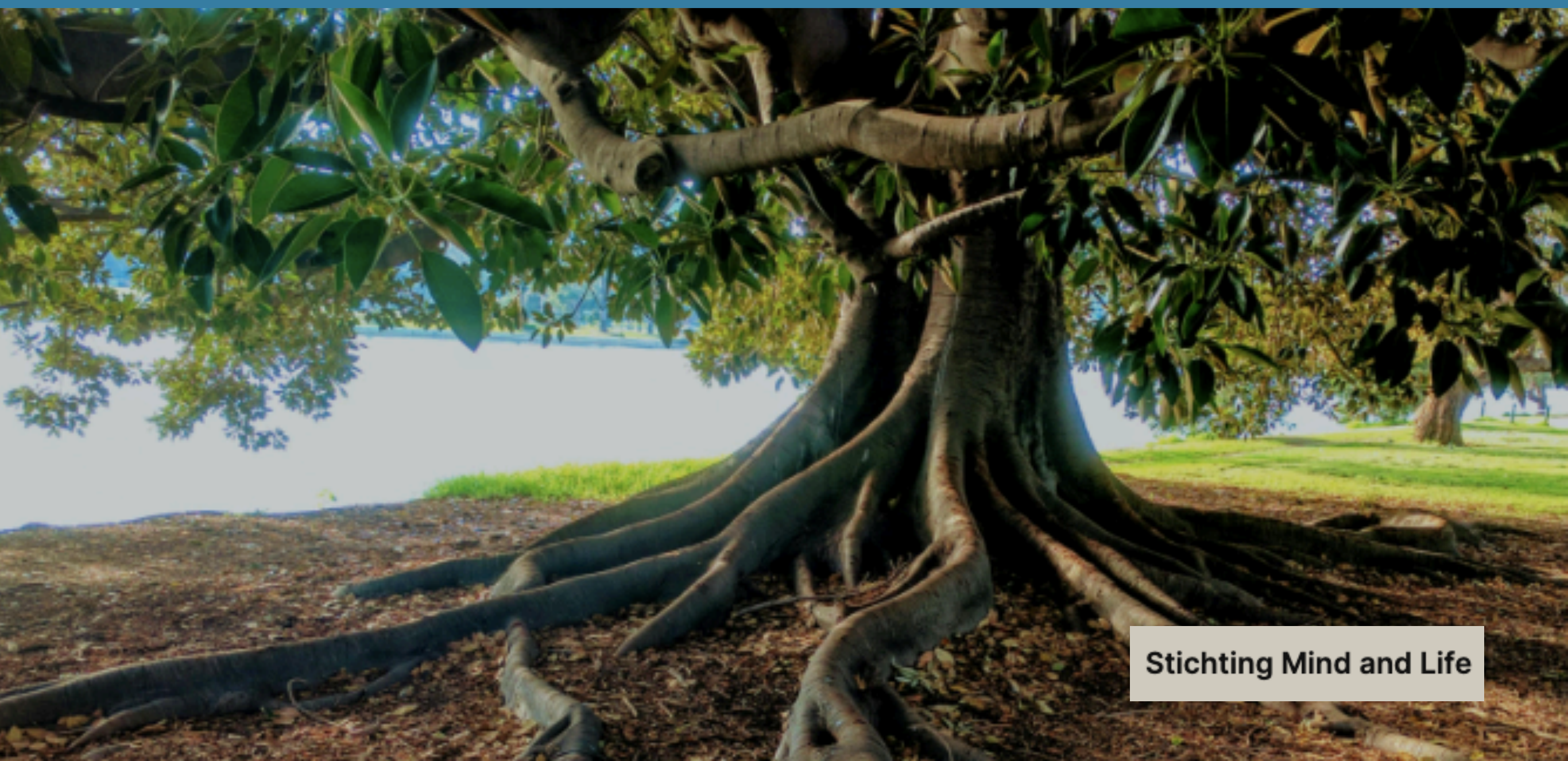


Activity Report 2024



Stichting Mind and Life

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Who Are We?

FACILITATING AND PROMOTING DIALOGUE



Stichting Mind and Life is a foundation governed by the laws of the Netherlands, having its registered seat in the municipality of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and its office address at Fongersplaats 43, 9725 LC Groningen, the Netherlands. It is registered on the Commercial Register of the Dutch Chamber of Commerce (KvK number: 67382908), and with the Dutch tax authorities (RSIN: 856959947).

