

Science of Consciousness Series

CONSCIOUSNESS 2.0

SEEING THE THEORETICAL FOREST FOR THE EMPIRICAL TREES



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Pari Center
25th Anniversary

Pari, Italy — June 3-10, 2025

Science of Consciousness Series

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SEEING THE THEORETICAL FOREST FOR THE EMPIRICAL TREES

With **Anil Seth, Jessica Bockler, Kehlan Morgan, Liad Mudrik
Lucia Melloni, Robert Lawrence-Kuhn*, Sean Esbjörn-Hargens**

Curated and Chaired by

Àlex Gómez-Marín

** virtually*



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The current revolts and revolutions unfolding in consciousness studies may be akin to those of modern physics a century ago, except that we can now experience the mystery. However, we often remain confined to our preferred theory and confused about the data.

It is time for a reckoning. We will seek to integrate diverse approaches to consciousness and elevate the field towards a proper science of experience for the 21st century.



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SCIENCE OF CONSCIOUSNESS SERIES

CONSCIOUSNESS 2.0

Seeing The Theoretical Forest For The Empirical Trees

Dates

June 3-10, 2025

Location

Pari, Tuscany, Italy

Presenters

**Anil Seth, Jessica Bockler,
Kehlan Morgan, Liad Mudrik, Lucia Melloni,
Robert Lawrence-Kuhn (virtually),
Sean Esbjörn-Hargens**

Curated and
chaired by

Àlex Gómez-Marín

Event

**The event starts with a welcome dinner on
Tuesday June 3 at 19:00 and ends after lunch
on Tuesday June 10**

Fee

2175,00 euros, which includes:

- a 7-night stay in private accommodation
- breakfast, lunch and dinner at the local restaurant featuring locally sourced produce and traditional dishes
- water, wine and coffee served with lunch and dinner
- programmed lectures, activities and materials

The event

We are living a profound moment of transformation happening within the field of consciousness studies, drawing an intriguing parallel to the revolutions that occurred in physics a century ago.

Modern Physics, a Century Ago

In the early 20th century, modern physics underwent a revolutionary transformation with the advent of quantum mechanics and relativity. The established, classical Newtonian worldview, which had dominated for centuries, began to unravel in the face of new experimental evidence. This was a time of great upheaval—scientists like Albert Einstein, Niels Bohr, Werner Heisenberg, and others pushed the boundaries of human understanding, introducing concepts that defied common sense (challenging the very ideas of space, time, causality, locality and objective reality) and our everyday experience of reality.

Such revolutions were not just a series of empirical discoveries; they entailed a meta-theoretical shift that opened the door to new kinds of experience and understanding. In the process, physicists had to embrace a new way of thinking—one that was less about absolute certainties and more about probabilities, perspectives, and the complex nature of reality itself. These developments are often referred to as the “foundations of modern physics,” and they marked the dawn of an entirely new era in science.

Consciousness Studies: the Next Revolution?

Today, consciousness studies seems to be undergoing a similar upheaval, though the field is in some ways even more complex because it directly deals with subjective experience. We are grappling not just with theories of the physical world, but with the nature of awareness itself, the qualities that make us experience the world, perceive it, and reflect on it.

In many ways, consciousness studies has been constrained by our inability to bridge the gap between subjective experience (the “what it is like” aspect of consciousness) and objective scientific analysis. Theories of consciousness range from materialist metaphors, models, and metaphysics, which claim that consciousness arises solely from brain activity, to more radical proposals like panpsychism, which suggests that consciousness is a fundamental property of the universe itself. Within this spectrum, there are competing schools of thought, such as cognitive science, quantum

consciousness theories, integrated information theory (IIT), and various forms of phenomenology and philosophy of mind.

Like physics in the early 20th century, we find ourselves in a moment where the old paradigms are increasingly inadequate to explain the full scope of consciousness. Traditional, reductionist models of mind and brain are being challenged by new, more complex theories that attempt to account for the mystery of subjective experience—something that is elusive to scientific observation and analysis. And just as physicists had to grapple with the unsettling nature of quantum mechanics and relativity, those of us in consciousness studies must contend with the disorienting, mysterious quality of conscious experience itself.

The Challenge: Empirical Trees and Theoretical Forests

Despite the progress being made, a crucial issue remains: many of us within the field of consciousness studies remain attached to particular theories, often to the point of dogma, which can limit our capacity to integrate the vast range of data available to us. Some scientists and philosophers stubbornly cling to reductive models, insisting that consciousness will eventually be fully explained by neuroscience. Others, meanwhile, explore more speculative or metaphysical theories, sometimes neglecting the empirical rigor that has characterized the most successful scientific endeavors. As much pluralism is welcome (even necessary), the divide between these camps can lead to confusion, fragmentation, and a lack of consensus, leaving us stuck in a kind of theoretical paralysis.

