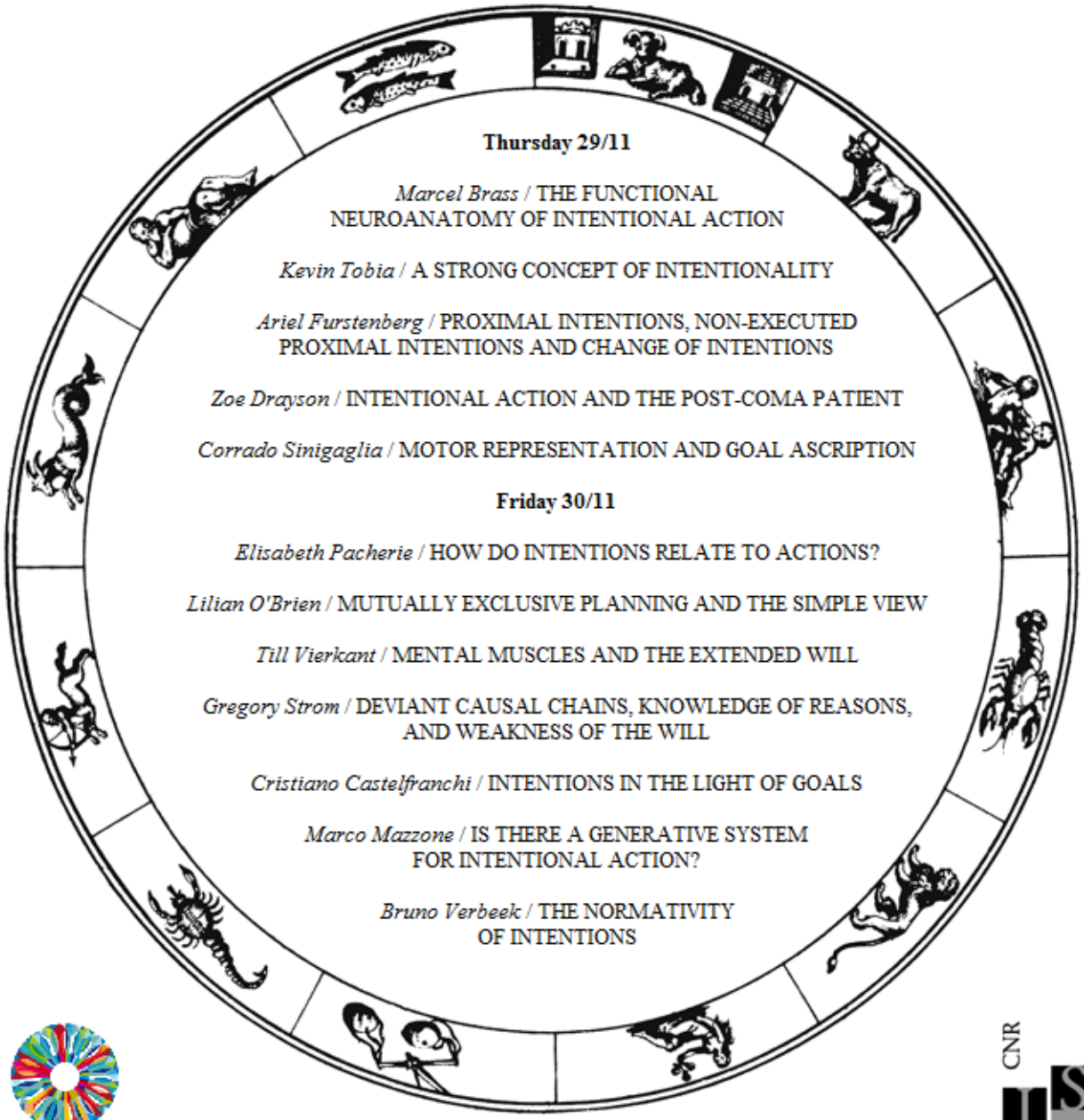
Topoi Conference 2012

Chairs: Fabio Paglieri & Markus Schlosser

INTENTIONS: PHILOSOPHICAL AND EMPIRICAL ISSUES

Roma, ISTC-CNR, 29-30 November 2012



Thursday 29/11

Marcel Brass / THE FUNCTIONAL NEUROANATOMY OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

Kevin Tobia / A STRONG CONCEPT OF INTENTIONALITY

Ariel Furstenberg / PROXIMAL INTENTIONS, NON-EXECUTED PROXIMAL INTENTIONS AND CHANGE OF INTENTIONS

Zoe Drayson / INTENTIONAL ACTION AND THE POST-COMA PATIENT

Corrado Sinigaglia / MOTOR REPRESENTATION AND GOAL ASCRIPTION

Friday 30/11

Elisabeth Pacherie / HOW DO INTENTIONS RELATE TO ACTIONS?