The goal of the foundation is to facilitate and promote a dialogue between sciences, humanities, and contemplative traditions, thus furthering the field of contemplative sciences, with the aim of contributing to human flourishing, well-being, and the common good.

Our History

Stichting Mind and Life was founded on the 30th November 2016 in Amsterdam. We have been collaborating with our original founder organisation, Mind & Life Europe (MLE) in Switzerland, to bridge and integrate contemplative wisdom and practices with modern research capabilities and bring a new wave of initiatives into the European science community. After some restructuring between 2021-2023, today we operate as an independent foundation in order to develop collaborations and partnerships with like-minded organisations in the Netherlands and throughout the European Union.

Board Members



AMY COHEN VARELA
*Board Chair
France*



GÁBOR KARSAI
Hungary

Summary of Partnership Events in 2024

- 1. Land Art Event *“Road to Montegrande, regarding Francisco Varela”* (18th January – 18th February, Elqui Valley, Chile)**
- 2. Conference *“The Elephant in the Room. Investigating Consciousness Beyond Reductionism”* (21st – 23rd February, University of Padova, Italian Buddhist Union Research Center, Italy)**
- 3. 8th Pioneers of Change Online Summit (7th – 19th March)**
- 4. Varela International Symposium: *“Sentience and Intelligence: AI, the More-Than-Human, and Us”* (24th – 26th May, Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico, US, hybrid event)**
- 5. Training Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding International Programme (May – December 2024)**
- 6. Dialogue Between Scientists and Tsoknyi Rinpoche (24th – 26th May, Brussels)**
- 7. 2nd Annual *“International Society for Contemplative Research”* Conference (19th – 23rd June, University of Padova, Italian Buddhist Union Research Center, Italy)**

Land Art Event “Road to Montegrande, regarding Francisco Varela”

18th January - 18th February, Elqui Valley, Chile

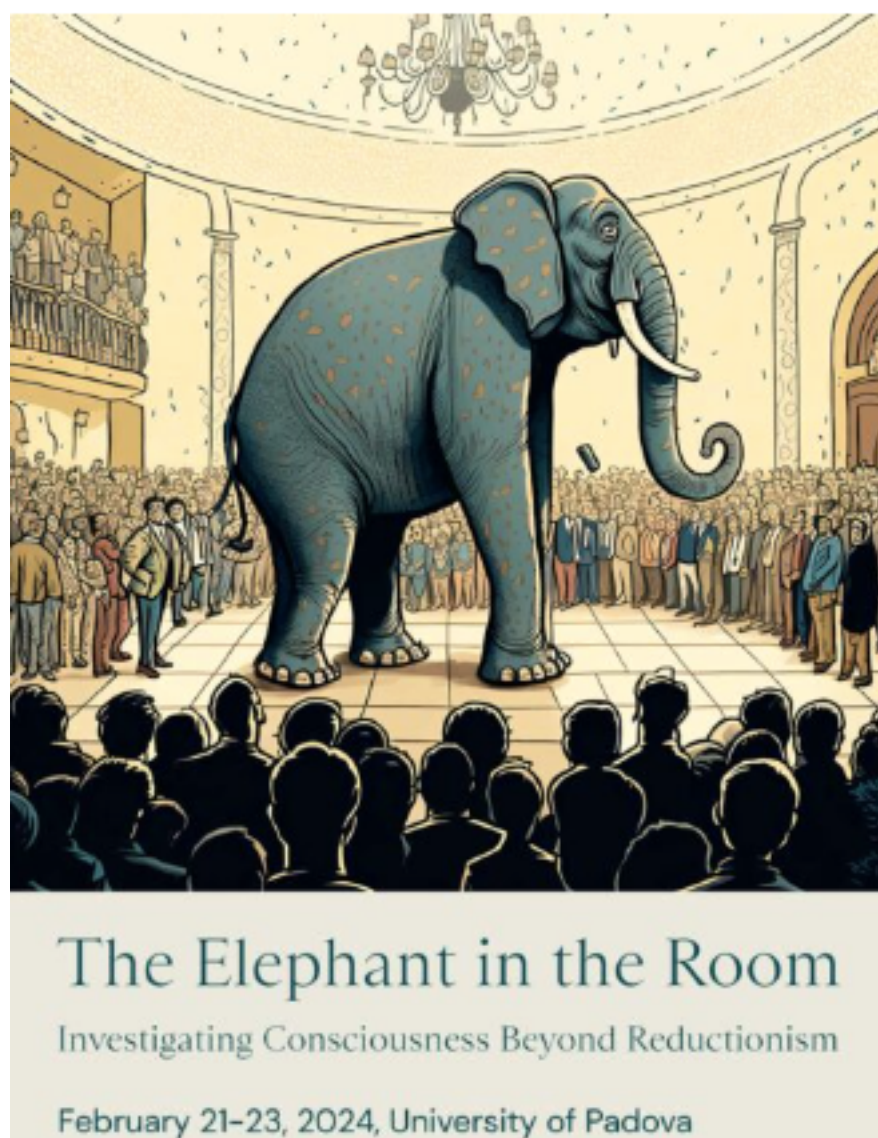
Stichting Mind and Life was a collaborating partner of a cutting-edge **Land Art** event and scientific colloquium which took place in Montegrande, Chile from **18th January to 18th February**. These works of art, integrated into the spectacular landscape of the Andes mountains, celebrated the work of **Francisco Varela** (1956 – 2001), Chilean neurobiologist, philosopher, and Buddhist meditator, and specifically the notions of impermanence, memory, and experience. There, **art was understood as a journey, as an organic creative action that has its own spirit.**

