

Towards a Paradigm Shift

10th - 14th September 2025, Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, Austria

3rd Mind & Life Europe Workshop of the European
Neurophenomenology, Contemplative, and Embodied
Cognition Network (ENCECON)



Research
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EUROPE

Welcome!

Dear Friends,

On behalf of Mind & Life Europe, we are delighted to welcome you to the third workshop of the European Neurophenomenology, Contemplative, and Embodied Cognition Network (ENCECON) at Rangjung Yeshe Gomde, Austria.

The main aim of the ENCECON workshops is to provide for an in-depth and integrated discussion of what is known, what is not known, and what approaches could be taken to address outstanding questions in a particular field related to the understanding of mind and consciousness from first- and third-person perspectives.

The initial ENCECON meeting took place in June 2016, exploring three topics related to contemplative neuroscience: 1) the role of the brain resting state in meditation, 2) the role of the body in meditation, 3) neuro-phenomenology. The second meeting took place in June 2019, exploring the similarities and differences in phenomenology and the neural dynamics of meditation, hypnosis, trance and psychedelics.

From these meetings, it has become apparent that a radical paradigmatic shift is required rather than attempts to integrate neuro-phenomenology within the mainstream cognitive neuroscience paradigm.

The third ENCECON workshop is therefore titled "Towards a Paradigm Shift" and will bring together an interdisciplinary team of scholars from neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, physics, medicine, and contemplation to collectively reimagine consciousness beyond the confines of the reductive materialist framework.

Each day will begin with a brief presentation by participants of their work relevant to the key themes of the workshop, allowing ample time for theoretical discussions, methodological brainstorming sessions, and first-hand explorations of consciousness.

Its mission will be to create a platform for rigorous dialogue, challenge long-held assumptions, and foster innovative approaches that will expand our understanding of consciousness together with our ability to tackle research questions that remain outside of the scope of the currently adapted paradigm due to its inability to approach such questions, epistemologically and methodologically. Through the open exchange of ideas, experiential sharing, and collaborative research, we aim to articulate new models, frameworks, and methodologies that better reflect the complexities of human experience, perception, and awareness.

As a central outcome, this workshop seeks to produce a comprehensive white paper that synthesises key insights from each discipline, similar to the output of the second ENCECON workshop held in 2019, the proceedings of which were published as a special feature review in Trends in Cognitive Sciences. This document will formulate a new paradigm, its epistemic and ontological tenets, and proposed methodology to guide future research in the field of consciousness studies powered by forward-thinking vision.

The goal of catalysing a paradigm shift is integral not only to enriching academic discourse but to transforming our collective view of ourselves as well as our relationships with each other and our planet.

With warm wishes from the members of the planning committee:

Dr Elena Antonova and Prof Aviva Berkovich-Ohana (co-chairs of the Planning Committee), **Prof Eviatar Shulman, Dr Giuseppe Pagnoni, and Dr Pedro Mediano**

Schedule

	Wednesday 10 th September	Thursday 11 th September	Friday 12 th September	Saturday 13 th September	Sunday 14 th September
Theme	<i>Arrival & Welcome</i>	<i>Problems with Reductionist Materialism</i>	<i>Alternative Views of Consciousness</i>	<i>Open Perspectives Without “ism”</i>	<i>Wrap-up & Departure</i>
07:30-08:00	Arrival & Registration	Meditation Prof Gábor Karsai	Meditation Prof Urban Kordes	Meditation Father Francis Tiso	Meditation Father Francis Tiso
08:00-09:00		<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>	<i>Breakfast</i>
09:00-11:00		Morning Session 1 Prof Michel Bitbol <i>Consciousness, Quantum Mechanics, and Phenomenology</i> (45 min + 15 min discussion) Prof Aviva Berkovich-Ohana <i>What Needs Explaining But Resists Reduction?</i> (20 min + 10 min discussion) Dr Charlotte Martial <i>Near Death Experiences</i> (20 min + 10 min discussion)	Morning Session 1 Prof Susan Blackmore <i>It's All Models</i> (30 min + 10 min discussion) Prof Eviatar Shulman <i>The New Case for Immaterialism</i> (30 min + 10 min discussion) Prof Gabor Karsai <i>Panpsychism, Panexperientialism</i> (30 min + 10 min discussion)	Morning Session 1 Prof John Dunne <i>Nondualism in Tibetan Buddhism</i> (30 min + 10 min discussion) Dr Elena Antonova <i>Groundlessness as the Ground</i> (30 min + 10 min discussion) Prof Miriam Kyselo <i>Enactive Orientations for Social Groundlessness</i> (30 min + 10 min discussion)	Morning Session 1 Group discussion + breakout groups <i>White Paper Brainstorming</i>
11:00-11:10		<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>
11:10-12:00		Morning Session 2 Group discussion + breakout groups	Morning Session 2 Group discussion + breakout groups	Morning Session 2 Groups discussion + breakout groups	Morning Session 2 <i>Closing Session</i>
12:00-13:30		<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
13:30-14:30		Afternoon Session 1 Prof Franz Vollenweider <i>Mindfulness and Psychedelic States</i> (20 min + 10 min discussion) Dr Ruben Laukkonen <i>My Graveyard of Paradigms</i> (20 min + 10 min discussion)	Afternoon Session 1 Dr Michael Sheehy <i>Clear Light at Night</i> (20 min + 10 min discussion) Dr Ben Hartl <i>It's Turtles Both Ways</i> (20 min + 10 min discussion)	Afternoon Session 1 Group discussion + breakout groups <i>White Paper Brainstorming</i>	Departure
14:30-15:30		Afternoon Session 2 Group discussion + breakout groups	Afternoon Session 2 Group discussion + breakout groups	Afternoon Session 2 Group discussion + breakout groups <i>White Paper Brainstorming</i>	
15:30-16:00		<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	<i>Break</i>	
16:00-18:00		Afternoon Session 3 Prof Amit Zoran <i>Between Worlds: Research as an Act of Inner Navigation</i>	Afternoon Session 3 Prof Claire Petitmengin <i>The Inner Space of the Tree</i>	Afternoon Session 3 Ohad Nave <i>Becoming Intimate with the World: From Theory to Transformative Practice</i>	
18:00-19:30		<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	<i>Dinner</i>	
19:30-21:00	Welcome Remarks Prof Gábor Karsai, Amy Cohen Varela, Dr Elena Antonova, Prof Aviva Berkovich-Ohana & Birgit Meiche Blitz Introductions (2 min each)	Evening Session Prof Juan Gonzalez <i>Shamanism: When Science and Philosophy Meet the Sacred</i>	Evening Session Prof Aviva Berkovich-Ohana <i>Uncharted Realms: An Experiential Inquiry</i>	PARTY TIME!	
21:00 - 21:30	Tlalie Vered Shir & Shaiyah Honorov <i>Birthing the Space: A Contemplative Sound Journey</i>				
21:30 - 22:00					

Gomde Welcome Guide

We're happy you are here. Gomde is a place of peace, reflection, and learning — brought into being by Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, nurtured through the dedicated care of volunteers, and continually enriched by the presence and participation of all who visit. May your stay at Gomde bring clarity, compassion, and benefit to all beings.

Living the Dharma Together

At Gomde, we bring the Dharma into daily life through small, heartfelt acts of awareness and care:

- Try to bring kindness, patience, and mindfulness into your interactions.
- Be aware of your surroundings and the diverse needs of those around you. Respecting others' space, silence, or sensitivity is a way to support harmony in shared community life.
- Approach others with openness — everyone is doing their best, and all are welcome.