Lilian O'Brien / MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE PLANNING AND THE SIMPLE VIEW

Till Vierkant / MENTAL MUSCLES AND THE EXTENDED WILL

Gregory Strom / DEVIANT CAUSAL CHAINS, KNOWLEDGE OF REASONS, AND WEAKNESS OF THE WILL

Cristiano Castelfranchi / INTENTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF GOALS

Marco Mazzone / IS THERE A GENERATIVE SYSTEM FOR INTENTIONAL ACTION?

Bruno Verbeek / THE NORMATIVITY OF INTENTIONS

European Network for Social Intelligence

Springer

CNR ISTC ISTITUTO DI SCIENZE E TECNOLOGIE DELLA COGNIZIONE

A new event for a long established journal

This is the first edition of the TOPOI CONFERENCE, a series of biannual conferences in philosophy, sponsored by *Topoi: An International Journal of Philosophy*. In analogy with the journal format, each conference will focus on a specific theme (*topos*), and contributions presented to the conference will later appear in an issue of the journal dedicated to the same topic. The second Topoi conference will take place in late 2014, and will be announced well before that date on the journal's website (http://www.springer.com/philosophy/journal/11245).

This first edition attracted 29 submissions from all continents (Antarctica excluded): after blind peer-reviewing by at least two referees, only 7 were accepted, with an acceptance rate lower than 25%. Revised and extended versions of these papers, together with contributions by the invited speakers, will be included in a thematic issue of *Topoi* devoted to the conference topic, to appear in late 2013.

The conference is organized by Fabio Paglieri (Rome) and Markus Schlosser (Groningen), and sponsored by *Topoi*, Springer, the European Network for Social Intelligence, SINTELNET (http://www.sintelnet.eu/), and the Goal-Oriented Agents Lab of the ISTC-CNR (GOAL, http://www.istc.cnr.it/group/goal).

A few words on the journal

Topoi's main assumption is that philosophy is a lively, provocative, delightful activity, which constantly challenges our received views, relentlessly questions our inherited habits, painstakingly elaborates on how things could be different, in other stories, in counterfactual situations, in alternative possible worlds. Whatever its ideology, whether with the intent of uncovering a truer structure of reality or of soothing our anxiety, of exposing myths or of following them through, the outcome of philosophical activity is always the destabilizing, unsettling generation of doubts, of objections, of criticisms.

It follows that this activity is intrinsically a “dialogue”, that philosophy is first and foremost philosophical discussion, that it requires bringing out conflicting points of view, paying careful, sympathetic attention to their structure, and using this dialectic to articulate one's approach, to make it richer, more thoughtful, more open to variation and play. And it follows that the spirit which one brings to this activity must be one of tolerance, of always suspecting one's own blindness and consequently looking with unbiased eye in every corner, without fearing to pass a (fallible) judgment on what is there but also without failing to show interest and respect.

Topoi's structure is a direct expression of this view. To maximize discussion, we devote most or all of this issue to a single topic. And, since discussion is only interesting when it is conducted seriously and responsibly, we usually request the collaboration of a guest-editor, an expert who will identify contributors and interact with them in a constructive way. Because we do not feel tied to any definite philosophical theme (or set of them), we choose the topic with absolute freedom, looking for what is blossoming and thriving, occasionally betting on what might - partly through our attention - "begin" to blossom and thrive. And because we do not want our structure to become our own straightjacket, we are open to contributions not fitting the “topos”, and do not rule out in principle the possibility of topic-less issues.

