moral Phenomenology and Moral Philosophy"

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Published online: 1 March 2022

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Moral experience plays a crucial role in people's lives and deliberations. However, when one or another philosophical "ism" claims to capture the truth about what the experience of value is like, the claim is seldom based on careful attention to the lived character of moral thought and discourse. Amid the many and various philosophical taxonomies and classifications of theories, outright attempts to characterize the phenomenal aspect of moral experience are extremely hard to find. Apart from a few haphazard references to moral experience as a subject of philosophical importance, contemporary moral theory often lacks a systematic discussion about the aims, procedures, and results of moral phenomenology as a vehicle for understanding and interpreting the world. By this we do not mean, of course, that the works of major phenomenological thinkers are not of moral significance, but that inquiry into concrete moral experiences as a specific method of philosophical investigation has not generally been part of moral philosophy although lately interest in moral phenomenology has gained increasing attention from philosophers.¹

This special issue goes some way towards filling this gap by bringing together a group of leading scholars whose work can be seen as "exercises in moral phenomenology" in the sense that they draw attention to the experiential dimension of ethics beyond the limitations of existing debates. Among their central questions are: What is the point of moral phenomenology? What is its subject matter and method? What might be learned from such an enterprise? How can attention to the phenomenology of moral experience help to gain a better understanding of, for example, the nature of value and obligation? More specifically, what are the epistemological and ontological credentials of arguments based on moral phenomenology? Finally, what are the benefits of a more matured moral phenomenology to mainstream debates in metaethics and normative ethics?

One of the main topics of the debate on moral phenomenology is methodological: Do moral experiences exhibit some commonality as moral experiences that unify them or is

¹ For a recent overview of the field of moral phenomenology that discusses work from both the so-called continental and analytic traditions, see Drummond and Timmons (2021)

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moral experience simply too diverse to allow for such claims? In his article “Indignation, Appreciation, and the Unity of Moral Experience,” Uriah Kriegel argues against the view that moral experience lacks sufficient unity to make substantial claims about its content. His aim is to show that close attention to the phenomenology of key emotions such as indignation and appreciation suggests that at least some moral experiences have a unified subject matter.

The discussion moves from moral methodology to moral metaphysics in the articles of William J. FitzPatrick and Jennifer Church. Are there introspectible features of at least some forms of moral experience that portray reality as containing worldly moral properties thus providing *pro tanto* evidence for an objectivist metaethic? FitzPatrick answers this question in the positive in his article “Moral Phenomenology and the Value-Laden World,” arguing that there are some aspects of moral phenomenology which specifically carry ontological objective purport and thus support moral realism. Church discusses this theme from another angle in her article “Imagination and the Experience of Moral Objectivity,” in which she argues for the crucial role of imagination for understanding the experience of moral objectivity.

Another issue concerns the epistemological status of moral experience. If there are moral properties that are represented in at least some forms of moral experience, how might one be aware of them? In his article “The Phenomenology of Moral Intuition” Robert Audi discusses this question by exploring different dimensions of moral intuition and by comparing moral intuition with moral perception. Ingrid Vendrell Ferran examines how an immediate consciousness of value underlies several moral experiences in her article “Feeling as Consciousness of Value.” After discussing explanations of feeling in terms of judgment, emotion, and perception, she concludes that the consciousness of value is best explained by an intentional feeling. In her article “Feeling Wronged: The Value and Deontic Power of Moral Distress” Carla Bagnoli makes the case that there are moral experiences whose epistemological significance is other than epistemic. In contrast to appraisal and perceptual models of distress, her view is that the epistemic and normative value of moral distress is dialogical rather than evidential.

Bearing on issues in moral epistemology and normative ethics are questions about moral motivation. Michiel Meijer aims to extend the debate on moral motivation on phenomenological grounds in his article “Articulating Better, Being Better: Ethical Emancipation and the Sources of Motivation.” His view is that moral motivation has a distinctive emancipatory dimension which can only be adequately conceptualized by having recourse to a phenomenology of motivational experience at the intersection of normative ethics and metaethics.

Normative ethics includes ideas of respect, sympathy, and gratitude that figure centrally in much normative ethical theorizing. The question of how respect and sympathy are related is addressed by John Drummond in his article “Sympathetic Respect, Respectful Sympathy,” in which he argues that respect and sympathy cannot be separated from each other in making articulated choices. In their article “Expressing Gratitude as What’s Morally Expected: A Phenomenological Approach” Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons argue that reflection on the phenomenology of prototypical cases of gratitude motivate recognition of the deontic categories of the *expected* and its contrary the *offensive* – categories that are (respectively) distinct from the familiar categories of the obligatory and the wrong.

Interest in phenomenology has greatly increased in recent years. Indeed, what used to be a sharp division between so-called continental and analytic traditions seems to have largely eroded and we now find a greater willingness of philosophers to recognize the significance of work from both traditions in addressing questions and issues of common concern. We

also find increasing interest by phenomenologists in the work from the cognitive and neurosciences as bears on phenomenological concerns. One example of this integration of phenomenological traditions that takes account of pertinent work in cognitive science is the 2012 book by Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind* (Gallagher and Zahavi 2012). In short, current approaches to issues in phenomenology have tended to be "inclusivist."

We find this same inclusivist spirit animating recent work in moral phenomenology. For example, the 2018 Drummond and Rinofner-Kreidl collection of essays on the moral emotions brings together philosophers from both phenomenological traditions (some of them contributing to this special issue) (Drummond and Rinofner-Kreidl 2018). We hope this volume will encourage other moral philosophers to explore the resources that the field of moral phenomenology has to offer for addressing metaethical and normative ethical issues and problems in what we are calling an inclusivist spirit.

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