Participation & Support

Being part of Gomde includes contributing to the daily life of the centre. Tasks like cleaning, helping in the kitchen, or working in the garden are shared by everyone staying here. These acts of service are expressions of Dāna — joyful generosity, and an important aspect of the Buddhist path. Your support is deeply appreciated.



Facilities & Information

Library: Please enjoy the books mindfully and return them when you're done.

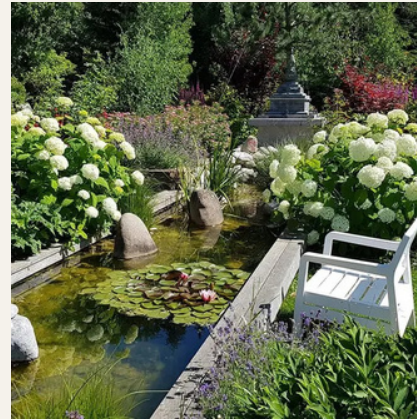
Lounge: A cosy place to gather, enjoy music, and connect with others. Alcohol is permitted here after 6 PM. The Lounge usually closes at 10 PM — after that, feel free to continue conversations in the dining hall, making sure to close the windows and doors so others can rest undisturbed. At times, the Lounge is used for house team meetings. When this is the case, a sign will be on the door. Please avoid using the Lounge during these times.

Rinchin Shop: Offering Dharma texts, ritual items, and thoughtful gifts. Every purchase helps nurture Gomde's vision and supports our monastic community in Nepal

WiFi Access: gomde / gomde2022

Exploring The Area

Enjoy peaceful walks and beautiful nature in the Almtal Valley and the Salzkammergut region. A shuttle service is available via www.salzkammergutshuttle.at For train information, see oebb.at or westbahn.at



Silence & Rest

- Quiet hours generally begin at 10 PM. Please help maintain a peaceful atmosphere in sleeping and rest areas.
- During larger events, some areas (such as the east wing, the tent area, or the upper pond path) may be designated as silent zones. Your awareness helps maintain a peaceful atmosphere.

Daily Life & Practical Tips

- No outdoor shoes inside — please place them at the west entrance or designated areas.
- Before leaving Gomde, please remove your bed sheets and tidy the room to the best of your ability.
- Shared bathrooms are for everyone — please leave them clean, just as you'd wish to find them.
- We have a fridge available for medication or essential food items needed for dietary reasons. Please ask the on-site team for its exact location
- Keep your belongings with you. During large events, Lost & Found is located at the registration desk.
- Please close windows when it rains, or if you leave the room, and there is a chance of rain.

To support a more environmentally caring lifestyle and help protect this beautiful place we share:

- Take shorter showers.
- Turn off lights and heaters when not needed.
- Help us to recycle. Designated containers are in the dining hall.

Shared Spaces & Daily Harmony

Meditation Hall (Lhakhang)

- Remove your shoes before entering.
- Please handle texts with care: do not place them on the floor or step over them. In Buddhist tradition, texts represent sacred wisdom and are treated with great respect. Likewise, please avoid pointing your feet toward the shrine or monastics as a sign of consideration and respect.
- Dress modestly, especially during teachings or in the presence of ordained Sangha.

Gardens & Pond

- The pond is a place for quiet contemplation. Please shower before entering to help preserve its natural ecosystem, and wear swimwear only in the immediate pond area — not in or around the house.
- If you've been swimming, please avoid sitting on cushioned furniture in your wet swimsuit, as it can leave marks.
- Enjoy the gardens mindfully and refrain from picking flowers, so their beauty can be enjoyed by everyone.
- Please also respect all water areas, including the Wisdom Garden, by refraining from throwing stones or disturbing the animals that inhabit them.

House Guidelines

- No candles or incense indoors.
- Smoking is only permitted at the north pavilion (near the parking area).
- Alcohol is allowed only in the Lounge, and only after 6 PM.
- If you wish to practice yoga or engage in physical movement, please ask a team member for a suitable space.

Learn More & Stay Connected

- Learn about Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche, Gomde's history, and our connection to Ka-Nying Shedrub Ling Monastery and Nagi Gompa in Nepal.
- Website: www.gomde.eu
- Instagram: [@gomde.eu](https://www.instagram.com/gomde.eu)
- Facebook: [Rangjung Yeshe Gomde Germany–Austria](https://www.facebook.com/RangjungYesheGomdeGermanyAustria)
- Share your experience — we warmly welcome your Google review.

Thank You!

Biographies



Elena Antonova

Elena Antonova is a Reader (Associate Professor) in Contemplative Neuroscience at Brunel University of London, which she joined in June 2019. Elena's research focuses on the effects of long-term mindfulness practice using neuroimaging, psychophysiology, and behavioural methods, with applications to the prevention and management of psychopathologies, such as psychosis and schizophrenia. She has been actively involved with the Mind and Life Institute since 2011 and Mind & Life Europe since 2013. In recognition of her contributions to contemplative science research, Elena was elected a Mind and Life Research Fellow in 2017. Elena has had a personal meditation practice since 1998 and has attended numerous meditation retreats since 2001, mainly studying and practicing the Dzogchen approach to non-dual awareness. She has also been actively engaging with the issues in philosophy of mind in psychiatry, psychology, and cognitive neuroscience.

My inspiration for co-organising ENCECON 2025 workshop stems from a long-standing impulse to challenge the reductive materialist ontology prevailing within the sciences, and particularly cognitive neuroscience and consciousness studies. Without even knowing it, I have been following Francisco Varela's lineage of thought from the start of my academic career, which I then fully consciously embraced after reading *The Embodied Mind*, in which all I ever wanted to articulate was already perfectly articulated 😊. My stance of an a-ontological approach in empirical sciences stems from two main roots: i) an inner call for intellectual

honesty, as NO ONE (!) has answers to the mystery of life and consciousness; and ii) a deep experiential conviction that collapsing the ever-flowing, expanding becoming of our beingness into this or that metaphysical ontology misses the point altogether.



Daniel Atad

I am a neuroscience PhD student working in the intersect of complexity science, machine learning, neuroscience and consciousness studies. My interest lies in bridging scientific and spiritual enquiry, aspiring to devise science-based tools for enhancing contemplative practices and exploring various altered states of consciousness. In my PhD research, I explore the neural correlates of states of self-dissolution in psychedelics and meditation. I combine neurofeedback, computational neuroscience and neurophenomenology to facilitate the double aim of gaining a deeper basic-science understanding of the mental construct of the self and it's malleability and developing practical tools for meditation practice that build upon this knowledge. Apart from my scientific work, I practise and teach Yoga.

I am drawn to the workshop as deeply resonate with the need to establish a new paradigm, or even move beyond paradigmatic thought, in the study of consciousness. Tracking the debate in the field for many years, I feel that we are missing something profound in the way we think about these issues – it seems to me that our method of inquiry itself is being called for a deep revision in light of the attempt to provide a naturalistic theory of

consciousness. I hope this workshop will succeed in leveraging the diverse backgrounds of the attendees for this required shift, and that we will be able to discuss with an open mind and open heart.