This is where the “reckoning” comes in—the realization that we must move beyond entrenched positions and truly confront the complexity of consciousness. It is not enough to insist on a particular theory or model; we need to develop a truly interdisciplinary approach that draws on insights from neuroscience, psychology, philosophy, phenomenology, physics, and even the arts. It is time to seek integration and synthesis, embracing diversity while avoiding division.

A Science of Experience for the 21st Century

What would such integration look like? First, it means acknowledging that consciousness is a multi-dimensional phenomenon that cannot be fully captured by any single theory or discipline. Like the revolution in physics a century ago, we need a new language—a more inclusive, flexible framework that can accommodate the diversity of human experience and the complexities of the systems that give rise to it.

In practical terms, this could involve greater collaboration between neuroscientists and philosophers of mind, or the incorporation of phenomenological insights into experimental design. New methodologies—such as neurophenomenology—are already emerging, which attempt to correlate subjective experience with objective neural data, creating a bridge between “what it’s like” and the brain processes that underlie it. But this will require the humility to accept that the very nature of experience may defy the kind of reductionist models that have so often dominated science. We must also be open to the possibility that the field of consciousness studies, like physics, may require new tools, new conceptual frameworks, or even a new understanding of reality itself to truly understand the nature of experience.

This means cultivating an openness to mystery—something we may have lost sight of in the quest for certainty. Unlike the hard, measurable phenomena of physics, consciousness resists being neatly packaged or fully explained by any one theory. However, that does not mean we should shy away from the challenge; rather, it invites us to deepen our inquiry and embrace the richness of experience.

The Road Ahead

The “reckoning” that is needed in consciousness studies is one of intellectual humility, bold exploration, and interdisciplinary collaboration. It is about transcending the boundaries that currently divide us—amongst the different “isms”, between objective and subjective, between science and spirit—and creating a field that acknowledges the complexity of human consciousness while embracing rigorous, empirical methods.

If we can do that, we may be poised to uncover insights about the nature of experience that are as transformative for the 21st century as the breakthroughs in physics were for the 20th century. The key will be to approach consciousness not merely as a set of theories or data points but as a profound mystery that we can experience, reflect upon, and, in time, understand in new ways.

Consciousness for Real

Finally, to move beyond “mere” theoretical models and into the realm of “consciousness for real”, we must make the study of consciousness not just an intellectual pursuit but a lived experience that anyone can access, explore, and understand. This means creating bridges between abstract theories and the concrete, everyday experiences that shape our lives. The

technologies and methodologies emerging in neuroscience, psychology, and even virtual reality offer exciting new ways to immerse ourselves in the study of consciousness. But these must be grounded in real, subjective experiences—whether through meditative practices, altered states of awareness, or simply cultivating our attention and perception while walking in the forest—that allow individuals to directly engage with the mysteries of their own minds.

The field of consciousness must find ways to make its insights accessible to the public, so that consciousness is not something relegated to academic debate or laboratory experiments, but a tangible and transformative aspect of our collective human experience. This “consciousness for real” approach has the potential to democratize the study of mind, allowing all of us to participate in the unfolding revolution, fostering a deeper understanding of what it means to be conscious, and ultimately helping us harness the profound potential of awareness in our everyday lives.

What a typical day looks like

8:30 - 9:30	breakfast
10:00 - 13:00	formal presentation (including a half-hour break)
13:00	lunch
16:00 - 19:00	presentation or interactive/workshop session
20:00	dinner
21:00	free time (retire to your accommodation for quiet time, engage in informal discussions, or, if there is a village event such as music in the piazza, join in)

For those seeking opportunities for interaction between participants and presenters (ratio around one to four!), these occur not just in the more formal presentations—which will allow time for discussion and Q&A—but also at the workshops, mealtimes, and during the free time.



‘The future has an ancient heart?’

CARLO LEVI

Our founder David Peat compared Pari to an alchemical vessel—a place where transformation can come about—as well as an opportunity to pause for a moment and re-assess one’s life. Participating in an event at the Pari Center means not only meeting with scholars and experts but living for a week in a medieval village, mingling with the local population, eating local dishes and drinking local wines. It also means being able to view the beauty of the surrounding countryside, and participating in a very gentle way of life far from the frenzy of work and city living.

Pari today continues in a remarkable state of preservation. In the 1950s Pari’s population began to drop from 1500 to the present 100 as people left to find work in the cities. The Pari Center maintains a close relationship with the village people and supports the local economy by renting accommodation—furnished apartments—on behalf of our participants, by having the local restaurant provide meals, and by supporting the local businesses.

Pari is located a few kilometers from the main superstrada that connects Siena to Grosseto. The nearest airports are Rome, Florence and Pisa. Once you have arranged your flight, we can guide you on the best means of travelling to the village.



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Pari Center