

International Conference

First-Person Science of Consciousness. Methodological Issues and Fields of Application

May 6-8, 2021 in Witten, Germany

There is an increasing consensus in the mind sciences that intentionality, phenomenal states and subjectivity cannot be reduced to brain states without sacrificing consciousness as a field of research altogether. This raises the question of how first-person methods can be integrated more thoroughly into the study of consciousness.

Against this background, the conference will pursue the following core questions:

- What are the differences and commonalities between first-person methods – in particular those that have been developed in recent decades?
- In which disciplines and/or fields of research are these methods most fruitfully being applied?
- How are these first-person forms of inquiry related to second- and third-person methods of studying consciousness?

The conference seeks to advance the field of a first-person science of consciousness with a particular emphasis on recent developments in method and application. The conference will bring together leading researchers, young scholars, and students in order to open up a future in which first-person research moves from the fringes of the scientific exploration of the human mind to its center.

Keynote speakers: Prisca Bauer, M.D., PhD, Prof. Dr. Dr. Thomas Fuchs, Prof. James Morley PHD, Prof. Claire Petimengin PhD, Prof. Joëlle Proust PhD, Prof. Dr. Christian Tewes, Prof. Max Velmans, PhD

Organizers: Prof. Ulrich Weger, PhD, Prof. Dr. Christian Tewes, Prof. Dr. Johannes Wagemann, Dr. Terje Sparby and Dr. Anna-Lena Lumma.

Background

With the recent re-appearance of *consciousness* as a field of research in the cognitive sciences, different methods of first-person enquiry have been developed. In the field of “micro-phenomenology”, for example, various techniques are now available to invoke first-person experiences and to analyze their structural content. The same is true with regard to the “descriptive experience sampling method”, the psychotherapeutic method of “focusing”, or the “protocol analysis” approach – to name only a few. Each of these methods explores subjects’ lived experiences. This does not mean, however, that there are no controversies concerning the structure and justification of the respective methods. A number of important issues remain unresolved. For instance, should a first-person science seek to inquire into pre-reflective or “pristine experiences” of conscious processes? Are reflexivity and the application of concepts essential ingredients of first-person descriptions? How do we assess the process of retrospection, i.e. the temporal gap between a former experience and its re-evocation? Finally, in what way do first-person methods have to adapt to specific disciplines as diverse as psychology, psychotherapy, mathematics, or pedagogy?

Call for Submissions

We invite you to submit an abstract for a talk or presentation. While the conference focuses on philosophical and psychological issues, it is open to scientific contributions from other disciplines too. For registration and submissions, please go to the [registration page](#). The conference is open to academics, students and the wider public. Talks will be 30 minutes long, plus 15 minutes for discussion (and intermissions). For further details, see the [program page](#).

Information regarding COVID

Our decision that the conference will take place physically/in person is final and will only be withdrawn if the hosting of conferences will be prohibited. What we cannot guarantee is whether there will be restrictions in number that we can admit to the conference rooms. We will comply with federal/state and University guidelines regarding the Corona pandemic and may have to impose restrictions on the number of those admitted to the conference. People presenting a talk/poster will be given priority.

If restrictions in the number of people admitted will be imposed or the conference is prohibited, we offer a digital possibility of participation (for speakers and participants), in addition to the physical conference. In case the entire conference cannot take place in Witten physically, we are prepared to realize it in a digital online format.

On March 1st 2021 we will survey the most recent update on room-attendance regulations. On that day we will let you know in case you cannot be physically admitted to the conference or whether the entire conference takes place digitally.

There is, however, the possibility that this physical admission may have to be withdrawn even after that date (due to the unpredictability of the pandemic) but we consider this unlikely. We look forward to seeing you in Witten!