Programme

Thursday, 29 November 2012

14:00-14:15 Opening remarks

14:15-15:15 *Marcel Brass* (Ghent)
THE FUNCTIONAL NEUROANATOMY OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

15:15-16:00 *Kevin Tobia* (Oxford)
A STRONG CONCEPT OF INTENTIONALITY

16:00-16:30 Break

16:30-17:15 *Ariel Furstenberg* (Jerusalem)
PROXIMAL INTENTIONS, NON-EXECUTED PROXIMAL INTENTIONS AND CHANGE OF INTENTIONS

17:15-18:00 *Zoe Drayson* (Stirling)
INTENTIONAL ACTION AND THE POST-COMA PATIENT

18:00-18:30 Break

18:30-19:30 *Corrado Sinigaglia* (Milano)
MOTOR REPRESENTATION AND GOAL ASCRIPTION

21:00 Social dinner

Friday, 30 November 2012

09:00-09:15 Springer's presentation

09:15-10:15 *Elisabeth Pacherie* (Paris)
HOW DO INTENTIONS RELATE TO ACTIONS?

10:15-11:00 *Lilian O'Brien* (Cork)
MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE PLANNING AND THE SIMPLE VIEW

11:00-11:30 Break

11:30-12:15 *Till Vierkant* (Edinburgh)
MENTAL MUSCLES AND THE EXTENDED WILL

12:15-13:00 *Gregory Strom* (Sydney)
DEVIANT CAUSAL CHAINS, KNOWLEDGE OF REASONS, AND WEAKNESS OF THE WILL

13:00-14:30 Lunch

14:30-15:30 *Cristiano Castelfranchi* (Roma)
INTENTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF GOALS

15:30-16:00 Break

16:00-16:45 *Marco Mazzone* (Catania)
IS THERE A GENERATIVE SYSTEM FOR INTENTIONAL ACTION?

16:45-17:45 *Bruno Verbeek* (Leiden)
THE NORMATIVITY OF INTENTIONS

Invited speakers: Abstracts

THE FUNCTIONAL NEUROANATOMY OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

Marcel Brass (Ghent University, Belgium)

Thursday 29/11, 14:15-15:15

The question of how we can intentionally control our behaviour has an enduring fascination for philosophers, psychologists and neurologists. Nevertheless, a deeper understanding of the cognitive mechanisms and functional-anatomical principles underlying intentional action is still lacking. Over the last few years we have started to investigate two fundamental aspects of intentional behaviour. The first line of research is related to the question whether intentional action has to be treated as a unitary concept. I will outline evidence for a heuristic framework that distinguishes different components of intentional action and tries to relate these components to different parts of the medial frontal cortex. The second part of my talk will address the question whether high-level beliefs have an influence on basic intentional processes. This research line shows that disbelief in free will affects intentional motor preparation.

INTENTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF GOALS

Cristiano Castelfranchi (Istituto di Scienze e Tecnologie della Cognizione, CNR, Roma, Italy)

Friday 30/11, 14:30-15:30

I will present a systematic analysis of the various steps of goal processing and intention creation, as the final outcome of goal-driven action generation. Intention theory has to be grounded in goal theory: intentions require means-end reasoning and planning, conflict resolution, and coherence. The process of intention formation and intentional action execution is strictly based on specific sets of beliefs: predictions, evaluations, calculation of costs, responsibility beliefs, competence, etc. The origin of an intention is not necessarily a “desire” (which is just a kind of goal). Intention is a two-layered goal structure: the intended action(s) to be executed, and the intended outcome motivating that action. Moreover, each aspect of this structure has its own kind of failure, with different consequences on planning and intention revision. I will also examine, from this belief-goal perspective, the double stage of intentions and the relations and differences between intentions “in agenda” (future directed intentions; prior intentions) and intentions under execution (intentions in action). Finally, I will discuss why the will is much more than the intention that drives an intentional action.

HOW DO INTENTIONS RELATE TO ACTIONS?