I have many questions in mind, but I think the main ones (somewhat related to one another) would be: What would a truly comprehensive and wholesome science of consciousness look like? Can we expand on the methodological suggestions of neurophenomenology to do truly “embodied” science, or can we combine philosophical and spiritual traditions that have been exploring these questions for millennia without losing scientific rigour? If our starting point for defining consciousness is deemed to rely on our own inner experience, how can we move beyond that to come up with a truly naturalistic theory that also applies outside of the human realm? What is the meaning of an “objective” 3rd-person validation of hypotheses regarding consciousness and how can we ideally integrate the two methods of “inner” and “outer” inquiry?



Aviva Berkovich-Ohana

Safra Brain Research Center, and Head of the Integrative Psychotherapy Program in the School of Psychotherapy, Counseling and Human Development. I hold a PhD in Neurobiology from the Gonda Multidisciplinary Brain Research Center at Bar-Ilan University and completed postdoctoral training at the Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel. My research investigates the effects of contemplative mental training on consciousness, self-reference, and death-related processing, primarily through a

neurophenomenological approach. To this end, my laboratory collaborates with long-term meditation practitioners and individuals experienced in altered states of consciousness, including psychedelics, channeling, near-death experiences, and lucid dreaming. My recent book, *Perspectives on Consciousness: Inquiries into Subjective Experience Across Disciplines* (Berkovich-Ohana et al., eds., MIT Press, 2025), reflects this interdisciplinary orientation and the central role of subjective experience in my work. My research has been supported by TEVA's National Network of Excellence, the Foundational Questions Institute (FQXi), the Bial Foundation, the Mind and Life Institute, the Israel Science Foundation, and the Tiny Blue Dot Foundation's “Perception Box” project.

I was inspired to organise this workshop by personal experiences that do not align with the current materialistic view. Based on numerous conversations with colleagues in the field of consciousness research, I feel that time might be ripe for a paradigm-shift in the field as a whole.

Key questions stirring within me for exploration and debate include: Did you ever had a personal experience that challenges the current materialist view of consciousness? How should we rethink about consciousness, to accommodate all experiences that cannot be explained by a materialistic paradigm?



Michel Bitbol

Michel Bitbol is researcher at CNRS/Ecole Normale Supérieure, Paris, France. He received a M.D., a

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Ph.D. in physics and a 'Habilitation' in philosophy. After a start in scientific research, he turned to philosophy of science, editing texts by Erwin Schrödinger and formulating a neo-kantian philosophy of quantum mechanics. He then studied the relations between physics and the philosophy of mind, in collaboration with Francisco Varela, and drew a parallel between Buddhist dependent arising and non-supervenient relations in quantum physics. He also developed a first-person conception of consciousness expressed from the standpoint of an experience of meditation. More recently, he engaged a debate with the philosophical movement called 'speculative realism', from the same standpoint.



Amy Cohen Varela

Amy Cohen Varela is Chairperson of the Mind & Life Europe Board and involved with Mind & Life since its inception. She is also a clinical psychologist specialised in psychodynamic therapy and philosophy. Amy studied comparative literature at Brown and Columbia Universities before moving to Paris in the early '80s, where she received her degree in clinical psychology at the University of Paris 7, with a specialty in psychodynamic theory and practice, and in parallel, completed psychoanalytic training.



Susan Blackmore

Susan Blackmore is a psychologist, lecturer and writer best known for her book *The Meme Machine* (1999) and the textbook *Consciousness: An Introduction* (4th Edition 2024 with her daughter Emily Troschianko). She is a Visiting Professor at the [University of Plymouth, UK](#).

Her research interests includes [memes](#), evolutionary theory, [consciousness](#), [NDEs](#), [OBEs](#), [free will](#), [lucid dreams](#), [sleep paralysis](#), [drugs](#), [psychedelics](#), [spirituality](#) and [meditation](#). She has written more than sixty academic papers, a hundred contributions to books, and her work has been translated into twenty other languages. She has practised Zen for forty years and plays in a samba band.



Yair Dor-Ziderman

Yair Dor-Ziderman, Ph.D. currently holds research positions at the Universities of Haifa, Israel and

Padova, Italy. He is fascinated by how the mind-brain constructs a self, identifies with it, and comes to believe it will live forever. He investigates the accumulated power of ego-dissolution/nondual experiences to train the brain to 'forget' its self and accept its finitude. His research orientation is multidisciplinary with expertise and interests in accumulating and integrating knowledge and methods from cognitive neuroscience, phenomenology, meditation, and psychedelic science. Running projects, funded by the Bial Foundation, Israel Science Foundation (ISF), and Tiny Blue Dot Foundation (TBD), explore the boundaries of self-consciousness, experiential and neural mechanisms of death-denial, and the potential of meditation, psychedelics and near-death experiences (NDE) for inculcating existential resilience.

I am inspired to join this workshop and explore how and contribute to moving the fields of consciousness and contemplative neuroscience forward. I have a sense that certain neurocentric-materialistic assumptions which are prevalent in the field are, first, unnecessary for conducting rigorous and high-quality science; and second, limit the scope and breadth of what can be studied and how emerging findings are interpreted.

Questions I would love to explore regard (1) how to use existing cognitive neuroscience methods and tools to explore non-materialistic frameworks. A second idea I am interested in is somewhat ambitious. It regards (2) the prospect of a new research field: Empirical Phenomenological Cartography (EPC), a discipline dedicated to the empirical-phenomenological mapping of the mental landscape. This emerging field would develop and standardise its own methods of data collection and analysis, train specialised researchers and contemplative practitioners, and foster a shared ecosystem of research agendas, open-access data repositories, and platforms for information exchange. At its core, this field would function as a disciplined bridge between lived conscious experience and cognitive neuroscience — a systematic arbiter capable of translating between first-person and third-person domains of knowledge. In doing so, it would not only advance a science-based understanding of the mental landscape, but also inaugurate a new contemplative tradition within science a tradition of inner scientific inquiry.



John Dunne

John Dunne (PhD 1999, Harvard University) serves on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, where he holds the Distinguished Chair in Contemplative Humanities at the Center for Healthy Minds. He is also distinguished professor in the Department of Asian Languages & Cultures, where he recently served as department Chair. His work focuses on Buddhist philosophy and contemplative practice, especially in dialog with Cognitive Science and Psychology. John's publications appear in venues ranging across both the Humanities and the Sciences, and they include works on Buddhist philosophy, contemplative practices and their empirical examination and interpretation within scientific contexts. In recent years, his research agenda includes a focus on consciousness in various contexts with collaborators such as Antoine Lutz (INSERM, Lyons), Giulio Tononi (UW-Madison), and the Berggruen Institute.

John speaks in both academic and public contexts, and he occasionally teaches for Buddhist communities. In addition to his appointments in the Center for Healthy Minds and the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures, he is a member of Mind and Life Europe and a Fellow of the Mind and Life Institute, where he previously served on the Board of Directors. His academic collaborations include a senior advisory at the Rangjung Yeshe Institute in Kathmandu, Nepal.

A significant motivation for my participation in this iteration of ENCECON is the opportunity to

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spend an extended time with a number of excellent colleagues that I already know fondly, along with a number that I hope to know better, in a beautiful setting on a topic of profound importance. Although consciousness has always played an important role in my academic work (and especially in my own contemplative practice), somehow it has gained considerable momentum as a pressing topic in recent years. Some of this is due to some pressing questions around AI, and recent methodological and technological developments have also made consciousness more accessible as a focus of academic research. But clearly, our unprecedented global challenges also appear to be rooted in issues that relate directly to how our notions around the nature of consciousness.

