

Mittwoch, 22. November 2023

18:30 bis 20 Uhr
Gebäude 24.53.
Raum 01.81

Pacale Willemsen

Shining Light on Moral Praise

Philosophers claim that an agent's moral responsibility can come in two variations: A blameworthy agent deserves blame, and a praiseworthy agent deserves praise. It is also widely accepted that a central question in moral philosophy concerns the conditions under which an agent *is* or is appropriately *held* morally responsible for their behaviour. Moral philosophers ask under what circumstances or in virtue of what moral responsibility is deserved and justified. Surprisingly, while moral blame has been the target of considerable philosophical and psychological discussions, little to no attention has been paid to moral praise. In philosophy, this omission has recently been recognised, but despite this recognition, the required work has yet to be carried out. The research in moral psychology seems just as imbalanced. While negative moral phenomena, hardly any empirical evidence exists on the psychology underlying the practice of praising. One reason why praise has been neglected may stem from the philosophical assumption that praise is the positive counterpart of blame: Praiseworthiness is assumed to be 'methodologically mirrored in blameworthiness'. By understanding how blame works, so goes the assumption, we can infer all we (really) need to know about praise. We shall call this the *Symmetry Assumption*.

In this talk, I will provide evidence that the Symmetry Assumption is false. Blame and praise are asymmetrical with respect to the underlying cognitive and affective processes, the language that is used to express blame and praise judgments, and also with various norms of how, when, and by whom blame and praise may be expressed. I will outline various research gaps and suggest way of addressing them.

About the speaker

Pascale Willemsen studied Philosophy, Linguistics and Communication at the University of Aachen. She received her doctorate from the University of Bochum in 2017. Her dissertation was titled: "*Investigating the Role of Causal Responsibility for the Attribution of Moral Responsibility*". She is currently working on thick ethical concepts from a psychological, linguistics, and metaethical perspective, being a Research Fellow at the University of Zürich since 2022.

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