Élisabeth Pacherie (Institut Jean-Nicod, ENS/EHESS/CNRS, Paris, France)

Friday 30/11, 09:15-10:15

On a traditional philosophical view of the structure of agency, intentions, conceived as conscious mental states, are the causes of actions. More specifically, an event being an action depends its being caused by an intention, and an action being an intentional action depends upon its fitting the content of the intention that caused it. In recent times, this traditional view has come under attack from both philosophers and cognitive scientists. Two main worries have been raised. The first worry concerns the causal efficacy of intentions *qua* conscious states. Libet's famous studies on the “readiness potential” were interpreted by many, including Libet himself, as evidence in favour of a

sceptical attitude towards the causal efficacy of conscious intentions. Wegner's psychological experiments and his claim that the conscious will is an illusion also fuelled this scepticism. The second worry concerns the nature of the relation between intentions and action, and whether this relation is best described as a causal relation rather than as a control relation. Current scientific evidence provides strong support for the view that action is hierarchically organized and involves several levels of intentions, action representations and action control processes. I shall argue that the traditional philosophical view, but also some of the objections levelled against it, rest in part on an over-simplified conception of the structure of agency and that taking into account the hierarchical nature of intentions and control processes can lead to a reassessment of the relation between intentions and action and of the role of conscious agency in action production.

MOTOR REPRESENTATION AND GOAL ASCRIPTION

Corrado Sinigaglia (Università degli Studi di Milano, Italy)

Thursday 29/11, 18:30-19:30

Observing another agent acting recruits the same motor processes and motor representations that would be involved if one were actually acting oneself. There is evidence that such motor recruitment facilitates understanding others' actions. Further, several studies have shown that the richer one's motor representation, the greater one's ability to understand others' actions. But how could motor representation facilitate action understanding? The talk aims to tackle this question by introducing a new account of action. This account, I shall argue, enables us to understand the role of motor cognition in action understanding and sheds new light on the ways we mind others' minds.

THE NORMATIVITY OF INTENTIONS

Bruno Verbeek (Leiden University, The Netherlands)

Friday 30/11, 16:45-17:45

Suppose you intend now to do A at some future time t. However, when t has come you don't do A. Something has gone wrong. My object in this paper is to determine the nature of this failing. This failing is not just causal, but is also a normative failing. This raises the question how to characterize this normativity. I will discuss three alternative views (or rather, three groups of views). On the first view, the fact that you do not execute your intention to do A is wrong only if the balance of reasons pointed to A-ing. The fact that you intended to do A does not add to the reasons for A-ing at t. On the second view, the fact that you do not execute your intention to do A is wrong because you violate a requirement. Both these views have in common that they deny that intending to do A at t creates a reason to A at t. The third alternative, the one I defend, claims that you do create reasons to A by intending to A.

Accepted papers: Abstracts

INTENTIONAL ACTION AND THE POST-COMA PATIENT

Zoe Drayson (Stirling)

Thursday 29/11, 17:15-18:00

The presence or absence of intentional action plays an important role in the clinical diagnosis of post-coma patients. Attributions of intentional action are made when a patient's bodily movements are judged to be purposeful or voluntary, rather than reflex or automatic. Recent research, however, has suggested that evidence for our judgements about intentional action can come from neuroimaging data as well as bodily movements: researchers argue that a certain pattern of neural activity is reliable evidence of intentional mental action, and thus conscious awareness. If this is correct, it raises the possibility of attributing conscious awareness to patients in vegetative states, with important legal and ethical consequences. In this paper, I argue that this so-called 'argument from volition' requires several assumptions about the nature of mental action. I suggest that while the neuroimaging data may provide evidence for the existence of certain mental events, it is neutral with regard to whether these mental events constitute mental actions. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how one could set up a neuroimaging task that would enable us to make the required discrimination. None of these facts rule out the presence of conscious awareness in the vegetative state, but together they indicate that the 'argument from volition' is not the way establish it.

PROXIMAL INTENTIONS, NON-EXECUTED PROXIMAL INTENTIONS AND CHANGE OF INTENTIONS

Ariel Furstenberg (Jerusalem)

Thursday 29/11, 16:30-17:15

Intending to do something *now* is considered a proximal intention. Proximal intentions closely connect the *intending* and the *doing*, i.e., the process of *executing* a plan to act, which makes the postulation of *unconscious* proximal intentions attractive, as claimed by Alfred Mele (2009). In this paper I want to go a step further and consider *non-executed unconscious proximal intention*s, i.e., unconscious proximal intentions to act that do *not* turn into doing. Is it justified to talk about *unconscious proximal intentions* which were not executed and never turned into a real movement, but perhaps were vetoed or overcome (unconsciously) by an alternative action? And if so, can such intentions be identified?