One would expect that a stridently objectivist and reductionistic approach to consciousness will stand in opposition to its (perhaps equally strident) dialectically opposite approach, and being linked in this way to its dualistic opposite, this non-objectivist or non-reductionistic position is likely to share many of the same problems with its opposite.

I wonder, then: What is this dialectally non-objectivist and non-reductionistic position? Are we sufficiently aware of it so as to either endorse it or critique it in a conscious 😊 way?



Juan González

JI am full professor of Philosophy and Cognitive Science at the Morelos State University (UAEM)

in Cuernavaca, Mexico. I am currently also the Director of the Center for Research in Cognitive Sciences (CINCCO) at UAEM. My main field of research is perception and consciousness, in a broadly-constructed and interdisciplinary way, so as to include conceptual, empirical and phenomenological approaches. I have been working for a long time on hallucinations and modified states of consciousness, both from a scientific and a shamanic perspective. In the upcoming workshop I hope to find like-minded colleagues, who value the ontology and epistemology of experience, and who appreciate the intertwining of the truths of reason with the truths of the heart.

Key questions stirring within me for exploration and debate include: What is the ontological and epistemological status of hallucinations and/or other EMC? Are there regions/aspects of reality beyond the grasp of rational thought?



Ben Hartl

I am a researcher working at the interface of artificial intelligence, artificial life, evolutionary developmental biology, and theoretical physics. My work explores how principles of self-organisation, modularity, and collective intelligence in living systems can be modelled computationally and harnessed in synthetic settings. Inspired by the multi-scale competency of biological systems — from cellular decision-making to organismal morphogenesis — my research at the Levin Lab utilises multi-agent-based machine learning to

model multi-scale competency architectures. By deploying swarms of virtual, adaptive agents that self-organise into tissues and functional morphologies through local decision-making, I investigate how generative models such as neural cellular automata and diffusion models can shed light on the dynamics of agency, learning, and evolution in both natural and artificial systems. My goal is to reframe self-organisation in biology (and physics) as an expression of self-modeling diverse intelligences, unfolding across scales through repurposing integrated context-sensitive collective dynamics.

What inspires me to join ENCECON 2025 is the opportunity to bring these perspectives into dialogue with consciousness studies. If rather simple, distributed, self-regulating processes support intelligence and life across scales, what does this imply for the science of consciousness, and how might we move beyond a strictly reductive materialist framework?

I am particularly interested in whether consciousness might be understood as a process of crystallising cognition in a collective network, where problem-solving capacity first emerges in distributed dynamics across many interacting nodes, and only later condenses into coherent roles or “understanding” at specific loci within the system.

Questions I would like to explore at the workshop are: How can models of scale-free collective intelligence inform a framework of consciousness that does justice to its distributed, embodied, and lived nature? If biological and artificial systems use bowtie-style generative architectures — compressing diverse inputs into latent codes and creatively decoding them into adaptive responses under novel contexts — could consciousness be understood as a scale-invariant property of such systems, measurable by their capacity to flexibly attend and reinterpret compressed representations under novel contexts?



Gábor Karsai

Prof Gábor Karsai, based near Budapest, Hungary, is a long-standing member of the MLE Association, and presently serves as Rector of the Dharma Gate Buddhist College in Budapest, as well as Professor of Philosophy and Religious Studies. Gabor has undertaken Ph.D studies with a focus on process philosophy (A. N. Whitehead), phenomenology and Buddhism.

Over the last 15 years, he has had extensive management engagements, including as a deputy CEO at Bankar Holding Plc. (Hungary), Director of the Spirit of Humanity Forum (Iceland), the Education for Peace Foundation (Switzerland) and and as CEO at the Ling Jiou Mountain Buddhist Society (Taiwan).

He combines practical experience in running a not for profit organisation together with a deep appreciation for contemplative practice and science as well as the values and vision which MLE embodies.

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Johannes Kleiner

Johannes Kleiner is a physicist and mathematician who works on consciousness. His research focuses on mathematical questions in consciousness science, spanning theories of consciousness, methodological questions (e.g. regarding mathematical representations of conscious experiences), the study of experimental paradigms, statistics, and the question of consciousness in AI. Johannes is currently working as a postdoc at the Institute for Psychology of the University of Bamberg. Previously, he has finished a second PhD entitled "Topics in Mathematical Consciousness Science" at the Graduate School of Systemic Neurosciences and the Munich Center for Mathematical Philosophy of Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich. During this PhD, he was a visiting scholar at New York University's Center for Mind, Brain, and Consciousness, and an academic visitor at the Mathematical Institute of Oxford University. Earlier extended research visits comprise the Harvard Center of Mathematical Sciences and Applications, the Department of Computer Science of Oxford University and the Centre de Physique Théorique of Aix-Marseille Université. In his first PhD, Johannes worked on a topic in quantum gravity at the Department of Mathematics at Regensburg University. Johannes currently serves as the chairman of the board of the Association for Mathematical Consciousness Science.

I'm deeply interested in the neurophenomenological, contemplative, and

embodied perspectives on the mind. The chance to learn from and discuss with some of the main thinkers in this space inspired me to join the workshop.

My first key question is whether there is a role for mathematical approaches to play in applying ideas from neurophenomenological, contemplative, or embodied research in a scientific study of consciousness that is centered around, and derives from, lived experience; especially when mathematics is viewed not so much as tool to calculate, but as a way of thinking that can help us climb out of the cognitive edifices that evolutionary and cultural constraints may have set our brains to operate in. Second, more specifically, I'd be interested to discuss whether, and perhaps how, recent breakthroughs regarding the representation of conscious experiences in terms of mathematical structure can be applied to and helpful in understanding and studying lived conscious experience.



Urban Kordes

I am a professor of cognitive science at the University of Ljubljana, where I lead the Center for Cognitive Science and the Laboratory for Empirical Phenomenology. My research focuses on developing frameworks for the empirical investigation of subjectivity. I design epistemological and methodological approaches for in-depth phenomenological research, with a particular emphasis on identifying the core structures of human consciousness. I also explore ecologically valid ways of studying cognition in

natural environments.

Researching consciousness from a first-person perspective (i.e., empirical phenomenology) is my central research focus. I am interested in how to obtain empirical data about lived experience and - perhaps even more - what is the meaning of such data. I am intrigued by the epistemic dimension of gathering experiential data, which is very different from that of the data typically used in the natural sciences: in first-person research on consciousness, every act of observation is simultaneously an act of construction. Thus, we cannot even pretend that observing experience is the observation of something "out there," independent of the act of observing. In this context, I am deeply interested in contemplative training for observing one's own experience. From the perspective of the constructive nature of such research, training does not solely involve describing experiential landscapes, but also uncovering the characteristics of the very gesture of observing experience. As the representative of the group for contemplative observation of consciousness (Observatory), I hope that the ENCECON community will be able to offer a research home for the unusual line of inquiry we are pursuing.