Participants in the colloquium included MLE Board Chairperson, **Amy Cohen Varela**, along with several other esteemed collaborators of Francisco Varela.



"The Elephant in the Room. Investigating Consciousness Beyond Reductionism"

21st February – 23rd February, University of Padova, Italy



We were a collaborating partner of an exciting conference on **"The Elephant in the Room. Investigating Consciousness Beyond Reductionism"**, taking place in person at the University of Padova, Italy, from **21st February to 23rd February**, organised by the Italian Buddhist Union Research Center. The conference hosted international scholars from various fields of research (including neuroscience, physics,

philosophy of mind, and contemplative research) to foster interdisciplinary collaboration regarding consciousness – one of the great unresolved mysteries of our time. Participants in the conference included members, **Dr Giuseppe Pagnoni, Dr Steven Laureys, Dr Elena Antonova, and Dr Sebastjan Vörös.**

8th Pioneers of Change Online Summit

7th – 19th March

The **8th Pioneers of Change Online Summit**, which took place **from 7th to 19th March, 2024**.

As the world moves towards system collapse, many look away, entrenching themselves in everyday normality and virtual distraction. But where the threat grows, the need for solutions also grows! **This summit encouraged us to understand how profound the change we are experiencing is;** how we can be part of the new world that is being created; and what our individual contributions can be.

With 40 outstanding speakers, amongst them members, and honorary Board members, **Matthieu Ricard** and **Roshi Joan Halifax**, this free online event was deeply thought-provoking and inspired us all to 'become the change'.



Varela International Symposium 2024

“Sentience and Intelligence: AI, the More-Than-Human” and Us”

24th – 26th May, Upaya Zen Center, Santa Fe, New Mexico, US, hybrid event

Over the weekend of 24th – 26th May, we held the **Varela International Symposium** – co-organised with the Upaya Institute and Zen Center. This hybrid event was titled: ***‘Sentience and Intelligence: AI, the More-Than-Human, and Us’***. It brought together a remarkable faculty to explore cutting-edge areas of science, philosophy, and contemplative practices.

In the programme participants had the opportunity to explore the profound questions around ***‘Sentience and Intelligence’***.

Faculty Members

Onsite: Molly J. Crockett, PhD; John Dunne, PhD; Adam Frank, PhD; Roshi Joan Halifax, PhD.

Online: Kristin Andrews, PhD; Richard Davidson, PhD; Gábor Karsai; Luc Steels, PhD; Evan Thompson, PhD; Amy Cohen Varela.

