

From the Editors

Running an academic journal is quite a challenge. Not only in terms of reading manuscripts that might be well outside your comfort zone or recruiting suitable reviewers, but also when it comes to operating the journal in accordance with principles that respect both authors, editors, the academic community and morality.

Respecting moral principles is a challenge in ordinary life, and it is no less a challenge in the life of an academic journal. When establishing *De Ethica*, we made several morally important choices. The first was to be a not-for-profit, web only, open access journal. Free from pressures to generate a profit, *De Ethica* therefore enjoys a greater freedom to publish what it wants. While having the backing of a large, profit-driven publisher certainly has its benefits, operating without demands for profit also means that there is no need for subscription fees or article processing fees. By making our articles freely available on the web, scholars with no institutional backing, or those affiliated with universities that cannot afford the substantial subscription fees, are not excluded from the academic discussions.

A second morally motivated choice was for the editors to avoid becoming gatekeepers. Many, if not all journals have editors who screen the submissions before sending them out for external reviews. In order not to overburden reviewers, this is an important part of the review process. Unfortunately, this sometimes amounts to arbitrary or ill-founded rejections, as an editor is seldom competent in all areas covered by the journal. As a result, a submission can be rejected because of the editor not properly understanding the topic, or because of his or her often unconscious biases regarded subject, ethical position, or style. Recognising that the area of expertise of an editor is rather narrow, *De Ethica* is committed to a charitable screening process, only desk-rejecting submissions that are clearly lacking in quality or – as is almost always the case when a desk-rejection is made – outside the scope of the journal.

A third choice was to adhere to a strict double-blind review process, with an ambition to move towards an explicit triple-blind review process. While double-blind review is relied upon by most journals, it allows the editors' often implicit biases to kick in: gender biases, racial biases, personal biases, and so on. Triple-blind, where both reviewers and editors handle anonymous manuscripts until a decision is made, helps to reduce such biases and allows a proper focus on the manuscript's content.

A fourth choice of ours was to encourage constructive reviews. Many authors are doctoral students sending their manuscripts to an academic journal for the first time, or authors not having English as their first language. Neither they, nor the academic community, benefit from reviewers giving short and unmotivated reviews or from abusive comments. While a reviewer must be forthright and not shun from pointing out embarrassing weaknesses, it should never be done in a manner that is insulting to the

author or disheartens the author from pursuing his or her career in academia, or without supplying solid reasons why the paper is not worthy of publication.

De Ethica is continuously trying to improve; not only in terms of the quality of the articles published, but also regarding the moral status of the journal. Academic publishing is a moral balance act, and if not properly done it has a potential for causing substantial harm to both individual authors and to the academic community. By having an ongoing discussion on such matters, and by welcoming input from our readers, we hope to set a good example for the future of academic publishing.