Two parts to the paper; one is a construction of a philosophical perspective that can help us conceptually account for the phenomenon of *non-executed proximal intentions* and the related phenomenon of *change of proximal intention*. The ingredients of this perspective are Mele's notion of *unconscious* proximal intentions combined with the notions of *trying* and *striving* taken from Brian O'Shaughnessy's model of action.

A fundamental way to identify *non-executed unconscious proximal intention*s is through brain activity (for instance, electrical activity recorded with EEG), and thus, the second part of the paper is an analysis of empirical findings. For example, a specific EEG signal is shown to be a neural correlate of a *non-executed proximal intention.* However, how similar does this neural correlate have to be to the neural correlate of an *executed* proximal intention, given that they both fall under the concept of intention? Prior to EEG development, one would never consider *non-executed unconscious proximal intention*s a case of intention at all, since the agent was not *conscious* of

anything and did not *do* anything. But with the technical and interpretable development of EEG a whole group of so called “intentions” suddenly appears. The aim of the paper is to justify this expanded usage of the concept of “intention” and to consider new questions that arise as a result from considering these philosophical and empirical realms together.

IS THERE A GENERATIVE SYSTEM FOR INTENTIONAL ACTION?

Marco Mazzone (Catania)

Friday 30/11, 16:00-16:45

How complex are intentions? And how wide and scattered are the neural circuits involved in their representation and attribution? Despite a reasonable tendency to keep the notion as simple as possible – especially in philosophy, where it has been traditional to conceive of intentions and other mental states in propositional terms – consensus is growing that having and representing intentions is a complex affair. In this paper I propose to address a specific aspect of this issue, that is, whether it can be said that humans have a generative system for intentions. Such a claim has been made by Baldwin and Baird (2001), and Pastra and Aloimonos (2012) have made a recent attempt to elaborate it in some detail. The claim is based, however, on a parallelism between communicative and non-communicative intentions that is not universally agreed. I will specifically address an argument that has been put forth by Sperber and Wilson (2002) to the effect that there is a crucial difference between intentions involved in communicative and non-communicative actions precisely because the former but not the latter admit of a generative account – in a sense to be specified below. The analysis of this argument is useful to understand what is conceptually required in order for intentions to be generative. For the same reason I will also consider Levelt's (1989) model of speaking. Speaking is a special case of intentional action that is presumed to be generative par excellence, and Levelt has proposed a psycholinguistic model of speaking where communicative intention is the starting point of the process. In the present paper, I do not presume to show that the claim of a generative system for non-communicative actions is correct. My more modest aim is to clarify some important aspects of the issue. Specifically, I claim that Sperber and Wilson's (2002) argument seems to underestimate the complexity of non-communicative intentions. Moreover, their argument presupposes that communicative intentions expressed by linguistic utterances have the same semantic structure than those utterances. There are, however, two ways in which the semantic structure of utterances can be thought to be intended. Each component of the structure could be consciously intended and planned. Or the structure could be processed automatically in a constraint-based fashion, and it could be accessed by consciousness and executive control only in a dynamic way: which components are actually attended depends on the circumstances. The second view allow for a very coherent picture of the claim that non-communicative and linguistic actions are not only similar, they also are processed by the same intentional system.

MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE PLANNING AND THE SIMPLE VIEW

Lilian O'Brien (Cork)

Friday 30/11, 10:15-11:00

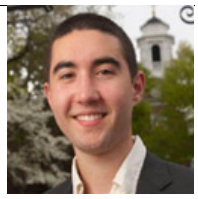
Michael Bratman’s celebrated thought experiment has convinced many that the so-called Simple View is false - the view that an intention to A is necessary if I am to A intentionally. This article presents a novel objection – close examination of Bratman’s case reveals a dilemma: either the mental states involved in the case are intentions or the case does not involve intentional actions. Either way the Simple View is not undermined. The real import of Bratman’s case is that it raises the question of how we can rationally intend mutually exclusive ends and a solution to this puzzle is presented.

