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MORAL KNOWLEDGE THROUGH IMAGINATION

An initial observation: there is a practical use of the imagination, that is, we sometimes make use of the imagination in order to answer practical questions.

The question: does the contribution made by the imagination in its practical (including moral) use amount to anything more than its contribution in the theoretical use?

The theoretical use of the imagination: we exercise our imagination in order to achieve knowledge of, among other things, possible states of affairs.

The question, *reformulated*: does the contribution made by the imagination in its practical (including moral) use amount to more than offering knowledge of, among other things, possible states of affairs in order to help us answer practical questions?

There are at least two ways in which it does, or so I argue:
1. Preselection of (practically or morally) reasonable alternatives which then become the subject of deliberation
2. Preselection of (practically or morally) relevant details within imaginative representations: patterns of salience, levels of resolution and leaving out irrelevant details.

How does this justify talk of gaining moral knowledge[1] through imagination?
1. Preselection of reasonable alternatives is a cognitive process which puts us in a position to know what (practically or morally) reasonable action alternatives we have.
2. Preselection of relevant details within imaginative representations is a cognitive process which puts us in a position to know what are the (practically or morally) relevant aspects of a situation, of an action etc.

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[1] Caveat: the centre of gravity of this claim is not on the word *knowledge* - if you think there is no such think as moral knowledge, replace knowledge with any mental state that you think amounts to getting things right in the moral domain. If you think there is no way to salvage a notion of getting things right in the moral domain, then this talk might truly be of little interest to you. But, then again, so is much of everything else.