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FORSCHUNGSSTELLE NEUROPHILOSOPHIE
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Seminar at VIU-Venice 23.-27. September 2013

PD Dr. Mechthild Schäfer (Psychologie), Dr. Michael von Grundherr and
Prof. Dr. Stephan Sellmaier (Philosophie)

What determines moral behaviour? Moral competence and situational factors

according to a well-established principle of social psychology, human behaviour is determined by a combination of situational factors and individual characteristics. This implies that moral behaviour depends on both personal moral competence and the context in which people act. Social contexts (groups, organisations) may exert very strong influence and are especially interesting for ethics.

The adequate moral evaluation of behaviour in such contexts and the development of intervention strategies require:

- (a) a deeper understanding of the underlying functional mechanisms – e.g.: are agents unable to perceive a certain situation as morally relevant or do they just weight other factors (e.g. reputation, social status or social inclusion) higher in situations of this type.
- (b) a method or measure to identify the degree of moral competence and its influence on behaviour compared to the impact of situational influences.

In the seminar we will approach recent findings on moral competence in relation to roles taken in the bullying process for one and in what recent neuro-cognitive experiments on moral decisions contribute to the discussion. These studies in all use a rather wide range of tests and scales for moral competence and thus make implicit assumptions about what moral competence is. We will try to make these implicit theories explicit and discuss which of them is most helpful to support moral evaluation.

Registration until 20th. July at sellmaier@lmu.de.