DEVIANT CAUSAL CHAINS, KNOWLEDGE OF REASONS, AND WEAKNESS OF THE WILL

Gregory Strom (Sydney)

Friday 30/11, 12:15-13:00

I begin by refuting Davidson's classic account of weakness of the will, or *akrasia*, which turns on the distinction between judging that it is better to do *x* than to do *y* and judging the very same thing under the qualification "all things considered." I undermine this distinction with a redundancy theory of the expression "all things considered" according to which this qualification makes no difference to the meaning of a sentence in which it appears. So this distinction can underwrite Davidson's account only thanks to his stipulation that "all things considered" judgments are judgments, of some specific set of considerations that *happen* to be all the relevant considerations, that those considerations favor doing *x*. But then Davidson faces a dilemma: either the agent knows these considerations to be all the relevant considerations – in which case, according to the redundancy theory, she makes an "all out" judgment – or else she does not – in which case what Davidson calls an "all things considered" judgment cannot give her an occasion for *akrasia*. This demonstration of the inadequacy of Davidson's account motivates a new account of *akrasia* that turns on a distinction between different ways of having cognizing practical reasons. On this account, *akratic* agents balk from doing what they know they should because they merely have existential knowledge that *there is* some decisive practical reason to act in a certain way rather than also knowing *what that reason is*. Without knowing what that reason is, an agent can act in accord with it only in a way that deviates from the conditions under which her action might manifest that reason. The fact that motivation to act can lapse when we have merely existential knowledge of our reasons shows that practical rational excellence is not just a matter of doing *what* one has reason to do, but rather as a matter of safely *transporting* and *transforming* a practical reason *into* a doing of what it is a reason to do.



A STRONG CONCEPT OF INTENTIONALITY

Kevin Tobia (Oxford)

Thursday 29/11, 15:15-16:00

The folk concept of intentionality has been a recent topic of importance in the philosophy of action. A frequently used measure of this concept is to determine when ordinary people attribute intentionality to actions. A striking finding is that attributions of intentionality are sometimes influenced by seemingly external moral considerations (Knobe 2003a; Knobe and Burra, 2006; Leslie, Knobe and Cohen, 2006; Nichols, 2004). The most notable case of this phenomenon involves the intentionality of causing side-effects. Side-effects are typically thought of as events whose consequences are known but unintended. Broadly, the pattern is that causing a good side-effect is judged as unintentional while causing a bad side-effect is judged as intentional (Knobe, 2003a). In this paper I discuss a number of recent empirical studies on the side-effect effect, and argue that these studies together indicate the side-effect asymmetry may not be as robust or as troubling as initially thought; there exists a strong concept of intentionality in which both good and bad side-effects are unintentional.

MENTAL MUSCLES AND THE EXTENDED WILL

Till Vierkant (Edinburgh)

