

When reasoning errors are not errors of reasoning



Fabio Paglieri
ISTC-CNR

Science & Philosophy Colloquia

Room XII
Villa Mirafiori – Via Carlo Fea 2 – Roma
Tuesday 13 December 2016 – 10:30-12:30

open to the public

organization
Emiliano Ippoliti & Mirella Capozzi
FILOSOFIA – SAPIENZA



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Programme

tuesday
13 December 2016

- 10:35-10:40 **Introduction** Emiliano Ippoliti *Filosofa – Sapienza*
- 10:45-11:45 **When reasoning errors are not errors of reasoning**
F. Paglieri *ISTC-CNR*
- 11:45-12:00 **break**
- 12:00-12:30 **debate**
chair **Emiliano Ippoliti**

Description

Two approaches to reasoning errors are most prominent in the scholarly literature: in philosophy, fallacy theory has attempted to systematize argumentative mistakes since the times of Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations*; in psychology, the experimental study of systematic errors has been instrumental to the success of Kahneman and Tversky's "heuristics and biases" programme, and more generally to the development of dual systems theories of reasoning. Interestingly, both approaches face similar challenges: since Charles Hamblin's seminal monograph, *Fallacies* (1970), argumentation theorists have been preoccupied with the problem of "non-fallacious fallacies", i.e. arguments that superficially have the structure of a fallacy, yet appear justified on reasonable standards of inference; in parallel, the heuristics and biases programme has been criticized by proponents of ecological rationality (Gerd Gigerenzer) and the argumentative theory of reasoning (Hugo Mercier and Dan Sperber), suggesting that people's alleged mistakes are often experimental artefacts, due to a misguided attempt to test cognitive skills out of their proper context of application. In this presentation I will critically review both these debates and discuss a garden variety of argumentative fallacies and reasoning errors, to propose that such incidents, even when they reveal actual mistakes, have little to do with inferential deficits, but rather point to other cognitive shortcomings – namely, attentional biases and inhibition problems. The implications for critical thinking education are vast, suggesting both an explanation to the poor track record of past efforts and new avenues for improvement.

Fabio Paglieri is a researcher at the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies of the Italian National Research Council (ISTC-CNR) in Rome. He is the Editor-in-Chief of *Topoi* (Springer) and *Sistemi Intelligenti* (Il Mulino). He is the author of *La cura della ragione* (2016) and *Saper aspettare* (2014, both with Il Mulino), and over 100 papers on decision making, the psychology of reasoning, and argumentation theory.