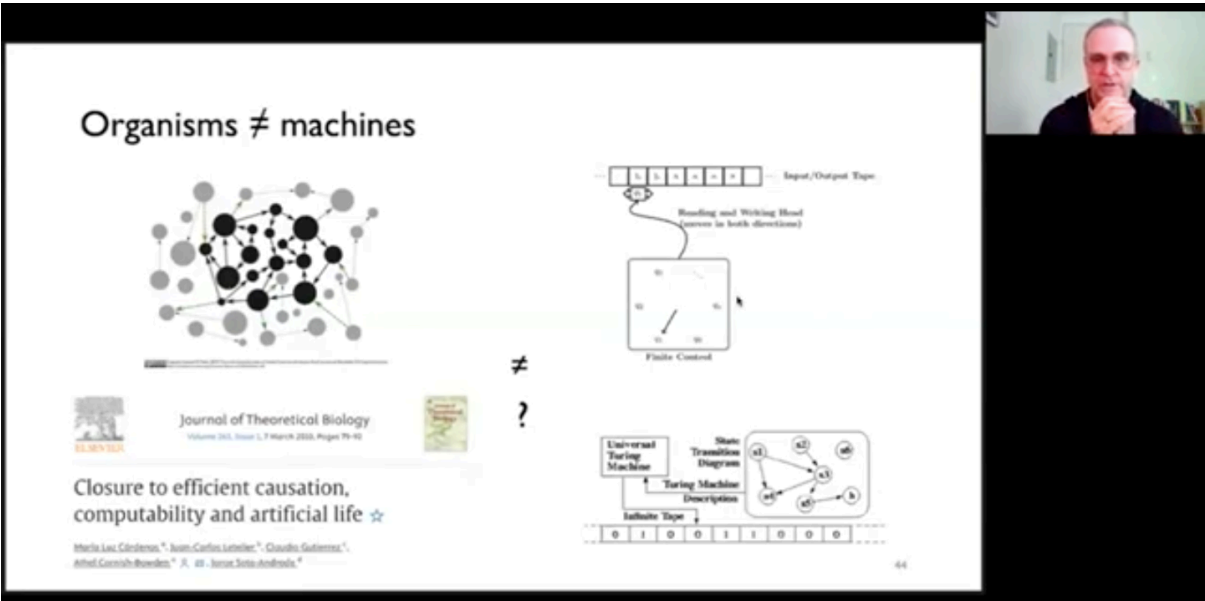
The recordings are available on Mind & Life Europe’s YouTube channel as a [playlist here](#).



Varela International Symposium 2024

Recordings

Released on	Content
25th November 2024	<u>Part 1: Intelligence and Wisdom - A Crucial Distinction</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 2: Exploration of mind, wisdom library, and the relationship between contemplative states and neural mapping.</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 3: Relationship between agency, sentience, and the potential creation of suffering in AI systems.</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 4: Concept of life as sensemaking and its implications for artificial intelligence (AI) and consciousness.</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 5: The blind spot in science: crisis in physics and issues in quantum mechanics.</u>
25th November 2024	<u>Part 6: Meditation beyond commodification, the transformation in neuroscience, and the importance of flourishing for ethical engagement.</u>



Training in Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding International Programme

"Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding in Times of Polycrisis"

May – December 2024

We are a partner for the Training in Embodied Critical Thinking and Understanding (TECTU), an interdisciplinary European Erasmus+ training programme initiated by **philosophers, computer scientists, cognitive scientists, and environmental designers, including numerous members**. It offers a fresh take and novel methodologies for students and researchers to think critically and creatively, contributing to the **transformation and enrichment of the skill of critical thinking in the 21st century**. The 2024 programme was hosted by the **University of Iceland** and included an online webinar



Dialogue Between Scientists and Tsoknyi Rinpoche

"Radical Resilience: Embodying Fearless Compassion for Ourselves, Others, and our Planet"

24th – 26th May, Brussels, Belgium

Two members, Valentine Goblet d'Alviella and Charles-Antoine Janssen **generously hosted** and co-organised a dialogue with **Tsoknyi Rinpoche** in Brussels on **24–26th May**. The event was titled ***"Radical Resilience: Embodying Fearless Compassion for Ourselves, Others, and our Planet"***. It included teachings and practices led by Tsoknyi Rinpoche, and two panels of dialogue between Rinpoche, scientists (Dr Elena Antonova, Dr Perla Kaliman, Dr Olaf Blanke, and Dr Giuseppe Pagnoni), and social activists (Sandrine Dixson-Declève, the President of Club of Rome, and Laila Martins from the Inner Development Goals) on ***"Inner Awareness, the key component for global sustainability"***. The programme ended with a circle entitled ***"Bringing the sacred into our work: How to engage from the inside-out to engage in life-sustaining behaviours"***. The participants (appr. 50 people) learnt, in a deeply felt way, the importance and

