



## **CNR SHORT TERM-MOBILITY PROGRAM 2014**

### **REPORT OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES**

#### **PROJECT:**

**MORAL EMOTIONS, CONSCIOUSNESS AND RESPONSIBILITY: A NEUROETHICAL ANALYSIS**

#### **Visiting Scholar (Grant Beneficiary): Dr. Elisabetta Sirgiovanni, PhD**

Research Fellow at the National Research Council of Italy, Institute of Biomedical Technologies -  
Unit: Research ethics, bioethics, biolaw and biopolitics, via dei Taurini 19 - 00185, Rome (Italy)  
Responsible: Dr. Cinzia Caporale

**Proponent: Dr. Luigi Zecca** (Director of the CNR Institute of Biomedical Technologies, Milan)

**Host Institution: Graduate Center - City University of New York (GC-CUNY)**, Philosophy  
Department, 365 5th Ave, New York, NY 10016 (USA)

**Supervisor: Prof. Jesse Prinz** (Distinguished Professor - Philosophy Program, Director of the  
Committee for Interdisciplinary Science Studies, GC - CUNY)

#### **Exchange Visitor Program, EVP**

**Dates: 2014, September 13 – December 11** (21 days covered by CNR Short-Term Mobility Grant)

Dr. Elisabetta Sirgiovanni successfully completed research activities within the project “Moral emotions, consciousness and responsibility: a neuroethical analysis” funded by CNR Short-Term Mobility Grant.

The project examined neuroscientific studies of moral emotions (especially guilt and shame), with reference to issues of conscious/unconscious control in the context of morally relevant behavior. The project aimed at contributing to a neuroethical account of moral responsibility and at analysing its impact to moral, legal and social domains.

This research is a prosecution of her research activities within the MIUR Premium Project “The administration of justice in Italy: the case of neurogenetics and neuroscience” at CNR-Italy.

**APPROACH:** The Project endorsed a sentimentalist view of morality within the multilevel naturalistic approach of neuroethics. The research included methods of experimental philosophy.

**METHODS:** The research combined both qualitative and quantitative methods: bibliographic research; conceptual analysis; experimental training in social/behavioral research with human subjects.

## LIST OF PERFORMED ACTIVITIES

### THEORETICAL ACTIVITIES

Theoretical activities were dedicated to the problem of moral responsibility and conscious control from a neuroethical perspective. Specialized documentary and bibliographic research was carried out in support of the analysis (relevant fields: neuroscience, biology, philosophy, psychology). The research was supported by access to the robust resource of CUNY Libraries' print collection and digital collections, active reference and instruction services, augmented by New York Public Library (NYPL) services for CUNY faculty. Dr. Sirgiovanni was also granted Manhattan Research Library Initiative (MaRLI) privileges, which gave her access to select materials owned by Columbia University and New York University (NYU). The research benefits from working for specialized seminars, meetings, and conferences in the area of neuroethics at CUNY and NYU (Center for Bioethics, and Center for Mind, Brain, and Consciousness), and from participation in the 2014 International Neuroethics Society Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C. (2014, November 14). During her time at CUNY, Dr. Sirgiovanni was a member of the GC – CUNY Committee for Interdisciplinary Science Studies. A draft paper on the topic of moral responsibility and conscious control was written and presented by Dr. Sirgiovanni at the meeting of The Committee for Interdisciplinary Science Studies (Director: Prof. Jesse Prinz), GC – CUNY (2014, November 21).

### EXPERIMENTAL ACTIVITIES

Experimental activities were dedicated to investigate the influence of proneness to moral emotions such as guilt and shame on the severity of responsibility attributions in first and third person. The research included training in experimental philosophy at the GC-CUNY Experimental Philosophy Lab (Director: Prof. Jesse Prinz, Assistant: Dr. Angelika Seidel) and was conducted in collaboration with other members of the Emotion and Morality group. Dr. Sirgiovanni got Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Certification in Social/Behavioral Research with Human subjects (2014, October 2). The experimental training included the analysis of measures for guilt and shame (proneness scales and relevant literature), the drafting of vignettes for responsibility attribution and the construction of the experimental design according to ANOVA models. A sample experiment was run to test methodology and predictions. The experimental design will be submitted to CUNY IRB; the research will continue in the next months. A proposal for fund raising to sustain the project has been submitted.

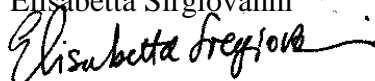
## RESULTS

- A scientific publication on responsibility and conscious control is under preparation.
- A project proposal on guilt, shame and responsibility for fund raising was submitted.
- The experimental design on guilt, shame and responsibility will be submitted to CUNY IRB for approval; the experiment will be performed in the next months with the research team. Dr. Sirgiovanni will continue to attend the Lab virtually and is eligible for a new visit at CUNY.
- Collaboration between City University of New York (GC Philosophy Program) and National Research Council of Italy (ITB Unit Research ethics, bioethics, biolaw and biopolitics) was consolidated; a new collaboration with New York University (Center for Bioethics; Associate Director: Prof. Matthew Liao) has been established.

December 11, 2014

Beneficiary

Elisabetta Sirgiovanni



Supervisor

Jesse Prinz