Regarding the search for an appropriate framework for consciousness research, I believe that too much energy goes into creating models and too little into collecting empirical data. I fear that ontological debates and discussions about "grand" models of consciousness mostly reveal the ontological intuitions of their authors, without contributing to a shared body of knowledge. I would like to contribute to this debate (particularly in relation to the topic of the third day of discussions) with the argument that what we currently need is an agreement on how to empirically collect data. We need an agreement on the research framework and its epistemological foundations, answering questions such as: What does it mean to collect data about experience? How could phenomenological data be compared? How can we build a body of knowledge about phenomenal consciousness? At present, the science of consciousness has many "grand" theories but lacks an understanding of what we are actually doing when we explore experiential data. I propose that we start modestly and ask ourselves how we might begin building a large, shared body of knowledge about the first-person aspect of consciousness - knowledge that might one day, in and of itself, resolve philosophical

and ontological questions (or render them irrelevant).



Miriam Kyselo

Miriam Kyselo is a Professor of Philosophy at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. She has a PhD degree in Cognitive Science from the University of Osnabrueck. Miriam's expertise is in philosophy of cognitive science, philosophy of psychology and interdisciplinary research in embodied cognitive science. She is interested in the self, social cognition and inter-agent affordances, as well as in understanding what happens when self and sociality are at stake. Miriam is a proponent of the enactive approach and applying it to develop a relational theory of the human co-embodied self.

I am joining this workshop because I think we urgently need a paradigm shift for thinking and investigating human consciousness. I think to appreciate that consciousness is not reducible to individual brains or bodies is probably one of the key points in that respect. A theory of consciousness should allow us to integrate altered and disordered states of consciousness and understand how or why they are continuous with "normal" states of consciousness. I think that a type of "inter-dependency view" of consciousness, one that focusses more on pre-reflective, bodily knowledge than abstract, theoretical insight will have important consequences, especially for fields dealing with cases where consciousness/identity at stake (such as psychiatry, clinical neuroscience, neurology etc.). I am curious to meet other like-

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minded researchers. I am curious to explore the relation between social, intersubjective and other approaches to consciousness as a non-individualistic and interdependently arising phenomenon (interactions with substances, other animals, artificial or spiritual agents). What are the practical, empirical consequences of a paradigm shift? to consciousness.



Ruben Laukkonen

Ruben Laukkonen is a Senior Lecturer (US: Associate Professor) in cognitive science and computational neuroscience. His research is theoretically driven and traverses many levels, from neurons to psychology. Key topics include: meditation, insight, consciousness, and artificial minds. Ruben is particularly inspired by the theoretical triangulation that can be achieved through computational neurophenomenology. He is also a chief investigator on Australia's largest psychedelic clinical trial, supported by ~\$4M from the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and the Peregrine Foundation. Ruben's work has been featured in The New York Times, TIME, Scientific American, TEDx, Vice, ABC, Aeon, VOX, New Scientist, and in the Nature collection. Ruben has an eclectic contemplative background, including Zen, Advaita, and Theravada, and his interviews and writings have attracted millions of views.

Consciousness has been the central driving motivation behind my research over the last two decades. My personal experience with contemplative practice revealed that a paradigm shift was indeed necessary. This hunch has only

strengthened over the years, so I'm excited to discuss possible futures in consciousness science and experience. What I would like to discuss are views beyond the divide between both reductionism and idealism. For example, I would like to discuss a middle-way inspired by the Buddhist notion of dependent arising.



Michael Lifshitz

Michael Lifshitz is an Assistant Professor working in the Division of Social and Transcultural Psychiatry at McGill University in Montreal. He did his doctorate in neuroscience at McGill and then a postdoc in anthropology at Stanford, where he worked with Tanya Luhrmann to study how culture shapes spiritual experience. He now co-directs the Psychedelics and Contemplation Lab, an interdisciplinary research space that combines phenomenology, neuroscience and ethnography to shed light on the plasticity of consciousness. His research focuses on practices that aim to transform subjective experience—from meditation and hypnosis to placebos, prayer, and psychedelics. He is particularly interested in how these practices can modulate feelings of agency, so that thoughts, actions and sensations can come to feel as if they are emerging from a source beyond the self.

Motivation to attend: The participant list is extraordinary and I felt that something deep was likely to emerge from such a special gathering of minds.

Some questions: How can we understand the relationship between the material world and the

awareness that perceives it? Does one give rise to the other? Is one more fundamental? Do they mutually co-arise? How would a rigorously non-dual perspective describe this relationship? And what might an enactive perspective have to say? How can we make sense of the claim from some contemplative traditions that awareness can relax into itself to know itself as the ground of being? What would that really mean?



Antoine Lutz

Dr Antoine Lutz is a director of research at the French Medical Research Institute (INSERM) in the Lyon Neuroscience Research Center (CNRL) where he co-leads the Experiential Neuroscience and Mental Training Team (EDUWELL). He did his PhD in cognitive neurosciences in Paris, France, with Francisco Varela. During his postdoctoral work with Richard Davidson, at the University of Madison-Wisconsin, he used neuroimaging techniques to study meditation practices in both expert meditators and novice meditators.

His current research group focuses on the neurophenomenology of mindfulness and compassion meditations and on the impact of these practices on consciousness, attention and emotion regulations, and pain perception as measured by cognitive, affective and social neuroimaging paradigms using EEG, MEG, intra-cortical EEG, and fMRI. He is collaborating to a European research consortium investigating the impacts of meditation practices on ageing and well-being (Meditageing study, [Information](#)). His recent research interest focuses also on

investigating neurocomputational principles of meditation.



Jonas Mago

I'm completing my PhD in Neuroscience at McGill University under the supervision of Dr. Michael Lifshitz. My research centers on computational neurophenomenology—an emerging approach that uses simulations and formal modeling to bridge neurophysiological data with lived experience. This work builds on Varela's neurophenomenological paradigm, extending it through tools from computational neuroscience. I apply this framework to study altered states of consciousness, with a focus on concentration-based meditation (jhāna) and Christian contemplative prayer. Beyond individual brains, I also explore intersubjective dynamics through multi-brain analysis, seeking patterns of shared embodiment and co-regulated mind.

I'm deeply inspired to join ENCECON because of its interdisciplinary and contemplative ethos—qualities I believe are essential for developing new paradigms of mind and consciousness.

A central question I am sitting with as we prepare for this workshop is to better understand the kind of computational model could truly integrate neuroscience, first-person experience, and formal epistemology? What are the minimal and sufficient conditions that could satisfy scholars from these different traditions? Having a better grip on the minimal requirements of such new emerging paradigm feels like a catalyst to move closer towards it.

Biographies



Charlotte Martial

Charlotte Martial is a neuroscientist at the Coma Science Group (GIGA-Consciousness, University of Liège, Belgium), where she leads research on the phenomenon of near-death experiences. Her work adopts a multidisciplinary approach to explore the nature and underlying mechanisms of NDEs, extending beyond traditional boundaries in science and medicine. Her long-term ambition is not only to advance the scientific understanding of near-death and other non-ordinary states of consciousness, but also to help shape a broader, interdisciplinary dialogue on the nature of consciousness. To deepen her investigation into human consciousness, she has explored a broad range of physiological (e.g., hypnosis, cognitive trance), pathological (e.g., disorders of consciousness), and pharmacological (e.g., anesthesia) states. Using cutting-edge multimodal neuroimaging, she aims to characterise and uncover the cognitive and neurophysiological mechanisms underlying these altered states.