Friday 30/11, 11:30-12:15

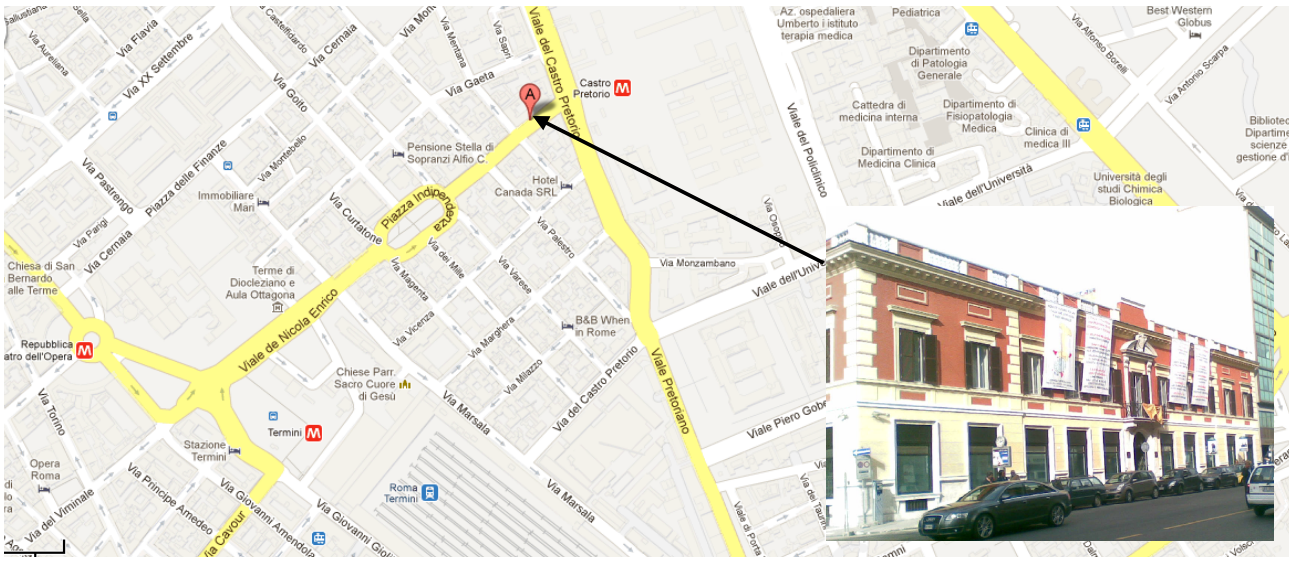
The ability to stop ourselves from being tempted is one of the things that is central to our agency. Humans can, some better than others, not give in to temptation if it presents itself, but stay the course and do the right thing. What exactly this ability consists in has been an age old discussion, but what most people would want to agree on, is that using external props that simply disable one to give in to temptation are an altogether different way of controlling the mind to real willpower. If you don't want to eat the cake in the fridge until tomorrow you can lock the fridge and give the key to a friend who will only come back tomorrow, but this is not the same as leaving your fridge unlocked and simply controlling your desires with your will. This paper wants to argue against this intuition. It wants to argue that in the way that matters, the two are the same kind of control. Once this point is established the paper will then argue that for the will we have even stronger grounds than for cognition (Clark & Chalmers, 1998) to believe that it is extended. In order to make the point it is now useful to introduce a strange character who has a very specific problem with controlling some of his desires. He should help to sharpen our intuitions about what is important in self control. Here comes Karl...

Practical information

The conference will take place at the *Istituto di Scienze e Tecnologie Cognitive, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche* (ISTC-CNR), Roma, Italy (http://www.istc.cnr.it/). The address of the conference venue is via San Martino della Battaglia 44, 00185 Roma, Italy. All sessions will be plenary and will be in the main conference room of the ISTC-CNR (Aula Piaget), on the first floor of the building. A laptop computer and a video projector will be available for speakers.

The ISTC-CNR is located in the city center and very close (5 minutes walking) to Rome's main train station (Roma Termini), where train and bus connections to the airports are available all day. There is an underground stop (Castro Pretorio) just around the corner of the Institute.

At the entrance of the ISTC-CNR, you will be asked to register and leave your ID at the front desk, in order to obtain a badge that will grant you access to the building. We apologize for this inconvenience, but, as all publicly funded research institutions in Italy, the ISTC-CNR has to comply with national regulations on such matters. Please make sure to have an ID with you, and remember to take it back once you leave the premises.



The social dinner on Thursday 29/11 and the lunch on Friday 30/11 will be at the restaurant *Al Grappolo d'Oro* in via Palestro 4/10 (http://www.algrappolodoro.it/), within walking distance from the conference venue. All speakers are welcome to join us there. Other people attending the conference will find that the area around the ISTC-CNR is quite crowded with places where to eat at a reasonable price.

As for accommodation, invited speakers will stay at the *Hotel Montecarlo* in via Palestro 17A (http://www.hotelmontecarlo.it/), which again is very close to the conference venue. In general, there are many hotels and B&Bs within walking distance from the ISTC-CNR, which should be able to accommodate any need of people attending the conference. We suggest to visit websites such as Tripadvisor.com or Venere.com, look for accommodation in Rome, and then narrow down your search by looking at locations close to Castro Pretorio. Alternatively, people might also consider staying in any place in Rome that happens to be close to an underground station (especially those on the B line), since the ISTC-CNR is very easy to reach that way. For information on public transportation in Rome, see http://www.atac.roma.it/

Attendance to the conference is free of charge, and no registration is required. For further information, please contact Fabio Paglieri: fabio.paglieri@istc.cnr.it