

# HOW TO EXPLAIN HUMAN ACTION?

## *Workshop on Questions from Riccardo Viale's Work*

**Riccardo Viale's** work has focused on the explanation of human action. The answer to this question corresponds to the foundation of the social sciences. Economics has responded with an a priori and instrumentalist solution. Sociology with the denial of the problem and its polarization on an abstract collective dimension. Viale connects himself to the philosophical tradition of John Stuart Mill, and develops the model of bounded rationality of Herbert Simon, declined in an ecological sense, inserting it into the current approach of embodied cognition. The foundation of the social sciences corresponds to a theory of human action that describes its adaptive dimension in relation to feedback from the physical and human environment. Environment is characterized mainly by uncertainty, complexity and information ambiguity. Human action is interpreted as a form of enactive problem solving that responds through its embodied dimension to problems and tasks whose meaning is embedded in the human and physical environment and whose solution can also refer to the extended dimension of cognition. Through this theory of action, also called *Embodied Individualism*, topics such as the behavioral approach to public policies and organization (i.e. *Behavioral Public Administration*), city development (i.e., the *Behavioral City*), innovation and entrepreneurship, the fight against disinformation, and the concepts underlying economics (i.e. *Cognitive Economics*), psychopathology, and Artificial Intelligence are analyzed.

*Riccardo Viale (MD) was trained initially in psychiatry and neuroscience and afterward in cognitive science and epistemology. Now he is Professor of Behavioral Sciences and Cognitive Economics at the Department of Economics of the University of Milan Bicocca and of Behavioral Economics at LUISS, Rome and President of Behavioral Insights Bicocca.. Early in his career he was CNR-Nato Fellow at Balliol College, Oxford University, and Research Scholar at Italian Academy of Columbia University, at Max Planck Institute for Human Development, Berlin and at Chinese Academy of Science, Beijing. He is currently Head of Italy Behavioral Insights Team (Team di Analisi Comportamentale) at Prime Minister Department of Civil Service. Founder and Secretary General of Herbert Simon Society. Editor in Chief of Mind & Society (Nature-Springer). From 2010 to 2014 he was Director of Italian Culture Institute of New York. Currently he is columnist of Corriere della Sera.*

## Biography of the Speakers



**Cristina Bicchieri** is an Italian–American philosopher. She is the S.J.P. Harvie Professor of Social Thought and Comparative Ethics in the [Philosophy](#) and [Psychology](#) Departments at the [University of Pennsylvania](#), professor of Legal Studies in the [Wharton School](#), and director and the [Philosophy, Politics and Economics](#) program. She has worked on problems in the [philosophy of social science](#), [rational choice](#) and [game theory](#). More recently, her work has focused on the nature and evolution of [social norms](#), and the design of behavioral experiments to test under which conditions norms will be followed. She is a leader in the field of [behavioral ethics](#) and is the director of the Center for Social Norms and Behavioral Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania.



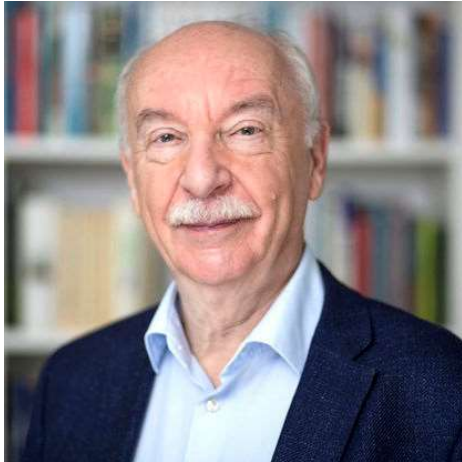
**Benedetto Camerana** is an Architect, Professional Architect (OAT from 1992 - RIBA from 2022), Landscape Architect (AIAPP - EFLA - IFLA from 1993), PhD in History of Architecture and Urban Planning (in Turin Polytechnics, 1995). Italian National Automobile Museum Chairman of the Board (2013-ongoing). Professional architect, urban planner, landscaper, designer, from 1997

(Camerana&Partners, then Benedetto Camerana Studio, Torino/Milano). Design research focused on:

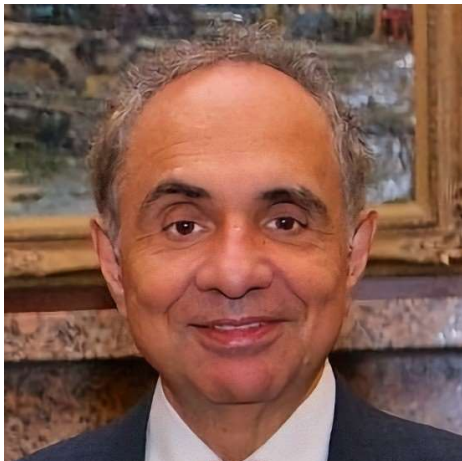
- integrating architecture and landscape, in a “*green urban architecture*” (Environment Park, Torino 1999; Lingotto Hanging garden, Torino 2022)
- space exploration design (Space Port, Taranto 2024; Space Center, Torino 2024).
- automobile exhibit design (Alfa Romeo Museum, Milano 2015; Ferrari Museum, Maranello 2018)



**Shaun Gallagher** is an American [philosopher](#) known for his work on [embodied cognition](#), [social cognition](#), [agency](#) and the philosophy of [psychopathology](#). Since 2011 he has held the Lillian and Morrie Moss Chair of Excellence in Philosophy at the [University of Memphis](#) and was awarded the Anneliese Maier Research Award by the [Humboldt Foundation](#) (2012–2018). He was awarded an honorary D.Phil from the University of Copenhagen. He has held visiting positions at Keble College, Oxford; Humboldt University, Berlin; University of Copenhagen, and the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, Cambridge University, and recently in the Psychology Department at the University of Rome – Sapienza. He is co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*.



**Gerd Gigerenzer** is a German [psychologist](#) who has studied the use of [bounded rationality](#) and [heuristics](#) in [decision making](#). Gigerenzer is director emeritus of the Center for Adaptive Behavior and Cognition (ABC) at the [Max Planck Institute for Human Development](#), Berlin, director of the Harding Center for Risk Literacy, University of Potsdam, and vice president of the European Research Council (ERC). Professor of Psychology at the University of Chicago and John M. Olin Distinguished Visiting Professor, School of Law at the University of Virginia. Awards for his work include the AAAS Prize for the best article in the behavioral sciences, the Association of American Publishers Prize for the best book in the social and behavioral sciences, the German Psychology Award, and the Communicator Award of the German Research Foundation. His award-winning popular books *Calculated Risks*, *Gut Feelings: The Intelligence of the Unconscious*, and *Risk Savvy: How to make good decisions* have been translated into 21 languages.



**Mario J. Rizzo** is Professor of Economics, the Director of the Foundations of the Market Economy Program, and the Co-Director of the Classical Liberal Institute, at New York University. He is the co-author of *Escaping Paternalism* and of *The Economics of Time and Ignorance*. He has published extensively in the history of economic thought, law-and-economics, classical liberalism,

and behavioral economics. He is a member of the editorial board of *Behavioural Public Policy* and of the advisory board of the LSE seminar in classical liberalismis



**Saras D. Sarasvathy** is an American entrepreneurship professor and recipient of the 2022 [Global Award for Entrepreneurship Research](#). She is currently the Paul M. Hammaker Professor in Business Administration at the [University of Virginia Darden School of Business](#) and the Jamuna Raghavan Chair Professor in Entrepreneurship, [Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore](#). She serves on the editorial boards or as associate editor of several academic journals as well as serving as an outside director to the public company LendingTree. She is best known for her conception of [Effectuation](#), a theory of Entrepreneurial action based on the study of Expert Entrepreneurs. Her award-winning journal article - "[Causation and Effectuation: Toward a Theoretical Shift from Economic Inevitability to Entrepreneurial Contingency](#)" is one of the most highly cited academic articles about [entrepreneurship](#) of all time.



**Hersh Shefrin** is a Canadian [economist](#) best known for his pioneering work in [behavioral finance](#). Shefrin received his B.S. from [University of Manitoba](#) in 1970. At the [University of Waterloo](#) in 1971 he received his M.S. in [mathematics](#). He then obtained a Ph.D. in [economics](#) from the [London School of Economics](#) in 1974, after which he became [assistant professor](#) at the [University of Rochester](#). In 1979 he was appointed professor at the [Santa Clara University](#), first in the department of economics and then in 1990 to the department of [finance](#). Shefrin holds an honorary doctorate from the [University of Oulu, Finland](#). Shefrin has written a number of influential books on behavioral finance and its applications to [corporate finance](#) and corporate culture.