She has authored over 90 peer-reviewed publications in international journals such as *Nature Reviews Neurology*, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, *Critical Care* and *Science Advances*, as well as several book chapters. Her work has been recognised with awards, including the prestigious *Young Investigator Award* from the *International Brain Injury Association* (IBIA). She has been invited as a keynote speaker and session chair at numerous international conferences and has served on scientific organizing committees. Alongside her scientific work, Charlotte is committed to public

education and awareness in this fascinating clinical and research field.

I am deeply inspired by the urgent need to rethink the dominant frameworks that have long shaped consciousness studies. The call for a paradigm shift resonates strongly with my own research experience, where I've encountered phenomena like near-death experiences that may challenge current paradigms and demand a more integrative, open-minded approach.



Chiara Mascarello

She currently holds a research grant on Tibetan contemplative practices at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where she also teaches Tibetan language and literature. She serves on the board of the Contemplative Studies Program at the University of Padua and co-directs the Research Center of the Italian Buddhist Union. She is a member of the Steering Committee of the international Contemplative Education Network. She has lectured in various university programs on meditation and has worked as a translator from Tibetan. Her research interests focus on the dialogue between contemplative traditions and contemporary studies on consciousness, as well as on the applications of meditation in modern societies. She has especially worked on the concept of reflexivity of mind and on mind training, tracing their development from Indo-Tibetan Buddhist traditions to their relevance in contemporary contexts.

In this light, ENCECON offers a really rare and valuable space for us—a special context in which it becomes truly possible to speak openly within a small group of invaluable scholars and to think together in a meaningful and generative way. As this is our first time participating in ENCECON, we approach the conference with an open and exploratory mindset, eager to familiarise ourselves with such an inspiring community and field of inquiry.

During the conference, we would be particularly interested in engaging with two core questions:

1. What could constitute today a solid and widely accepted set of epistemological and methodological standards for contemplative neurophenomenology—understood both as a field investigating meditative phenomena and as a pathway to exploring consciousness through contemplative practice itself? Addressing this question involves further inquiries: What are the minimum core disciplines and roles required in a truly transdisciplinary research team? What methodological requirements should be met both on the phenomenological and neuroscientific sides? What are the most reliable protocols for participant recruitment, data collection, analysis, and so on?

2. How might it be possible to coordinate the efforts of numerous independent research groups to establish a shared and evolving research horizon—potentially leveraging the most advanced tools currently available in artificial intelligence?

In relation to this second question, we would like to contribute a concrete proposal. We believe the time is ripe to begin identifying a set of shared methodological standards—both phenomenological and neuroscientific—that could raise the overall quality of research in this field and, crucially, allow different research teams to “speak the same language.”

To this end, we envision the development of a shared representational platform—built, for instance, on a high-dimensional vector space model similar to those underpinning large language models (LLMs) and other machine learning systems. Such a platform would enable independent researchers and teams to upload and integrate their findings according to agreed-upon standards. Over time, this could support the

construction of a fine-grained neurophenomenological map capable of representing an increasingly broad spectrum of contemplative states.

This kind of infrastructure could help coordinate currently dispersed research efforts and catalyse the emergence of contemplative neurophenomenology as a full-fledged academic discipline—anchored in both rigor and collaboration.



Pedro Mediano

Long ago, when the temperature of the universe was around 108 K, I did a Physics degree at the University of Valencia, Spain, truncating what could have otherwise been a promising career as a jazz melodica player. When I decided that neutrinos were interesting but not quite for me, I did a PhD at Imperial College and a postdoc at the University of Cambridge, where I (rather unsuccessfully, in all fairness) tried to solve the mysteries of consciousness and complexity. At the moment I continue to fail to solve consciousness and artificial intelligence as a lecturer at the Department of Computing, Imperial College London.

Broadly speaking, my research lies at the intersection between consciousness science, information theory, complexity science, and machine learning. I strive to ground my research in solid mathematical and theoretical grounds, and

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whenever possible I publish open-source software to make my research accessible and reproducible. I also have a few online talks for both technical and general audiences you can find in this website.

I often team up with my fantastic friends and collaborators Fernando Rosas and Andrea Luppi. They do awesome stuff, check out their papers too!



Ohad Nave

Ohad Nave is a body-centered psychotherapist, somatic group facilitator, documentarist, and social activist. With a background in neurophenomenological research on meditative self-dissolution in Aviva Berkovich's lab, he is devoted to integrating experiential exploration, embodied presence, and improvisation into a life-affirming approach to personal and collective growth.

He is also engaged in psychedelic facilitation for the open-ended exploration of expanded states of being, often drawing on expressive movement, Buddhist practice, and connection to nature. His documentary work focuses on art and dance as vehicles for dialogue-building between Israelis and Palestinians, reflecting his commitment to peace, creativity, and embodied understanding.

I was inspired to join the workshop by a deep wish to bridge the worlds of scientists and researchers with lived experience and the many practices of embodiment coming from the worlds of dance,

bodywork and therapy. I am committed to exploring how collective growth and ethical responsibility can emerge from enactive approaches to mind and life.

Question stirring in me: How can we harness the transformative potential of exploring lived experience and become active agents of social renewal and paradigm shift?



Giuseppe Pagnoni

Giuseppe Pagnoni is Associate Professor at the Department of Biomedical Sciences, University of Modena and Reggio Emilia, Italy. After a Master in Physics, he completed a PhD in Neuroscience and has worked for several years in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, at Emory University, Atlanta (GA), USA.

He has led and collaborated to neuroimaging studies on diverse topics including reward processing, the interaction of immune and brain function, social cognition, intrinsic brain activity, pain processing, mental effort, meditation. He is currently interested in the application of the predictive coding framework to the study of contemplative practices.



Claire Petitmengin

After studies in Buddhist philosophy and ten years of experience in information system design, Dr Claire Petitmengin, completed her PhD thesis under the supervision of Francisco Varela at the Ecole Polytechnique in Paris, on the subject of the lived experience that accompanies the emergence of an intuition. She is presently Professor Emerita at the Institut Mines-Télécom and member of the Archives Husserl (Ecole Normale Supérieure) in Paris. Her research focuses on the usually unrecognised dynamics of lived experience and “micro-phenomenological” methods enabling us to become aware of it and describe it. She studies the epistemological conditions of these methods, as well as their contemplative, educational, therapeutic, and artistic applications. She has written numerous scientific articles and two books: *L'expérience intuitive*, and *Le chemin du milieu: Introduction à la vacuité dans la pensée bouddhiste indienne*. She also edited *Ten years of viewing from within: The legacy of Francisco Varela*, which commemorates the tenth anniversary of the publication of *The View from Within*, wherein Francisco Varela designed the foundations of a research program on lived experience.

A question that I would like to see explored during the workshop is the following: "Can an ontology emerge from a rigorous empirical description of human experience (and not only from an abstract philosophical reflection)? If so, under which conditions is it possible to validate it?"



Michael Sheehy

Michael Sheehy is a Research Associate Professor and Director of Research at the Contemplative Sciences Center at the University of Virginia. He is Principal of the CIRCL, Contemplative Innovation + Research Co-Lab, a transdisciplinary experimental collaboratory that studies how contemplative practices work in bodies and minds, cultures and ecologies, ourselves and our worlds; and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Contemplative Studies, a peer-reviewed open access journal that publishes original scholarship. Trained in Buddhist Studies, Michael spent several years in a monastery in eastern Tibet.

His research gives attention to historical contemplative practices in dialogue with contemporary discourses in the humanities, cultural psychology, and cognitive science. He is an honorary lifetime Mind & Life Research Fellow.

