

***Individualism and Altruism:  
How Can We Move Beyond Selfish Behavior?***

Intensive Course // May 21-22, 2010  
Friday 17:30 – 19:30, Saturday 9:30 – 17:30

The main assumption behind modern economic development has been that selfish behaviour blends well with the public good: self-interest was believed not only to advocate welfare but to even create it. This assumption is more than a mere economic statement by far; it also has a great impact on the way we perceive political and legal institutions as well as the education system in our society today. Outside mainstream economics, however, the positive appraisal of selfish behaviour has always been open to sweeping categorical contest. Here, many believe individualism to fundamentally conflict with the interests of the larger society, at least in the narrow sense of egoism, and thus consider it as something to overcome. But what should take individualism's place, both in the economy and overall society? Is altruism really the right candidate, as some philosophers would say? And how are we to transform selfish behavior into something better, both as individuals and as a people? These critical questions will open our seminar. First, we will shortly review the fundamental and often unannounced assumptions behind the idea that acting in accordance with one's self-interests produces the common good. Here, specific attention will be paid to the underlying views of the human-being and its relationship to community and society. Second, we will study some exemplary philosophical texts, which challenge these views, and identify the possible alternatives they suggest. Third and lastly, we will discuss the potential paths along which we can practically move beyond selfish behavior, especially in the context of education.

Venue: Alanus University of Art and Social Sciences, Villestrasse 2, 53347 Alfter (Germany): Campus II, Semi 12.

Instructors: Prof. Dr. Marcelo da Veiga, Professor of Philosophy and Cultural Studies  
Prof. Dr. Silja Graupe, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and Economics

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ECTS: 1

Bibliographical Reference: John Stuart Mill: *On Liberty and Other Essays* (1993); Rudolf Steiner: *Intuitive Thinking as a Spiritual Path. A Philosophy of Freedom* (1995); Tetsuro Watsuji: *Rinrigaku. Ethics in Japan* (1996); Andrew Webburn: *Rudolf Steiner's Philosophy and the Crisis of Contemporary Thought* (2004).