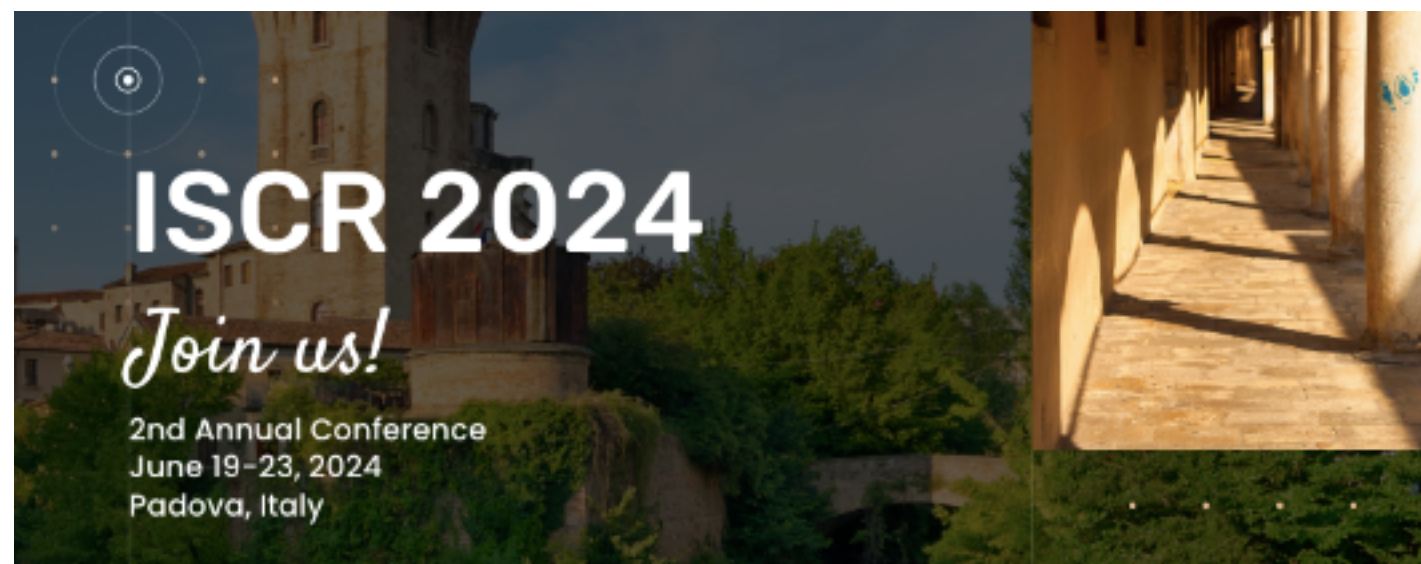
relevance of cultivating our "essence love", as Tsoknyi Rinpoche called it – that it is from this inner dimension that our resilience can take root so that **we make progress collectively, and bravely, towards life-sustaining choices and behaviours**.



2nd Annual “International Society for Contemplative Research” Conference

“Embodied Cognition and Intersubjectivity in Uncertain Times: Interdisciplinary Frameworks for Contemplative Research and Education”

19th – 23rd June, Padova, Italy



We were a co-organising partner of the 2nd Annual “International Society for Contemplative Research” (ISCR) conference on ***“Embodied Cognition and Intersubjectivity in Uncertain Times: Interdisciplinary Frameworks for Contemplative Research and Education”***, which took place in **Padova, Italy, from 19th to 23rd June**, alongside the ISCR, the University of Padova, the Italian Buddhist Union Research Center, and Mind & Life Europe. This second annual conference with **380 participants** aimed to foster the

emerging field of contemplative research through **a rich interdisciplinary dialogue that brings together clinical science, neuroscience, philosophy, religious studies, psychology, developmental science, and education**, in the fully enculturated and intellectually rigorous study and integration of the profound insights of the world’s prominent contemplative traditions. Our focus was to delve together into pathways for scholarly research through emerging approaches such as **“Embodied Cognition”**.