His publications include over two dozen articles and the book, *The Other Emptiness*. His work has been featured in *Psyche* magazine and National Geographic.

Biographies



Eviatar Shulman

Eviatar Shulman is Chair of the Department of Comparative religion, member of the Department of Asian Studies, and incoming Head of the Institute for the Study of History, Religion and Classics at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His main field of study is Buddhist and Indian religion and philosophy, especially early Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy. He has a wide ranging scope of publications in these domains, including his monographs - *Rethinking the Buddha: Early Buddhist Philosophy as Meditative Perception* (Cambridge University Press, 2014) and *Visions of the Buddha: Creative Dimensions of Early Buddhist Scripture* (Oxford University Press, 2021), as well a number of edited Journal volumes. He cultivates a particular interest in the comparative philosophy of mind, as in now working on a new project in this field.

What inspired me to join the workshop is a deep-seated doubt regarding the explanatory paradigm of materialism, which I feel will never be able to cash in its promises. Sure, it has proven successful, and as such must grasp an aspect of reality, but feigning to have a grip on the whole of reality is probably wrong, and perhaps morally dangerous. I think we can do better, and this demands that we acknowledge the foundational role of consciousness and experience in structuring reality. I may be wrong of course, so I am here to explore, discuss, and hopefully reach new understandings.

Questions that I would like to discuss are - (1) what do we mean by 'matter', and is there really such a

'thing'? (2) Can we not be more certain about the causal powers of mind and consciousness? (3) Are mind and consciousness the same thing?



Derek Sola

Derek Sola provides administrative support for the Managing Director of Mind & Life Europe, and MLE as a whole. He is a dedicated practitioner, reader, and translator of the early Buddhist teachings, with an MA in Buddhist Studies. Alongside his work for Mind & Life Europe, he is also active in a supporting role for various charity organisations.



Chris Timmermann

Dr. Chris Timmermann obtained his PhD in Neuropsychopharmacology at Imperial College

until 2025, pioneering the first investigations of the powerful short-acting psychedelics DMT and 5-MeO-DMT and is currently a Research Fellow in Neuroscience, Meditation and Psychedelics at UCL, where he is currently setting up the UCL Centre for Consciousness Research with Jeremy Skipper. His work has focused on the neuroscience, psychiatry, psychology, and beliefs of meditation and psychedelics to inform consciousness and mental health research.

The workshop excites me as an attempt to rigorously explore what a paradigm shift truly means, and whether we need one at all. I am also moved by how the workshop convenes several experts covering a range of topics (altered states, clinical studies, complexity) to understand what a paradigm shift entails. I am also particularly motivated by the possibility of incorporating the question of subjective experience and its relationship to brain activity from the perspective of complexity science.

1. How can we truly generate meaningful associations between experience and body/brain data with complexity science as the bridge?
2. What is the missing ingredient for the paradigm shift that is needed?



Father Francis Tiso

New York native, Father Francis Tiso holds the A.B. in Medieval Studies from Cornell University. He

earned a Master of Divinity degree (cum laude) at Harvard University and holds a doctorate from Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary where his specialisation was Buddhist studies. He translated several early biographies of the Tibetan yogi and poet, Milarepa, for his dissertation on sanctity in Indo-Tibetan Buddhism. He has led research expeditions in South Asia, Tibet and the Far East, and his teaching interests include Christian theology, history of religions, spirituality, ecumenism and interreligious dialogue. Father Tiso was Associate Director of the Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops from 2004 to 2009, where he served as liaison to Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, the Sikhs, and Traditional religions as well as the Reformed confessions.

Father Tiso is a priest of the Diocese of Isernia-Venafro, Italy, where he now serves as chaplain to the migrant communities in the Province of Isernia and as canon in the cathedral. He is Diocesan Delegate for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Affairs. He was recently elected to the Board of Directors of Mind and Life Europe, which promotes research in neuroscience, philosophy, and contemplative traditions.

Father Tiso has written and lectured widely, and is author of *Liberation in One Lifetime* (2014) and *Rainbow Body and Resurrection* (2016), two books on Tibetan studies. He is the recipient of grants from the American Academy of Religion, the American Philosophical Society, the Palmers Fund [Switzerland], the Centro Incontri Umani [Ascona, Switzerland], and the Institute of Noetic Sciences in Petaluma, CA.

Biographies



Francesco Tormen

I am one of the founding members of the of the Italian Buddhist Union Research Center, which I now co-direct. I also sit on the planning committee and act as the scientific coordinator of the University of Padova's Master's Program in Contemplative Studies, where I teach several subjects. Since 2020, I also serve as an adjunct professor of Tibetan language and literature at Ca' Foscari University of Venice. In recent years, I have published on Tibetan Buddhism, lucid dreaming, Madhyamaka philosophy, and the relationship between Buddhism, posthumanism, and transhumanism.

As co-directors of the Italian Buddhist Union Research Center and scholars of contemplative practices and consciousness in the context of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, we are deeply committed to exploring these themes through an interdisciplinary lens, particularly within the fields of Contemplative and Consciousness Studies. This aspiration informs the core activities of the Research Center and represents the deepest motivation behind both our academic work and broader engagement.

In this light, ENCECON offers a really rare and valuable space for us—a special context in which it becomes truly possible to speak openly within a small group of invaluable scholars and to think together in a meaningful and generative way. As this is our first time participating in ENCECON, we approach the conference with an open and exploratory mindset, eager to familiarise ourselves

with such an inspiring community and field of inquiry.

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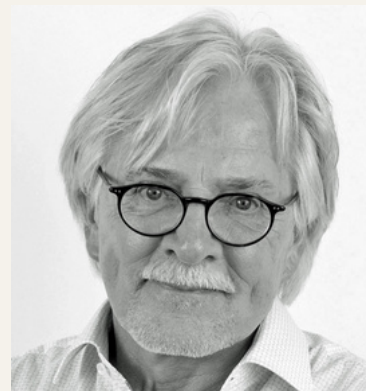
2. How might it be possible to coordinate the efforts of numerous independent research groups to establish a shared and evolving research horizon—potentially leveraging the most advanced tools currently available in artificial intelligence?

In relation to this second question, we would like to contribute a concrete proposal. We believe the time is ripe to begin identifying a set of shared methodological standards—both phenomenological and neuroscientific—that could raise the overall quality of research in this field and, crucially, allow different research teams to “speak the same language.”

To this end, we envision the development of a shared representational platform—built, for instance, on a high-dimensional vector space model similar to those underpinning large language models (LLMs) and other machine learning systems. Such a platform would enable independent researchers and teams to upload and integrate their findings according to agreed-upon standards. Over time, this could support the construction of a fine-grained europenomenological map capable of representing an increasingly broad spectrum of contemplative states.

This kind of infrastructure could help coordinate currently dispersed research efforts and catalyse the emergence of contemplative neurophenomenology as a full-fledged academic discipline—anchored in

in both rigor and collaboration.



Franz Vollenweider

Franz X. Vollenweider, MD, is Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Zürich and Director of the Neuropsychopharmacology and Consciousness Unit of the Psychiatric University Hospital Zürich. Since earning his Doctorate in Medicine in 1987, his research has focused on the psychological and neural mechanism underlying altered states of consciousness, encompassing both pathological and non-pathological phenomena. For over three decades, Dr. Vollenweider's research group has received sustained funding from the Swiss National Science Foundation to investigate the neurocognitive effects and clinical potential of classic psychedelics, employing advanced molecular and functional brain imaging techniques. He is recognised internationally for his pioneering work demonstrating that activation of serotonin-2A receptors within cortical-subcortical networks is a key mechanism mediating the psychedelic experience. Recent investigations have expanded to explore the interaction between mindfulness-based practices and psychedelic-induced states. Initial findings suggest that that mindfulness may deepen and facilitate the navigation of psychedelic states, while psychedelic experiences may, in turn, foster increased engagement with mindfulness training among novices. Dr. Vollenweider has published over 200 peer-reviewed papers and has been recipient of numerous awards, including the Heffter Research Institute Award, the Georg Friedrich Götz-Prize from the University of Zürich, the British Association of Psychopharmacology Prize, and

honors from the Swiss Society of Psychiatry, NARSAD, and European College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

The interdisciplinary spirit of the ENCEON 2025 workshop—especially the chance to explore psychedelic-induced experiences of oneness, reminiscent of those reported by seasoned meditators—deeply resonated with me. Engaging with experts in meditation research across theoretical, conceptual, and practical domains offered a rare and meaningful dialogue.

Psychedelics can evoke profound states of unity and insight. Yet, the dissolution of the self and encounters with emptiness (“shunyata”) often come with psychological turbulence, especially for those without prior contemplative grounding. These challenges may include fears of annihilation, loss of control, identity fragmentation, or compensatory ego inflation. Mindfulness—anchoring attention in the present, observing thoughts and emotions without judgment, and engaging in self-inquiry—can offer a stabilizing framework to navigate the intensity of the psychedelic experience, fostering openness, resilience, and integration.

1. Experiential Depth, Question:

Does prior mindfulness practice increase the likelihood of experiencing beneficial insights or mystical-type experiences during psychedelic sessions? This touches on the idea that mindfulness may prime the mind for openness, surrender, and metacognitive awareness—qualities often linked to transformative psychedelic experiences.

1. Neuroscientific approach, Question:

Can mindfulness-based training modulate the neural mechanisms activated by psychedelics to reduce adverse reactions and/or enhance therapeutic outcomes? This invites exploration of whether mindfulness can shape the trajectory of a psychedelic experience at the level of brain function—especially in emotion regulation, self-referential processing, and cognitive flexibility.

Biographies



Amit Zoran

Amit Raphael Zoran is a professor of Computer Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, working at the intersection of human-computer interaction, creativity, ecology, and consciousness studies. He holds a PhD from MIT and is the founder of FirstLight, a platform exploring embodied perception and the human-nature relationship. In recent years, his work has focused on studying human-forest interaction, seeking to awaken traditional shamanic experiences within a renewed relationship with the land. His practice encompasses extensive fieldwork with shamans, hunter-gatherers, and conventional craft masters worldwide, alongside research and creative projects in diverse ecological and cultural settings.

What inspired me to join: I am drawn to the workshop's commitment to moving beyond reductive frameworks in consciousness studies, toward perspectives that embrace lived experience, relational awareness, and the deep interconnection between humans and the living world. It is a rare opportunity to engage in open, meaningful dialogue with colleagues from diverse disciplines who share a passion for reimagining the science of consciousness.

Key questions:

1. Because the nature of consciousness can be directly explored through lived, often transformative experience—central to contemplative and mystical traditions—the subjective is not incidental but essential. Should the study of consciousness move beyond proving and

asserting through rigid objectivity, toward a science that recognises the legitimacy of subjectivity—grounded in shared reports, ideas, guidance, and empathy—where value lies not in mechanical certainty, but in the depth of lived experience and mutual understanding?

2. If consciousness is explored within the human being's natural habitat—the forests and wild landscapes where, throughout our evolution, mystical capacities and communication with the living world were integral to survival and meaning—how can such research be carried out today, and what would count as its genuine outcomes?



Tlalie Vered Shir

Tlalie Vered Shir is a multidisciplinary artist, singer, poet, doula, and body-mind therapist whose work explores subtle states of consciousness through voice, breath, and somatic perception. Her inquiry traces how sound and somatic presence awaken inner knowing, opening pathways into deeper perception and intimacy with the wider field of awareness.

Currently, she is exploring sound touch—the delicate dance of somatic and auditory frequencies that deepen embodied perception and expand sensory awareness.

Trained at the Art Body and Mind Academy and shaped by years of self-directed study, Tlalie draws from a broad range of embodied and contemplative practices. She is the creator of Vocal

Touch and Singing to the Womb, and founder of The River—a space holding feminine remembrance and honouring ancestral, unseen intelligences and the ancient circular ways of knowing. Her voice invites what lies just beneath the surface—to be felt, remembered, and sung back into being.

The key questions that are stirring in my heart through my life and especially this time and connected (as I understand) to our event is the quest of the nature of the subtle threshold — the quickening point — where a shift in consciousness begins to shape or move through matter? How can we sense or support this moment of transformation in ourselves, in others, and in the collective field and how might we cultivate deeper inner perception — attuned to vibration, silence, and presence — that would help us access the subtle intelligence that lives beneath form, and open pathways toward new paradigms of being, learning, relating and becoming. These questions reflect my fascination with the moment when form meets formlessness, light meets matter that I carry within me from a very young age.



Shaiyah Honorov

Shaiyah Honorov is a transformational guide, somatic therapist, and creator of integrative models that foster awareness, healing, and inner refinement. Drawing from decades of immersion in diverse modalities—including the Feldenkrais Method, empathic communication, rebirthing, NLP, and kinesiology—his work weaves together body, mind, and spirit to support deep personal evolution.

Shaiyah's approach centres on catalysing embodied transformation through experiential practices that awaken perception, presence, and the innate capacity for self-renewal. He facilitates journeys in natural landscapes, especially the desert, where simplicity and spaciousness mirror the clarity and silence at the heart of being.

Through the journey of life, I've been gathering and finding key insights and developing tools that support the ongoing process of personal and collective development — helping myself and others move toward harmony, peacefulness, and truth.

I am interested in how we can learn to move through life's challenging 'catch' points with greater awareness, eventually finding the ability to 'surf the waves of life' — while staying grounded in the wider consciousness of the ocean itself.

One path that continues to guide me is the deep, living wisdom within the story of the Garden of Eden, and the Ten Commandments — not as fixed beliefs, but as evolving maps for freedom, responsibility, and remembering where we're truly heading. I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn, share, and co-explore how we can open new ways of living, educating, and co-existing — toward a more harmonious and awakened world.

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Mind & Life Europe is rooted in the vision of the Dalai Lama and Francisco Varela: to bring science and contemplative wisdom into dialogue, deepening our understanding of the human mind and fostering the inner and societal transformation needed to address today's global challenges. For over a decade, Mind & Life Europe has catalysed pioneering work at the intersection of science, philosophy, and contemplative practice. Our goal is to advance research, learning, and leadership that supports human and planetary flourishing.

As a not-for-profit organisation, our work depends on the generosity of our community. Your donation helps us:

- Sustain and expand field-defining research and education
- Nurture a new generation of contemplative scholars and scientists
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To explore how you can support us—whether through a one-time gift, planned giving, or another form of partnership—please contact Gábor Karsai, Managing Director at gabor.karsai@mindandlife-europe.org

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Thank you for being part of this shared journey — for your presence, your care, and your contributions.



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